



Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

HANSARD VERBATIM REPORT



No. 1 — January 27, 2014

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

Hon. Dan D'Autremont, Chair
Cannington

Hon. June Draude
Kelvington-Wadena

Ms. Doreen Eagles
Estevan

Mr. David Forbes
Saskatoon Centre

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
Meadow Lake

Hon. Nancy Heppner
Martensville

Mr. Warren McCall
Regina Elphinstone-Centre

[The board met at 12:31.]

The Chair: — Okay. It now being after 12:30, I will open this meeting of the Board of Internal Economy. First I should introduce the members that are present. We have the Hon. Jeremy Harrison. We have Ms. Doreen Eagles and the Hon. June Draude. As well we have Mr. Warren McCall here for the opposition. I'd like to welcome everybody here today. We have a number of staff waiting with bated breaths to present their presentations today.

First item on the agenda is the approval of the proposed agenda. You should have the agendas before you in your packages. Would someone move that we adopt the agenda as presented.

Mr. McCall: — So moved.

The Chair: — Mr. McCall, seconded by Mr. Harrison. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Our first item of business is item no. 1, tabling of the response to the audit letter regarding the audit of the Board of Internal Economy, Legislative Assembly Service for the year ending March 31st, 2013. I believe this letter is in the package, is it not? Oh yes, we have to do the minutes first. That's what it is. That's why I couldn't find it.

Approval for the minutes of meetings. The first set of minutes is for meeting no. 9/13. That is in your package for November the 12th meeting. Are there any questions on those minutes? If not, would someone move adoption of those minutes? Ms Eagles, seconded by Ms. Draude. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Second item under approval of minutes is meeting 10/13. It as well is in your package. Meeting of November 18, are there any questions? If not, would someone move adoption of the minutes for meeting 10/13? Mr. Harrison. Second, Mr. McCall. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Okay. Next set of minutes we have for approval are the minutes for 11/13, December the 2nd. Any discussion? If not, could we have a mover, please? Mr. McCall. Second? Mr. Harrison. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. The next item of business is the approval of the minutes for 12/13. Is there any discussion? If not, would someone move adoption of the minutes for the meeting of December the 3rd? Ms. Draude. Second? Mr. McCall. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Okay. The first item is the tabling of the response to the audit letter regarding the audit of the Board of Internal Economy. You'll see it under item no. 1. This is the copy of the letter here, the original. Any questions?

Would someone like to move acceptance of this letter? Mr. Harrison. Second? Mr. McCall. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Okay. Item no. 2, approval of the Legislative Assembly third quarter expenditure report for the fiscal year 2013-14. You will find it in your package. Are there any questions? Mr. Harrison.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Sure. Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Just with respect to the Refurbishment and Asset Replacement Fund showing 22 per cent spent, I'm wondering kind of what the projection is for the fourth quarter, if it's been kind of back-loaded in terms of the expenditures.

The Chair: — I'd like to point out to the committee that we have Mr. Putz, the Clerk; Lynn Jacobson and Dawn Court have joined us at the table.

Mr. Putz: — In response to the question of Mr. Harrison, you are correct. It is indeed back-loaded towards the end of the fiscal year, and Dawn just informed me that we expect the bill for that February, March time period. It's the digitization project that's outstanding.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: — Any other questions? If not, would someone move acceptance of the third quarter financial report for the LAS [Legislative Assembly Service]? Mr. McCall. Second? Ms. Eagles. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Item no. 3, a tabling and decision item, approval of the Legislative Assembly mid-year report on progress 2013-2014. You will find this report in your packages. Are there any questions? If not . . . Ms. Draude.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — I'm just wondering is there . . . Of the number of the members that actually use the publications, the bills and *Hansard* and the white papers, what percentage of us actually use them in our . . . [inaudible] . . . to the point where we're wondering if we're printing them and not using them?

Mr. Putz: — That's a very good question. In fact this year, as you might recall, we embarked on a new project that arose through our discussions at the House Services Committee. And rather than having a system now where members have to inform us they don't want the publications, we now ask members if they want the publications. And the majority of members now are wishing to have the publications on demand rather than regularly every day in their binders, updated in the Assembly. So that's just 58 copies of it, but it has made a difference. And

that is the way we'll proceed henceforth.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Is there any thoughts about putting them like online so that we can reach them in through the Dropbox or some way so that we don't have to print them?

Mr. Putz: — The documents that you receive are all available publicly on the website, and they have been available on the website since about 1996. So some members though in the past, when we instituted our net publications program, was that they still preferred the paper copy. I think we've gone a generation or two of members since then. And it seems that members now prefer to look at these documents online, and I think our exercise at the beginning of this last session has validated that rationale.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — We might get to the point where we won't have to do very many of them at all. There should be a savings. Not only the printing probably isn't a big thing, but just for everybody that's delivering them and setting them all out.

Mr. Putz: — You know, what we do print, it's done in house and it's done by our own people. It was long ago that we abandoned the process of sending them out, just because of the online presence. The public by and large wants the documents online rather than print. So our print subscription's gone way down. We basically, for the public as well, print them on demand.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Any other questions? If not, would someone move adoption of the mid-year report for 2013? Mr. McCall. Second, Mr. Harrison. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

I would like to call forward the representatives for the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. Item no. 4(a) is the review of the 2014-2015 budget and motion to approve the budgetary expenditure estimates for the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. Ms. Dawn Court will represent the Conflict of Interest Commissioner today. And, Dawn, if you can introduce yourself and the people with you.

Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner

Ms. Court: — I'm Dawn Court, director of financial services. Greg Sykes, legal counsel for the Ombudsman, and Darcy Hislop is the chief technology officer with the LAS.

You just received a little package, and the first thing I just wanted to point your attention to is that the document that you received is just a revised copy of what's in your binder. There was just some minor typos that were found after you'd received the document, nothing that's substantial or anything, but we wanted to make sure you had that copy.

So I'm just going to walk you through the document that would have been the second document that you received in that package, and this is just a summary document of just the budget

request for 2014-15 for the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. As you will see from the summary document, the increase that the Conflict of Interest Commissioner is asking for is 1.44 per cent, which translates into \$2,535. The only increase that's applicable to this is for the personal services and the flexible benefit, which is a 1.25 per cent increase.

[12:45]

If you'd like, I can walk you through each of the different elements of the budget. The only other item that is of . . . that might be noticeable is that we did move some dollars out of the contractual services and put them into advertising, and that was just to reflect the actual spending of the annual report, the printing of that. If you have any questions, we'd be happy to answer them.

The Chair: — Are there any questions related to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . That's the second item under this. We have an (a) and (b).

I believe what has occurred in the past is that once the committee is done asking questions related to the office, that a decision has been held in abeyance for discussion amongst the members later on today. That being the case, unless anybody else has any commentary on the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, I'd like to thank you for that.

Now there is a (b) part for this office, and this is the consideration for the 2014-2015 funding request for the establishment of a lobby register and office of the lobbyist registrar in accordance with the proposed legislation before the Assembly. So, Dawn, do you have any commentary you wish to present for that?

Ms. Court: — Sure. This is just, at this time, our best estimate of what it would take to get the lobbyist operations up and running. So you'll notice there's some salaries and contractual services and all the regular things that you would look for in starting up an office. And I'm more than happy to take you through each of those components if you'd like.

So with respect to the personnel services item, that includes salary for Mr. Barclay for 12 months, for the whole fiscal year 2014-15 at a 30 per cent workload. And also there is anticipation of two new staff that would be required for that office, and that would include the deputy registrar and an executive secretary. And we're estimating those costs to be about \$191,000, and that is for three-quarters of the fiscal year. And the last component is flexible benefits of \$1,400.

Within the contractual services, we're asking for approximately \$8,000 for rent. And that would be for a temporary office space, and that would be beginning on June the 1st of 2014. The request also includes \$24,700 for office equipment supplies including photocopier, postage, and telephone.

The next component is \$162,000, which is under the general contractual services. And you'll see that \$150,000 is for the development of IT [information technology]; \$5,500 is for office branding and letterhead design; and \$6,500 would be for brochures, newspaper ad development, and some awareness material. Within the communications component, the request is

for \$20,500 for newspapers and dailies. That breaks down into \$27,500 for presentation printings, \$1,000 for lobbyist awareness and education pieces.

The next component is for travel and business, and that's a \$14,000 request. And that's for travel in province to hold awareness and public office-holder education.

And then the last component is supplies and services, and that's about \$16,000. And that's really the office equipment and computers and stationery to get the office up and running for the new staff. And so the total request for that budget is \$486,754.

The Chair: — Thank you, Dawn. Any questions? Ms. Eagles.

Ms. Eagles: — I just want some clarification, I guess. Under contractual services and communications, it's \$6,500 for brochures and newspaper ad for public and lobbyist awareness. And then under communications, it's 28,500 for newspaper and dailies, and presentation printing is \$1,000.

Am I clear in, the first one is also for the development, just strictly the development of the actual brochures and the ads?

Ms. Court: — Yes.

Ms. Eagles: — Okay. And the other is just for the publication of it.

Ms. Court: — Yes.

Ms. Eagles: — Okay. Great. Thank you.

Ms. Court: — You're welcome.

The Chair: — Mr. Harrison.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes, in terms of kind of the time frames on setting the office up, following proclamation, how long would your office anticipate the time it would take to have the office up and running?

Mr. Sykes: — I think I can speak to that question. Initially, Mr. Barclay made the assumption, for the purposes of developing this document, that he would move as quick as reasonably possible to having the office ready to go and have lobbyists begin registering.

In talking with some of the other peers across the country — ethics commissioners in Alberta, Manitoba, and in Ontario — and talking a little bit with the Legislative Assembly Service about how, for example, the information technology project that is represented in the budget submission would take, it could be a year and a half. He initially thought it might only take a year, but having done some extra research since, it could take longer. There's a table in one of the appendices just describing how long it took other jurisdictions to accomplish the same thing. Mr. Barclay didn't inquire as to why it took as long as it did in Alberta, but it took a year and a half, in some cases longer than two years.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes. So if the budget submission was

put in front of us with the intention of having the office up and running more rapidly than now would seem that to be the case, would the same expenditure still be necessary if we were looking at a time frame that perhaps would be more in line with what Mr. Barclay thinks would be reasonable?

Mr. Sykes: — Excuse me, just to clarify, are you asking if the office was to get up and running within a year as opposed to longer, would the numbers change?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — No. If the office were to be up and running, taking longer than a year as opposed to within that one year, whether that would have an impact in terms of the amount of resources necessary?

Mr. Sykes: — I think in some ways the budget numbers in front of you are reflective at taking a little bit longer. For example, Mr. Barclay has asked for \$150,000 in relation to the IT project that at the most preliminary planning level he anticipates being about 350,000 in total. So this budget submission would reflect that he only expects to spend, you know, a portion of that total anticipated amount in this fiscal year.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — So I was looking at the chart in terms of the development cost of the website or of the IT project. Looking at Alberta, I mean it says \$163,500 was the one-time development cost in terms of that. Would it be possible for us to — I know the materials indicate that we have spoken with some of the lobbyist registry commissioners in other jurisdictions — but would it be possible to, you know, see if we can license that program for instance from Alberta? Obviously we'd have some Saskatchewan-specific issues. But that being said, if the kind of development's already been done, why would we inflict that kind of reinventing the whole thing?

Mr. Sykes: — I think Mr. Barclay is sort of, at this preliminary stage, looking at four options, three of which would involve some form of licensing or sublicensing of other provinces' technology — Alberta being one, Ontario the other, and BC [British Columbia] the third — the fourth being an entirely new system developed just for Saskatchewan. So to answer your question, I think barring unforeseen circumstances, his intention is to try and find something that's already being used and hopefully license it from them and possibly adapt it.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes. I guess, you know, speaking on behalf of the government, we very much encourage any sort of collaboration with other jurisdictions who have already kind of gone down this path that we can possibly . . . any sort of synergies that we can possibly find, that we do everything we can to find them, you know.

And in terms of the number of registrations, I know in Alberta it's over 500 I think, and in Manitoba it's 160. I would suggest we'd probably end up being closer to Manitoba than to Alberta in terms of the numbers.

So yes, I guess just that we would do everything we can to find the most efficient way of doing this. And taking advantage of experiences from other provinces and any sort of materials produced or developed would be our suggestion anyway, in the best way of going forward. So I appreciate that.

Mr. Sykes: — Perhaps Mr. Hislop could give us some information on the IT side of what's been looked at and what is being looked at.

Mr. Hislop: — Sure. In conjunction with Mr. Sykes and Mr. Barclay, we did put together some information requests for Alberta, BC, Manitoba, and Ontario. Ontario was first out of the gate a number of years ago. Alberta used theirs as a starting point.

BC developed theirs starting fresh. The platform that, the Ontario, Alberta one wasn't something they were entertaining. They spent about \$1 million I believe in BC. Manitoba licensed theirs from BC and then modified it to deal with their specific requirements, including a second language being French. They spent about 400,000.

Ontario is doing something interesting. They're redeveloping theirs on the more current platform. And we haven't had a chance to see that in action, but we have some rough numbers. So I think Mr. Barclay is interested in the potential capability of the latest generation. The BC, Manitoba one are up and running; we could look at that. We had a chance to talk to their developers and got a bit of an understanding of what was involved and whatnot.

So our \$350,000 estimate is at a very sort of conceptual level, looking at what's been done to date along with some of the potential of looking more in depth at what Ontario's might offer, sort of what our basis was. I think the only reason you would go down the fourth road to completely redeveloping is if for some reason there was something very different that you couldn't reuse what's been done. But we haven't done enough analysis to really get into the details of is one or the other of those existing ones a better fit. So at this point it's a fairly broad number.

With the resourcing not being in place today in terms of the office being able to work on that, that's why we're only assuming a portion of the development dollars this year. It'll take some time to have staff in place, get them up to speed. And the first step would be contracting an applications project manager to assist the office in developing the requirements in issuing RFPs [request for proposal] and doing the analysis of the other systems to see if one or the other is a better fit. So that's sort of a brief outline.

The Chair: — Mr. Harrison.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes, I appreciate that information. That's very useful, and I mean we'll have a kind of, a broader discussion amongst members in terms of the actual budget request.

One thing I maybe would ask though, for the office to be prepared for . . . I mean this legislation hasn't been passed yet; it's still before the House. And without anticipating the legislature, I mean we really don't know what's going to happen. So I would maybe ask the office to prepare kind of options around some of these matters. I know there's been preliminary work done, but once we get kind of more into this, to perhaps come back before the board again and give us kind of a, perhaps a better overview of the options that we have in

front of us in the future, particularly once we have the legislation in place.

The Chair: — One of the difficulties there though, and correct me if I'm wrong on this, is that there's really no staff with this office at the present time. So staff are being utilized from the Ombudsman's office, from the LAS to try and put this together and to make some decisions on this, that there actually needs to be some staff put in place, assuming the legislation passes, to participate and develop this program.

[13:00]

Okay. Are there any further questions related to this topic? If not, again we will hold this in abeyance for now and come back to this matter later. So thank you very much for your presentations.

Okay. Item no. 5, the review of the 2014-2015 budget and motion to approve the budgetary and statutory expenditure estimates for the Office of the Ombudsman. I'd like to welcome Ms. Janet Mirwaldt to the table, and I would ask Ms. Mirwaldt to introduce her officials.

Office of the Ombudsman

Ms. Mirwaldt: — Thank you. Today joining me is Andrea . . .

Ms. Smandych: — Smandych.

Ms. Mirwaldt: — I know. Sorry. A bit nervous . . . who is our manager of administration and you met last year. She was here with Kevin, who probably did a much better job than I'm going to do, but we'll muddle through. Also with me today is Renee Gavigan who is our deputy ombudsman and who was here last year as well. And you obviously met Mr. Sykes who is our general counsel.

Just starting out, I thought I would talk about what to expect in our budget submission. I don't plan to go into great detail in the written submission but hit some of the highlights. But before I do that, as many of you know, Kevin Fenwick had left the Ombudsman's position in July, and I was appointed as acting. And I'll carry on until April 1st when Mary McFadyen will begin her appointment as our Provincial Ombudsman and our Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner. And we look very much forward to working with Ms. McFadyen. And what I'm presenting today is the budget that she will be implementing in 2014-2015.

But before I begin, on behalf of the staff of Ombudsman Saskatchewan, we would like to acknowledge and extend our sincere appreciation to Mr. Speaker and to the board for the support you've shown us over the last year and for all of your efforts in the recruitment of Ms. McFadyen. It was very much appreciated.

Taking on the acting role certainly has been a rewarding experience, and I also would like to thank you for that opportunity. But we've brought our colleagues and introduced them to you. They, along with Leila Dueck who's our communications director, makes up our leadership team. And certainly I wanted to point out, over the last several years in this

acting capacity, this truly has been a team effort with the leadership team and with all the staff of Ombudsman Saskatchewan to maintain our standards.

So just to move on, just in terms of the highlights of our proposal, there's three areas that I'll highlight, and then we can go into some detail as I go through the presentation. The first is that we are not requesting an increase in our budget beyond that which is required to maintain our existing positions and our level of service. Our request represents a status quo budget with the known inclusion of increases.

Second, you will see in the budget submission a reduction in funding, and that represents the one-time removal of funding that we received last year for the Saskatoon project that saw the relocation of the Ombudsman and the Children's Advocate's office, and that move is actually taking place at the end of this week. And again on behalf of the staff of Ombudsman Saskatchewan, we would certainly like to thank you for your support in that project.

Third, a third area that we will highlight and talk about as we go through is last year — I think for a number of years, but particularly last year — Mr. Fenwick spoke to you about the Regina shared space proposal. And that will see our office, along with the Privacy Commissioner, the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, the Advocate for Children and Youth, the Human Rights Commissioner, and in future the provincial lobbyist registrar share common office space.

We have been working very closely with our partners over the last little while and with Central Services, but unfortunately we are unable to predict the financial resources that are going to be required for the Regina shared space proposal in this budget proposal, and that most likely will necessitate a mid-year return to the board by us and our partners in the upcoming fiscal year. And when we return to the board, we hope to have a detailed financial plan for an in-year increase of funding. But again because we are also in the very beginning stages of this proposal, it's also difficult to determine time frame that is going to be associated with completing that project, and so that project may have financial implications that span more than one fiscal year.

In terms of our operation, as you well know, we've gone under . . . 2013 has been a time of change for Ombudsman Saskatchewan, and most notably we've experienced change in our leadership structure, obviously with the departure of Mr. Fenwick and with the arrival of Ms. McFadyen. But also in August of 2013, our long-serving deputy, Joni Sereda, who was our deputy in Saskatoon, had retired after many years of ombudsman service.

Some of these changes were expected; some were not; but most came a little bit quicker than we had anticipated. But because we were aware of the changes, in 2012 we began . . . We saw this both as an opportunity and a challenge to continue on with the work that we were doing in moving our service system from a geographical-based service system to a provincial program model. And historically we had provided services on a geographical-based model which in essence saw mirrored services in both Saskatoon and Regina, and we moved towards a provincial program model that saw programs delivered across

the province and cases assigned primarily based on the individuals' need, also in conjunction with their residence. We did so between 2009 and 2010.

In 2011 we undertook a lean initiative, as many others have, and reviewed our case management model and our policies and practices. And we found a number of efficiencies in that and made the required changes.

Then in 2012, because we were expecting change, the leadership team completed a review of our management structure to look to where we could find further efficiencies and reduce duplication and put our resources to where the demand for the resources were needed. And in September of 2013, we began a pilot project that saw us increase our resources available at our intake and early resolution programs. And we did so by repositioning and reallocating funds in our current, in our existing resources to increase our front-line presence with increasing our assistant ombudsman and complaint analyst positions. We're going to be evaluating those changes over 2014 and '15 again in a continuation to find more efficiencies and to meet our demand for service.

But over the last year, our work has continued. And we do our work primarily in three areas. One is responding to individual complaints. Second is own-motion or systemic reviews. And of course the third area that we provide services in is within our public education and communication program.

Our individual complaints, however, remain the core of our business and our first priority. These are concerns that are coming from members of the public about some aspect of services that they've received from government or a decision made by a government official either within a line ministry, an agency of government, or a publicly funded health entity. Again our priority has always been to resolve the individual complaint and to work with the parties to find resolution.

Each complaint is obviously going to be very different, and we have a menu of services that we provide. Sometimes that means we do formal investigations, where we do make recommendations. But more often than not, it means that we work with the parties to find doable and timely resolution to the complaints. We can do that through coaching, negotiations, mediation, or more often than not directing the individual to the right person inside the agency at the right time so they can find resolution as well on their own.

In terms of our case numbers, between 2007 and 2011 our numbers remained relatively constant and stable. In 2012 we saw an increase of approximately 300. At the same time, we engaged in a public education campaign. So we believe that that increase was as a result of increased awareness of our office. But over the last year, we've seen some decrease in our numbers but the numbers still remain higher than in previous years. Last year, within jurisdiction, we received 2,375 complaints. Outside of jurisdiction were 759, for a total of 3,134 individual complaints.

We have seen a slight increase to our out-of-jurisdiction calls. Those are calls where we don't have a mandate and they may be calls about concerns about the federal government or concerns about municipal policing, things that are not within our

mandate. Those calls, though less impactful, still require services because we simply don't tell people that they've got the wrong office. We're going to be working with them to get them to the right oversight body or agency that can help them.

In working with our individual complaints, our staff are working at full capacity. We've set standards, or had set standards, that our goal was to close 90 per cent of our cases within 90 days of receiving the complaint and 95 per cent of our cases within 180 days. In 2013 we exceeded these targets and we've completed 95 per cent of our files within 90 days and 98 per cent within 180 days. And we're pleased to report that 81 per cent of our complaints brought to our office are concluded within 30 days.

With respect to our core business or the public complaints part of our mandate, we are asking for the necessary funds to maintain the status quo within that program. Our core work, however, is going to be provided by individual staff and the vast majority of funds associated with our work is representative in salary dollars. And so what we are requesting are increases in funding there to cover the known adjustments.

We currently have three in-scope staff. The numbers are on page 10 of the presentation. And with the known increases there, we're looking at obviously the collective agreement increases of \$2,900. And our staff also receive annual increments and currently all of our staff, the three staff, are eligible for those increments. And we've calculated that amount of \$2,500, for a total of 5,400. The remaining staff are out of scope, which is also on page 10, and we're requesting the increases, the economic increases, also increases to the flexible benefit and performance pay to move out-of-scope within their pay range for a total salary increase of 59,600. Lumped together, the total that we're requesting is \$65,000.

In terms of, you know, obviously our goods and services, we're also asking for status quo within that area with the inclusion of known increases which is outlined on pages 11 through 13 in the proposal. Though they are known increases, I do appreciate that some of them are significant.

For the cost of doing business, we've used an estimate of 2.2 per cent, the consumer price index, for a total of 18,000. It should be noted that a number of our goods and services and expenses are shared or cost shared with the Advocate for Children and Youth. In Saskatoon we share an office, office equipment, furniture, information technology, the information management resources, and administrative support, backup resources, and office space. And that model was created in 1994 and certainly has created a number of efficiencies for us as well.

In Regina our office is home not only to the Ombudsman's staff but the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. And we provide administrative support to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and, of late, our legal counsel has provided support, some support and services to the lobbyist registrar, and those costs we've absorbed within our existing budget. So the total increase that we're requesting for ongoing goods and services is \$40,000.

Coupled with those, there's obviously the leased space. In Saskatoon, as I mentioned, we are moving into our new space

this week, and the cost of leasing the new space has increased, and Central Services estimates the new costs to be an additional 46,800 for 2014 and '15. It's important to note that \$67,000 was provided last year on a one-time basis to cover the expenses associated with double rent, the cost of leaving one space and moving to the next, and that occurred between May of 2013 to March 2014 when we officially vacated our old space. Our construction costs in association with that project are still being finalized, but we believe and anticipate they're on target with the approved budget that we received last year, and that was \$240,000.

[13:15]

In Regina, as I mentioned, our physical space is home both to the Ombudsman's staff and our staff who do public interest disclosure but also Mr. Barclay. And again we are looking to develop a shared space model with our partners, and we hope that . . . And we are working very closely with Central Services around that possibility. In the interim, we still need to rent the Regina space, and we are signing another lease and we've renewed our existing lease for another year at an additional cost of \$28,700.

We'll continue to work with Central Services and our partners over the next year to find new space and ensure that we find the most cost-effective and appropriate space for all the partners.

We also have a computer system, SIM [system information management], and with the move to the new space in Saskatoon, we're upgrading our computer lines to improve the rate of transmission between our Saskatoon and Regina office. The Ombudsman's office and the Advocate's office currently share the server, and that's located in Saskatoon. And from the server we obviously provide network services to our Regina office through SaskTel. In the last little while, we had experienced significant issues with the speed of transmission to Regina, and as a result we are upgrading our lines as part of the project. But we will experience additional ongoing expenses of approximately 13,600 per year for that upgrade.

In terms of the one-time only funding I mentioned that we were highlighting, in 2013-14 we received a significant investment of one-time only funding, which I think most of you are familiar with, in relation to the Saskatoon move. We also received \$60,000 of one-time only funding to look at the Regina shared space model. But as I said, we would be removing those costs from this request.

So in summary, for goods and services we are looking for \$40,000 on an annual basis and returning 300,000 that was provided on the one-time only basis, but requesting approval to return to the board to seek approval for one-time only funding for a new space in Regina that will include the co-location of a number of independent offices.

In terms of our other work that we do beyond own-motion, where we see a lot of our resources being . . . or the individual complaints where a lot of our resources are, we also do own-motion or own-initiated investigations. That's a second aspect of our work, and those we've called our systemic or major reviews. Typically these reviews have been initiated by the Ombudsman based on complaints that he has received and

are directed to reviewing administrative issues or problem areas in government that have been brought forward to us that affect a large group of people, and typically these result in recommendations.

This year we have not taken on any new systemic reviews, but we still have a very long waiting list, as Mr. Fenwick had mentioned last year. Those types of investigations do require more staff time and resources. They're crucial to the work of the office because what we recommend in the systemic change will affect many people and hopefully resolve the problem so people don't return. Much of the work is accomplished with our current staff complement, and we have one full-time staff who leads those reviews. But from time to time we require subject matter expertise, and we will seek that out, usually on a very short contractual basis of no more than three to six months. To date we believe our systemic reviews have been well received by government and outside of government. But as with our case complaints, we are asking again for status quo in that area.

The final area that we do work on is public education, fair practices training, and communication. Again we're not asking for any increase in funds in this area other than the mentioned salary, goods and services adjustments.

I think in previous years, Mr. Fenwick spoke about our fair practices training which is a two-day training workshop that we provide to government . . . to staff in government ministries, agencies, and health care entities. And these workshops are intended to shift government's focus away from solely, or usually a line person's focus, away from what to do when the Ombudsman calls to what to do so the Ombudsman doesn't call.

The fair practices training is a very important part of our work. Not only are we able to provide information to government agencies about administrative fairness and how we do what we do as the Ombudsman, but fair practices training has helped build a common language and an understanding of what it means to be fair when delivering a service. Through fair practices training, we believe we've been able to begin the conversation with government employees in a much different way and a much more proactive and positive way.

Although we do very little promotion for these workshops, we were fully booked last year. We trained over 400 participants and we are fully, well booked into already half of next year.

To address the demand for our training, we've reallocated resources using an existing position that was an assistant ombudsman position to create a fair practices training coordinator who not only coordinates our program and liaisons with government services and agencies, but ensures all of our material are up to date and reflect best practices.

And currently we are embarked on a project where we are revamping the fair practices training workbook to reflect what we've learned from government staff who've attended our training, and also recent advancements in administrative fairness. And that hopefully will be completed by March 31st.

But in addition to the fair practices training within Saskatchewan, we've also received requests outside of our

jurisdiction in other provinces and in Canada. We believe our workshops are not only an example of best practices in government services and decision making, but also acts as a model of public education and a proactive approach for parliamentary ombudsmen.

In 2013 we conducted workshops for our federal counterparts. We trained with the correctional investigator of Canada, the procurement Ombudsman, the veterans Ombudsman, the taxpayers Ombudsman, and the federal Ombudsman for victims of crime. And in April we will be presenting our fair practices training at the International Ombudsman Association, at their ninth annual conference.

But not only do we do this fair practices training within government services and working with government staff, but I think we also do a remarkable job in our efforts to provide information to the general public about what an ombudsman does and does not do, but more importantly about fairness.

Over the last year we've created information for specific populations in specific circumstances. For example, we've created information for residents in health care facilities. We've also created information directed towards women who are incarcerated in provincial correctional facilities. We've also used Facebook advertising and targeting specific populations and demographics, such as not only the general public but young adults, people who live outside of Regina and Saskatoon, in rural and smaller cities, and seniors.

Facebook advertising, we've found, has been very cost-effective and certainly has driven up a lot of our traffic on our website, as you can see. And certainly we've seen a great deal more contact through our website as a result.

But we also work with young people every year, and every year we attend the Student Leadership Conference and have developed a series of materials for teachers and students about the role of ombudsmen, and these materials fit into the curriculum in such subjects as social studies and law 30.

Beyond the Ombudsman work, we are also the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner, and in 2012-13 we completed our first year as the commissioner and tabled our first annual report in July. We also hosted in October 2013 the national conference of public interest disclosure commissioners from across Canada, and we hosted that in Regina. And as our work continues, we're fairly new at this but currently we are working on plans, a series of plans to increase awareness of our office within the civil service so people know about the commissioner, but more importantly so they know about the process that is allowed under legislation for civil servants who wish to discuss, either with their designated officer or with the commissioner, concerns that they may have in their workplace.

In terms of our budget and what we've done over the last year, we believe that we've continued to be fiscally responsible. We're working very hard to find efficiencies within our office and within our existing resources. We have some examples. Some are small; some are large. Certainly we've, in terms of hiring staff, we've been very strategic about doing that, and when that makes the most economic sense for us doing so. The others things we've done, some small, some large, but we've

reduced, for example, reading materials, journals, and that budget's been reduced by nearly \$7,000. And we also provide services in kind to other independent partners and certainly have been receiving of their support as well.

Almost all of our budget is salary and therefore we have little ability to find efficiencies within the staffing implications. However we are piloting the new structure and we hope to . . . That saw us reduce some supervisory duplication to increase our front-line services. And again we'll be continuing to evaluate that and hopefully find some more efficiencies.

But our non-salary costs are mostly things to do, this year, with rent. And again we work very closely with Central Services to be able, and Central Services does negotiate on our behalf. And again we are working with our independent partners as well. So thank you. That's it.

The Chair: — Okay. Thank you very much. I just want to point out that the legislation calls for the Ombudsman's office to support the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner's office, if they are held co-joined or in conjunction with the Ombudsman's office. That's why there's no separate budget for the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner.

Okay, any questions? Mr. McCall.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks very much, Madam Ombudsman, and you know, great job.

Ms. Mirwaldt: — Thank you.

Mr. McCall: — It's too bad, you know. Maybe there'll be an encore performance in the future, but you did fine. Anyway, I guess the question I have for you is it's always interesting to get status quo budgets. It's also interesting to get budgets with reduction talked about in the budgets. And I guess we'll discuss that later on, but again it would indicate a fairly precise stewarding of the resources that have been entrusted with the Office of the Ombudsman, and thank you for that.

I guess the specific question or questions I have concerns the type of complaints and those within the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman, those without. I guess for my own sort of edification, if you could tell me a bit about, if you could characterize overall the types of complaints received. Is there any one sort of direction from which they're coming, one dominating over the others, and if . . . I could follow up after that. But please.

Ms. Mirwaldt: — It's really never any one specific type of complaint, but what we do, but what we are receiving are complaints from certain sectors primarily more so than other sectors. And our numbers that we will be completing and in our annual report this year, the primary places where complaints come from this year was Social Services with 770 complaints. Corrections, which would be primarily provincially incarcerated inmates, they were around 647. Health, we did receive, because we have a mandate in Health, approximately 194. And then they start going, well obviously . . . Sorry, before Health would come the SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] and then the Crown corporations.

So we get them from sections of government services, and these are primarily with the two larger sections, which would be Social Services and Corrections. Those would be individuals who would be classified as vulnerable. They are receiving a benefit or they are incarcerated. And in Social Services they're receiving a benefit that there have been problems with or concerns about their benefits, and then we would become involved with respect to that. With provincially incarcerated inmates, their issues that they have, or complaints that they have with respect to staff . . . issues surrounding their incarceration, so somebody requesting a temporary absence to go on a visit, somebody being held in secure, and then we would move forward on those complaints as well.

[13:30]

Mr. McCall: — I guess I'm fairly well aware of the complaints that would come to the Office of the Ombudsman within your jurisdiction, but I was wondering if you could characterize those that are coming from outside of your jurisdiction.

Ms. Mirwaldt: — Outside the jurisdiction, primarily . . .

Mr. McCall: — It's a fairly significant number.

Ms. Mirwaldt: — It is a significant number.

Mr. McCall: — It's about one in four in terms of the complaints handled.

Ms. Mirwaldt: — It is a significant number and I think a lot of it has to do with the lack of oversight bodies, or I don't want to say advocacy, but bodies where the individual person could go in issues, for example, with the federal government. So it's often very difficult for the average person to know where to call when they have a concern with respect to the federal government. If there is a corresponding federal ombudsman, we definitely refer. For example on tax issues, we would refer off to the tax Ombudsman.

So the complaints are coming in from areas where it's either the federal government or municipal government but also consumers where they're having issues with their landlord but it wouldn't necessarily fall under *The Residential Tenancies Act*. Issues with respect to other consumers, problems that they may be having that they think the government body is connected to, but is not necessarily connected to and there isn't anybody else, or they don't believe that there is anybody else they know to go to. So when they call us, they're hoping that either we can take the complaint or at least we can tell them where to go. Some of the complaints we also receive are with respect to individuals who are concerned about services provided by a person who has a professional designation and is licensed under a professional association, and those calls would be moved off to them.

So they cover a wide variety. But how I would categorize them, it's either an area where it is provided by a government service, federal government service, but they don't know where to go — the complainant doesn't know the oversight body in the federal government service — or a service that they believe government has been involved in but when you talk to them, government actually hasn't been involved.

Mr. McCall: — So the preponderance would be from other levels of government and with those would it be the feds would be the greater? Or the municipalities?

Ms. Mirwaldt: — Feds.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. And the majority of the outside-of-jurisdiction complaints originating from the feds? Or how is that?

Ms. Mirwaldt: — What we're seeing is that it's a smattering, but primarily it's with the federal government at this point in time.

Mr. McCall: — One thing that I'm glad to see the office doing is the targeted communication efforts towards distinct populations and that it's a good, proactive way to do the work of the office. But is there work that is done with the federal government to flag different areas where these external-to-jurisdiction complaints are popping up? And again it accounted for 24 per cent of the complaints in the last year under consideration here today, so it's a significant number. Is there something proactive being done with the federal government to say, you know, look there's a job that that level of government needs to be doing instead of riding on your good coattails?

Ms. Mirwaldt: — We've done a couple of things. One is we've certainly gotten to know our federal counterparts. So for example if it's a concern with a federally incarcerated inmate, then we will refer off to our federal counterparts. Recently we've over the last several years come to know the federal tax Ombudsman and will refer people off. Those bodies have begun their own efforts to reach out to people. Just this week there's a webinar for individuals who want to know more about the federal tax Ombudsman. We also work with our colleagues across Canada to talk about those issues and if there are things that other people are doing, then we certainly try to bring that information to the table. But with direct communication with the federal government between our office and, say, a federal government ministry, no, we don't have that.

Mr. McCall: — Just one last question — and I thank my colleagues for the length I've gone on here — but are there other jurisdictions that would seem to be taking a more proactive stance with the federal partner? And have they had any sort of results worth contemplating?

Ms. Mirwaldt: — At a provincial level?

Mr. McCall: — Yes.

Ms. Mirwaldt: — Not to my knowledge, but certainly our colleagues at the federal level I'm assuming would be taking a very proactive approach in trying to get their information out to the average citizen.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: — Ms. Draude.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you very much, and I also appreciate your very professional presentation. It was concise. It

was great. Thank you.

I'm going to follow up a little bit on my colleague's direction, talking about the federal government. And I want to know if the federal government, do they ever pay for the fact that you do the fair practice training? Does the federal government pay the office for the fair practice training that you're doing?

Ms. Mirwaldt: — When we trained our federal counterparts, those were independent officers, and they didn't pay for it. They didn't pay for my time. They paid for the training, though. When we were in Ottawa, they covered all our costs — so the training room, our travel costs, our accommodation costs, and our meal costs. So there is . . . We don't charge, but in kind they cover the costs associated with bringing trainers out and the training.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — I still think they're getting a very good deal because obviously you're doing a great job. So they're getting the advantage of having someone do this. Also with the professional associations, the work that you're doing with them, does anyone else pay for your services?

Ms. Mirwaldt: — Our work that we do with them, if somebody has a complaint about a professional, a person designated under a professional association, it's a referral there. They also refer to us when they have issues, so it's a . . . There wouldn't be a necessity for an exchange of costs, and we certainly are aware of those associations and do work closely with their complaints . . . for lack of a better word — I'm sure they have a different word — their complaints analyst when moving complaints back and forth.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — When you're sharing space in the next year, do you share things like the cost of photocopiers and that type of thing?

Ms. Mirwaldt: — Certainly that would be something that the partners will talk about. At this point we're talking about sharing common space, so there would be . . . For example, one of the things that we had envisioned is that we would obviously have a shared training space. Certainly with respect to photocopiers, we would enter into those conversations with our partners, but it hasn't reached that point. But certainly from my perspective, it would be good common sense to look for those efficiencies.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you. I appreciate those words. With the public interest disclosure, was there any claims brought forward this year?

Ms. Mirwaldt: — I'm sorry?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — With the public interest disclosure, was there anything brought forward this year?

Ms. Mirwaldt: — In terms of our numbers?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Cases, claims, for example.

Ms. Mirwaldt: — We're very similar to other provinces. Our numbers remain constant. So last year we had about 15 cases, and I think those cases remain constant. So our numbers are not

increasing with respect to public interest disclosure at this point.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Okay. And if I may have one more?

The Chair: — Go ahead.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — I know I'm looking at the comparisons or the number of cases over the last number of years, and there's an increase. So is the cost per case . . . And I'm not sure how you do that. It's probably not even a fair way to do it. But it looks like nothing . . . It hasn't really changed since 2010. The only thing that I saw had quite an increase was the contractual services. Can you give me an idea of who you contract with or what work?

Ms. Mirwaldt: — That increase is mainly because of the increase in our rent, and it's just how we've categorized that piece so it shows up in there. And year over year, the last two years, we've had an increase in our lease space in both Saskatoon and Regina, hence the increase.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Okay. Any other questions? Any questions related to the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner at all? If not, then we will hold this decision in abeyance for the committee's discussions later. And thank you very much for your very professional and well done presentation.

Ms. Mirwaldt: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Okay. By request, we will take a short 10-minute recess and then we will come back. So we'll reconvene at 10 to 2.

[The board recessed for a period of time.]

The Chair: — Okay. I would like to call the Board of Internal Economy back into session and welcome the Advocate for Children and Youth, Mr. Pringle, to the table. And, Mr. Pringle, if you would like to introduce the staff that you have present and do your presentation, please.

Advocate for Children and Youth

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and board members. Thanks for the opportunity to be here and Happy New Year. With me is Bernie Rodier, our director of administration or, as I call her, my right arm, the person who keeps the office functioning in a very efficient manner. And it's always an honour to come here with Bernie, and we certainly appreciate the opportunity.

And I want to say at the outset, Mr. Speaker, and board members that we appreciate the support to our office and we also appreciate your interest in the work that we're doing. And as was just highlighted by Ms. Mirwaldt, we're looking forward to moving into our new space which you've been kind of been supporting us along the way for about a year and half. So we're moving in at the end of this week and really looking forward to it. So thanks for your support around that, and come and visit us. We'd love to see you again.

Anyway also I want to, if I could just take a moment, to thank Mr. Putz and the legislative staff for the ongoing support and guidance and work and the independent officer colleagues for the co-operation. You know, we meet on a regular basis and it's good to discuss kind of common issues and support each other and meet with, you know, the Clerk and the Law Clerk. And that's just kind of a nice support group.

And also I want to acknowledge our professional, dedicated staff for the hard work that they do and the sacrifices that . . . They're away from their families a lot because, as you know, we provide an outreach advocacy service. And also to the staff of the ministries of government for co-operation, and the ministers, the ministries and the community agencies who serve children and youth, because it's about all of us working together to ensure that our children are safe and protected and have the opportunities that they have a right to. So it's about supporting our children.

Mr. Speaker and board members, I think it's pretty clear from the news last week that there's a growing public expectation around the services to make sure children are safe, and also there's a public expectation that we continue to improve our accountability around that. And I put myself in that category for sure, to ensure that again our children are safe and their quality of life is enhanced, and especially, if I can say too, with regard to children who are at risk. And this is not easy work; there are lots of complex issues. But it's a collective challenge that we all bear some responsibility for, and I know that you recognize that.

Of course an important part of our work is the appropriate and proper oversight of the child- and youth-serving systems, whether in government or government-funded agencies, health agencies or so on. And this is the essence of my role, as I see it. Certainly a primary role is to assist government to deliver high-quality public services to children and youth in Saskatchewan.

It certainly is my expectation that we resolve issues in a non-controversial manner, which happens the vast majority of times, because we build relationships with organizations and ministries of government and community agencies. And so we certainly try, strive to do that in a non-controversial way, a respectful way, and also stand firm in our resolve though when this is necessary on issues that are important, as we see it.

I want to say at the outset that clearly in my opinion, and we'll talk more about this, that we are under-resourced to be able to perform our accountability in a way that, in my view, is acceptable. And so we need some additional support from the legislature. We're charged with ensuring that the rights of children and youth are protected and enhanced and also that we're a voice for those who are unable to speak for themselves. We take this mandate that you have given us, you've entrusted in us, very seriously and we endeavour to ensure that our services are more equitable across the province and across the sectors.

I will not talk in great detail about the specific work that we do that is in the budget request. But certainly you're aware of the early resolution desk where we get around 1,600 calls in the last year. Again a number of those are resolved very quickly and

some are, I would say more in the last year or so actually, have become more involved cases. And because of our short-staff in the advocacy area, our ERA [early resolution advocacy] desk is taking cases further than they used to in the past because there's nowhere else to send them.

Of course we have our individual and systemic advocacy program. Our investigations have several components and just for a moment there . . . Those are very time-consuming, and the process is that when there's a critical injury or a death of a child, either with a government ministry or with the First Nations agencies, then we have the opportunity to look at the coroner's report, the report from the ministry involved or the agency, and any police records. And then we look to see if there, in our case review, if there are any outstanding questions that need to be addressed, or if we believe that there are some parts of the investigation we do not have confidence in, we then have the authority to proceed with a full investigation.

And I would say as well that we have been working with the ministries of Social Services and Corrections and really the coroner to look at . . . We went through the lean exercise to try and streamline those processes, but make sure they're still accountable and tighten the timelines so that there'll be more timely, I guess, questions that are answered. Certainly when we get those reviews and those investigations from the ministries, we also look at what response has been taken to make corrections, and we're increasingly pleased that the responses are taken by the time we get the information. So what I would say is we've worked together on the investigation frameworks within the ministries, which I also see as a part of working together.

In regard to investigations, just to give you a bit of an update on the two major ones that we got some additional funding for, which we appreciate, those will be fully concluded by the end of this fiscal year. I mean by the end of the . . . Pardon me. Yes, the end of March. Yes, the end of the fiscal year. And we'll be reporting accordingly on those. So we do have enough resources to complete those.

[14:00]

Also our public education and communication outreach role to take out to the province the awareness of the rights of children in our province under our legislation and really under the MOA [memorandum of agreement] from the UN [United Nations] Convention on the Rights of the Child. And so we've done a lot of outreach, some 72 visits and presentations just to First Nations agencies alone in addition to the ongoing communication with the ministries. It used to primarily be the Ministry of Social Services. Now it's expanded significantly to the Ministry of Corrections, also the Ministry of Justice around, you know, access to equal justice, the concerns we have about the way the court is working in family service matters, and also the way the court is working — or not working, in our view — in relation to children who are sexually abused. So we have significant work there.

And also I'll tell you right at the outset here that with our expanded mandate into health care — as you recall we did not ask for additional resources at the time, and we did not get additional resources — but I've got significant questions I

would say about the need for some advocacy work and also some oversight in health care. And again we're taking steps to try and have a constructive relationship with the ministry and the health regions in the same way I hope that we've operated, at least in post-2011, generally with the ministries.

You'll recall last year I joked about going to my hometown of Carnduff, out near Estevan, and on National Child Day we did that last year, Estevan and Weyburn, and as we should. But this year on Canada national day — or last year, pardon me — in October, our outreach expanded to Moose Jaw, to Swift Current, Prince Albert, Sturgeon Lake. And so we kind of doubled our ability to go out.

And again it's not just us going out, with inviting community groups to come together who are serving children, sometimes there are organizations who come together who actually haven't come together before in the same way that they did. So we actually play a facilitative role as well to bring groups together, although we don't need to come from out of town to do that. It's just a matter that that way they also see some potential for our office in terms of ongoing coordination of service to children and youth.

Some of the reasons for the requests that we make, which is significant — I'll confess to that and I would certainly anticipate some questions around that — but some of those are in the report. I want to say clearly that, in our view and there are many examples of this, effective advocacy services are preventive. In other words, our advocacy work through and our investigation work through critical injuries, we're able to make corrections to system issues before a child dies. So yes, we'd like not to have critical injuries as well, but we certainly try to make corrections on any injuries that occur too.

So I want to stress that point, that good advocacy is preventive and allows us to get to issues early. And I'll give one example that I think is probably the most important in terms of ensuring, I hope, if we manage it properly with the Ministry of Social Services and any community agencies, is a person of sufficient interest program, whereby there's been close co-operation with the Ministry of Social Services.

As members might recall, and you, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chair, one child died in the last year in a person of sufficient interest's out-of-home placement, which is someone who's interested in the child — could be a friend, could be a . . . usually a family member, who steps forth to take a child, which is helping significantly to reduce the number of children coming into care, in addition to some preventative initiatives that are very . . . Some are promising practices there too.

But we're very concerned about the fact that those children were in care, would go to a person of sufficient interest, which makes a lot of sense, but there wouldn't be a consistent home study to ensure that . . . Just because someone's a grandpa, as we know, it doesn't mean the child is going to be safe. We found that out last year.

And so it's important that a proper home study be done on that situation and that the preparation and the visits occur in such a way that the ministry knows that children are safe, and then the ongoing support, and not only financial support, but the support

to ensure the child is doing well. And I had been quoted as saying that if we don't manage this carefully, this could be a next major crisis. But I believe that we are, we are getting a handle on it.

And to make a long story short, Mr. Chair, and members, the situation now is that every child under five has been physically seen, which is 101 of children protection, to see the child, make sure the child is safe. Secondly there is now a contract that's been agreed to — we've signed it off; we appreciate the opportunity to be consulted on that — where it spells out the obligations of the parents, the expectations of the new parents and the ministry in terms of the kind of support provided by the ministry, and of course has the court's sanction. So the court has to be satisfied that this is a sound plan.

And so I think that that came about because of a concern by the Minister of Social Services and myself that this is problematic; good idea, but the placements were problematic without significant improvements. And we did a joint review of that program and, just to assure members here, the independence of our office was part of the developing a framework that gave us that independence to ensure that we can play an oversight role. And so that's an example of, I would say, advocacy work, detecting there was a problem. And that will have the benefit of ensuring that literally hundreds of children are safe. I need to stress that. I know the Minister of Social Services knows that. Hundreds of children will be safe. That's one example of the value of working together and having a good advocacy service.

Also a significant demand, but it's a good demand, a significant demand highlighted in our report or request, are the number of areas we're being asked to engage in, in terms of playing a key role, whether policy or service related — again, being conscious of our independence. And there's 10 or 12 of those areas that are government initiatives to support children that we have, we're playing a unique role related to the oversight. Again I stress the expanded mandate of health care and the significant piece of work there.

In investigations, you know, as I say, we do a significant amount of work there. And I'm concerned about the investigations pending that need to be dealt with. They're very time-consuming. They've got to be done thoroughly, objectively. We have to get to the issues. What are the findings? Make recommendations formally to the deputy ministers and the ministry and then formalize those, but monitor implementation of those recommendations because again it's about life and death of children because they usually come about because a child is critically injured or deceased.

And I guess my primary point here I'd like to make is that I was encouraged by this committee, I was encouraged by those who hired me to maintain the independence of the office absolutely first and foremost, but to roll up our sleeves and be part of the solutions rather than just to critique government services, which we're also trying to do.

But I would say that the role was much more narrow prior to 2011, to oversee and monitor government services to children and youth. And post-2011 we've expanded to greater engagement and co-operation to resolve complex issues in child welfare and also been more active in the, say, the child and

youth agenda or the children and family agenda, the child welfare transformation. We're being asked to play a significant role in a bullying strategy, which I am unable to do without additional support. I can say that right now, although we have to make an effort. But that's going to be tough.

Also we've been working already quite significantly with the Ministry of Health, and I just spent two hours myself recently with the commissioner and the commission on how to try and shape services around youth addictions and mental health, children's mental health. Again a significant role for us there in terms of those networks in the province. Also the child and family services legislation — I highlight that in the report — and the Hub model.

I want to say with expansion of the Hub model and the COR [centre of responsibility] areas around the Hubs or including the Hubs, that is becoming a significant issue for us because there are a number of ethical questions there. There are a number of privacy rights versus a risk to children. And we're being asked by Corrections to come in, well not only Corrections but really Social Services, because those started out as models to prevent youth, I guess delinquent youth, in kind of as a crime prevention strategy. And it still is. But significantly more and more of those referrals to the Hub models are going to or coming from Social Services around families that are vulnerable and at great risk.

And so you know, there's been ongoing, I think, conversations with the Privacy Commissioner, both by the ministries and also by our office. And there are some critical dilemmas there that need to be addressed, privacy versus or related to the risk to children or youth if some of the information isn't shared. And that isn't an easy question but again, with the expansion, we're being asked to play a role there, and we just need to move there.

Also there is issues related to legal representation for children. We're counting on that being approved in the provincial budget. But there's a significant role for us in terms of how to shape that service and to provide the training on child rights and the ongoing support, and working with wherever that's lodged. So that's a significant initiative.

So these are all good things, but also I'll just mention one more. There's a big agenda in relation to, as we know from the report in December, in relation to interprovincial transfers to ensure that children are safe when they come in here from another province or to ensure children are safe when they go from here to another province. And there are written protocols around the requirements to ensure those children are safe between jurisdictions.

So those are some of the things that I, some of the engagements that I believe . . . We're not just sitting back to monitor. We're trying to shape those in terms of the rights-based framework as they unfold.

I also want to highlight to you, Mr. Chair, and the board the significant investment in relation to working with the First Nations agencies because we — and the tribal council — because we have a dual child welfare system, as we all know. It's complicated. There are lots of issues to address and as a significant and ongoing piece of work for our office to . . .

And I'm happy to say that, say this publicly, that we are welcome in places like La Ronge and Montreal Lake and Black Lake and places, areas that weren't sure about our role and whether we had jurisdiction. But we're trying to keep the focus on the children, along with the ministry and the agencies, and so that's an embracing. It just shows we're all putting children first. But it didn't happen by itself. It happened deliberately because of relationship building by our staff who reach out, and then that takes time.

So I will say to you, we're beyond the max, if you will. We cannot sustain this expanded work that we're doing, but I do not want to move back to a narrower role, narrower focus. I just don't think that's the right way to go. And I just appeal to you that . . . I mean we have no choice but to move into health care in a significant way. And when this committee, when this board provided four positions to the Ombudsman, I personally thought that was a great decision. We now are responsible for the oversight of all young people under the age of 18, and we clearly need significant support in order to do that work.

[14:15]

So this request is what we believe is required after careful analysis of our demands and the efficiencies and the economies and our capacity to respond. So for us . . . I'll say too that the full-time equivalents are very important because a lot of our work is about building relationships. You don't do that overnight or you don't just, you don't take someone who . . . I mean there are lots of natural advocates working for children and youth. That's absolutely for sure. But there's a certain lens that requires some time from our office to understand.

And also in the investigations, stakes are high in the investigations. The child is deceased. It's very important that we tell that story clearly as the legacy of that child and make sure changes are recommended so that won't happen again, if possible. You can never say never, it's a human endeavour, but that's our goal. I know that's a goal of all government agencies and our office and all committee agencies. But we work with the agencies and the ministries, and a lot of it is about trust and co-operation. And also it's very difficult to attract qualified people from ministries and other agencies when the positions are temporary.

So moving to the budget here, the assumptions we've used in the proposal, the economic adjustment from the Ministry of Finance. Secondly, the performance pay for out-of-scope employees, the non-personal finance forecasting percentages, and I'm going to say this with a presumption — it's a large presumption — but hoping that there's some way that the one-time adjustment for leasehold improvements from last year could be annualized.

Our status quo request, as one option, is a 3 per cent increase. But that isn't our request. And similar to the Ombudsman's presentation, only about 5 per cent of that is even discretionary.

If the board saw fit to annualize our request from our budget from last year, then we would be looking at a 12.8 per cent increase. We clearly need two, in our view, two advocates in health, one additional advocate for the North, an advocate to take on those other engagements like bullying, anti-bullying,

and so on, one investigator to clear off the backlog and to try and keep up, and an admin support person.

So just in closing here, our budget request for the 2014-15 year, the Advocate for Children and Youth is requesting 2.801 million in budget funding. The amount includes 2.579 million in budgetary and 222,000 in statutory funding. This request reflects an overall increase of 12.81 per cent, given the assumptions we've made, that is, over the 2013-14 budget.

Within the 2014-15 budget request, the following program pressures are being requested totalling \$678,000: one, status quo increase costs totalling \$65,000, made up of 44,000 budgetary for personal related to the COLA [cost-of-living adjustment], 1.25 per cent plus increments and performance pay; including also 9,000 budgetary non-personal services or 2.2 per cent CPI [consumer price index]; and 12,000 statutory personal services or 5 per cent. Five per cent was an increase over 2013-14. And secondly, a new increased cost as a result of programming pressures totalling \$613,000, made up of 550,000 budgetary personal services, that is six FTEs [full-time equivalent], and 63,000 budgetary non-personal services — travel, equipment, phones, etc.

In 2013-14, as I say, 360,000 was provided as one-term funding for office renovations. The Advocate for Children and Youth appreciates that and is requesting that this one-time funding be redirected to help offset the workload demands anticipated for 2014-2015.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, board members, and I know there'll be some questions.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Pringle. Are there any questions from the members? Ms. Draude. Excuse me, Ms. Eagles. Sorry. I was looking at June, but I saw . . .

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Pringle. I just have a couple of questions or maybe one question regarding two different areas you touched on, and it was shared information and also the rights of the child. And I mean children have the right to be loved. They have the right to be treated with respect, fed, educated, make sure they have adequate health care, but that is also a parental responsibility. And I guess my question is, what happens when a parent is dealing with a child that is perhaps rebellious or may be rebellious because of a mental health issue? Do the child's rights trump the parental responsibilities in a situation like that? And I'm just going to add before you respond, I'm just going to add that that's where I think shared information would come in if it was, you know, if different . . . the police had access to Social Services and Health and things like that. And I await your response.

Mr. Pringle: — Well in terms of the way I look at this is that the safety of the child trumps everything. Whether a child is at home or whether a child is in care or any other care placement, the safety trumps everything. And of course I know we'd all agree with that, but it's not that easy.

Certainly I'm personally very proud of the efforts that the Ministry of Social Services has taken to develop a new risk assessment tool. Increasingly some of the First Nations agencies

are buying into that as they feel that it's got some . . . It's cultural neutral, if that's the way to put it. I don't know if that's the right way to put it. And we have personally, I have personally met with the person from the States who's working with the ministry, last week actually, on how that's going and his views around that.

But I think a couple of things, to be more specific with your question, one is, there is a significant need in this province for more parenting services and more parenting training, more parenting counselling. And so secondly, there is a recognition that there's a significant need — and there is — for more effective mental health services and addiction services for everyone, but certainly in this case for children and youth. And frankly I don't think parents necessarily know where to go for counselling services. You know, I've been a social worker in the northern communities and somehow you're seen as a counsellor, a marriage counsellor. I'm not a marriage counsellor. I can listen, but whether I make the appropriate, timely interventions or suggestions, that's questionable. I've been in that role.

So I think that parents, first and foremost, have responsibility for their children — absolutely. I think that's pretty clear, and so that's the way it should be. I think there are a lot of pressures today that put families at risk and vulnerable. And I think the focus is on making sure that where those families are vulnerable, that the systems find a way to get support. And this was the essence of the child welfare review, the very first recommendation, to have strong prevention support training for those families who need it, and get that service to families earlier before the Ministry of Social Services has to pick up the pieces. It's too late by then, often.

And so I think that there are a number of initiatives to some pilot projects and specific initiatives that are actually doing that, and we need to accelerate that. But it's kind of a philosophical question as well. Parents are responsible for their children, but it's all connected, right? Unless we are more effective and there is some significant improvement, unless we're more effective at ensuring that we find a way to get to moms who are pregnant to ensure that they're not drinking and those children . . . Because we know it's a cause and effect, right? We know. So that's one area that there's a . . . It's not always so clear about the cause and effect, but it clearly is there. And so where those children are born to parents and there's FASD [fetal alcohol spectrum disorder] or autism or other challenges, those parents need support soon.

There's lots of parenting stuff comes to our attention. And again there may be services in some areas but they're not consistent around the province because that's tough to do, but it's something we need to do.

If one goes to court, family services court which I have done, and you, just for example you go some morning here in Regina, there might be 25 family service cases that come before the judge. I can tell you right now half those will be adjourned for lots of different reasons including if the parents haven't got legal representation yet or somebody doesn't come or whatever. So half those are adjourned, which keeps children in limbo even longer. The other half, the courts are making decisions that they need to make given the choices that I guess that the judge feels

are available to him or her. But there's not very much relationship to the services that are available in the community that the courts are making.

So if someone has, a parent has to get counselling support, parenting support, has to get into an addictions program, has to get mental health treatment, has to get better housing, a lot of parents simply give up because they don't know where to start. So if there's no spaces available in an addictions centre but one of the conditions to keep your children and get them back is you have to go through the addictions program, then it's a challenge. Right?

So that's why again one of the recommendations of the child welfare review was to make the court work better for families and children, child welfare. And it's not working very well for children and their families, in our view. And so I hope somewhere in there I answered your question. But it's complex. Right?

But as first and foremost, parents are responsible for their children. But when they're not able to or don't, when the children are at risk, whether it's children or youth, especially youth, then they come to the attention of the other systems that tend to be the justice systems. And we have far too many young people with FASD in our correctional centres.

The Chair: — Any other questions? Okay. If there are no other questions then I have been requested that we move in camera for a few minutes with Mr. Pringle. If someone would like to move that we move in camera. Mr. Harrison. Seconder? Mr. McCall. All in favour? We will move in camera at 2:27 and we will inform you as we come out. Thank you very much.

[The board continued in camera from 14:27 until 14:55.]

The Chair: — Committee, if we can, we will go back into session at 2:55. Are there any further questions for Mr. Pringle? If not, then thank you, Mr. Pringle, for coming forward. We will hold the decision, for now, for consideration by the committee.

Would someone move then that we take a half-hour recess, and we'll reconvene at 25 after 3. Someone move that? Ms. Draude, seconded by Mr. Harrison. All in favour? We will recess until 3:25.

[The board recessed from 14:57 until 15:26.]

The Chair: — I would like to call the meeting back to order. With us at this time we have Mr. Michael Boda, the Chief Electoral Officer. Michael, if you would care to, would you introduce your staff and make your presentation, please?

Office of the Chief Electoral Officer

Mr. Boda: — Sure. I have with me today Jennifer Colin. She's our deputy chief electoral officer and chief financial officer for corporate services and electoral finance. Tim Kydd has also joined us today; he's senior director for outreach and policy. Would you like me to go ahead?

The Chair: — Yes.

Mr. Boda: — Okay. Well it's a pleasure to be with you today. Happy New Year to you.

[15:30]

Over the past year, my colleagues and I have met with you on a number of occasions to discuss developments at Elections Saskatchewan. We've had an opportunity to discuss with you the importance of establishing new facilities for administering provincial electoral events. We've met to recommend that a permanent register of voters be established. We've discussed with you the genuine progress that has been made with respect to human resource policies and procedures. And we've framed for you specific changes to electoral legislation that is needed as we prepare for the upcoming 28th general election.

In many ways it has been a groundbreaking year for Elections Saskatchewan as an institution, a year in which we've laid the foundations for a very different kind of approach to conducting electoral events. Over the past year, we've had the opportunity to consider the mandate for change begun with your assignment to David Hamilton to consider how Elections Saskatchewan might become a modern election management body that can more effectively and efficiently serve the people of Saskatchewan.

In budget estimates laid before you last February, I took the opportunity to consider Mr. Hamilton's recommendations and to revisit what I had learned from listening to electoral stakeholders across the province since my arrival. With these two things in mind, I laid out the beginnings of a path for renewal for Elections Saskatchewan, a path that has and will continue to focus on professionalizing Saskatchewan's election management body, on improving the delivery of electoral events, and on renewing and emphasizing democratic stewardship within the province. This framework has offered directional guidance to the institution over the past budget year, but it's also proven foundational to the discussions our leadership team has had over the last fiscal year with respect to our institution's mandate and vision, role and mission, values, and our strategic goals.

This past fall our management team turned its focus to establishing a strategic plan for the 2014 to 2016 period, offering a more detailed approach to navigating the institution's path for renewal. And this past week we distributed copies of the plan, and I'm told that you have a copy in your package. Is that right?

Mention of our strategic plan leads me to talk about the approach we've taken in developing the fiscal year 2014-15 budget. First I'd like to describe a key characteristic of this budget that has come about as a result of some very heavy lifting over the course of the past fiscal year. Last February I described our intention to pursue a fundamental shift in Election Saskatchewan's budgeting methodology. The work of an election management body differs from most other public service organizations in that it operates on a four-year, not a one-year cycle. While EMBs [election management body] track annually some ongoing costs for administration such as salaries for permanent staff, rental of space, and telephone, costs related to the conduct of electoral events — so boundary redistribution, the general election, or other events — cannot be recorded in this way because they're implemented over a longer cycle.

While ongoing administrative costs remain relatively constant from year to year, event-related funding, in a best-practice context, crescendoes over the course of the electoral cycle. The provincial boundary redistribution for example, begun early in 2012 with the work of the Boundary Commission, will continue through the coming fiscal year with the delivery of new boundary maps for political parties, after which costs will diminish until the next electoral cycle when poll boundaries will be revisited. An approach that focuses on both ongoing administration costs and event-related costs has been central to the development of this budget not only because it allows for a provision of sufficient resources to run the organization over the entire electoral cycle but because it helps us to align our budget with a long-term plan for the institution.

We have been very intentional in ensuring that the 2014-15 budget includes spending that is consistent with that strategic plan for 2014, '15, and '16. This plan represents a new way of thinking for Elections Saskatchewan as we will return to it annually to ensure its continued relevance and in order to link its objectives to our annual budget.

Our strategic plan offers a new vision for the institution to be widely recognized as a professional, service-oriented, and innovated election management body; a new role and mission to serve democracy in Saskatchewan by ensuring the impartial and professional delivery of provincial electoral events; and provides six core values that will guide our actions and decisions — independence, impartiality, professionalism, accountability, innovation, and service orientation.

Now if you turn to page 6 of the estimates, you will see six strategic goals that are to be achieved over the next three years as part of our strategic plan. These six goals frame our budget priorities for 2014-15, and I'll return to discuss that further in a few minutes.

But first we'd like to offer some insight into the budget figures that are part of the coming year's budget. You might look at table 1 on page 8 of the estimates document to begin. Elections Saskatchewan's estimates for FY [fiscal year] 2014-15 are \$5.4 million, which represents an overall increase of \$1.6 million over last year's budget.

Table 1 shows the overall split between ongoing administrative expenses and event-related costs along with the variance from last year's budget. In terms of ongoing administration, we've estimated a slight increase of 0.61 per cent. With respect to event-related costs, we've budgeted just under a 160 per cent increase from last year. Overall the increase from 3.8 to 5.4 million constitutes a 42 per cent increase from last year.

On page 8, chart 1 illustrates how the coming fiscal year is to unfold, with ongoing administrative costs remaining relatively constant throughout the year and event-related spending seeing a sharper increase in the last two quarters of the year as we enter the one-year window for the general election.

At this point I'll turn the narrative over to Ms. Colin who will offer greater details with respect to the breakdown of the budget and the assumptions that are behind our estimates.

Ms. Colin: — Thank you. It is my pleasure to be here today to present a budget that marks a genuine shift in the way that Elections Saskatchewan has approached budgeting in the past. As Dr. Boda has described, we've worked very hard over the course of the last fiscal year to reform our approach to budgeting in a way that is closely aligned with electoral management best practice. We have also applied financial management and budget development best practices, and the result is a budget that is linked to our strategic plan that is realistic and comprehensive and allows for greater accountability and transparency. While I've only recently joined Elections Saskatchewan, my nearly two decades of experience in financial management tells we are definitely moving in the right direction.

But before I get into the details of the budget, I'd like to begin by outlining the basic assumptions that we've used to generate our estimates. First, while the budget does assume that we will increase rent costs for facilities beginning on April 1st, 2014, it does not include costs for the relocation, renovations, and furniture purchases associated with the new head office facilities as these costs are still being refined.

Second, the budget assumes that a permanent register of voters will not be a component in our preparations for the upcoming general election.

Third, the budget assumes at present that no further changes will be made to election legislation, although we appreciate this is a distinct possibility.

And finally, as required by our current legislation, the budget assumes that the 28th general election will be held on November 2nd, 2015 and that a full enumeration will be conducted. Should circumstances change with respect to any of these assumptions, Elections Saskatchewan will prepare and submit a supplementary budget.

So given these assumptions, I would like to first look a bit more closely at the budget for our ongoing administration. On page 16 of our estimates document, table 2 offers a breakdown of this part of the budget. The total budget for ongoing administration for the 2014-15 fiscal year is \$2.8 million, which represents a modest \$17,000 increase from the previous year's administration budget. The most significant variance in this administration budget is a result of the increased rent related to Elections Saskatchewan's planned relocation. The increased rent is offset somewhat by a reduction in the personal services category. This reduction is due to a one-time severance payout that was budgeted for in the 2013-14 budget year. The overall increase then for ongoing administration is less than 1 per cent over the 2013-14 budget when increased rent for facilities is included in our budget.

At the top of page 17 however, table 3 shows that ongoing administration costs would have actually decreased by 7 per cent if rental increases were excluded. We are very pleased that we have been able to effectively reduce our administrative costs for the upcoming year, and we will continue to focus on finding efficiencies and savings in our administration budget.

Turning to the top of page 18 of the estimates document, table 4 shows Elections Saskatchewan's event-related budget for the

2014-15 fiscal year at \$2.6 million, which is 1.6 million more than the '13-14 event-related budget.

Budget categories with the most significant variances include contractual services and communications and advertising. The increase in the contractual services category is due primarily to initiatives being undertaken to upgrade and enhance the institution's hardware and software as well as an investment in updating the website.

The increase in the communication and advertising budget is primarily due to increased spending on training materials and guides for election workers, political parties, and candidates as well as the development of election-related materials being undertaken towards the end of the fiscal year.

The total event budget of \$2.6 million has been allocated among three distinct electoral event components: boundary redistribution, the 2015 general election enumeration, and the 2015 general election itself. The expenditure budget for these three event components includes resource costs as well as supply and material costs for the various activities being undertaken in the 2014-15 fiscal year.

As we've begun to reform our approach to establishing estimates, applying a zero-based approach to budgeting for electoral events has allowed us to not only develop financial budgets but resourcing budgets as well.

On page 19, for example, chart no. 2 demonstrates the estimated resource effort in man-hours that will be required to carry out all activities throughout the 2014-15 fiscal year. It also shows that the effort intensifies in the last quarter of the 2014-15 year with respect to our preparations for the 28th general election. This upward trend will continue through the 2015-16 fiscal year before decreasing sharply about five or six months after the general election.

With this understanding of the numbers behind the budget, I'll turn things back to Dr. Boda who will provide some background and the priorities that have been established for the 2014-15 fiscal year.

Mr. Boda: — All right. In turning to these priorities that are described on, beginning on page 9 of the document, I'd emphasize again that the activities behind them are framed by our three-year strategic plan and particularly the six strategic goals within that plan that are provided on page 6 of the estimates document.

Our first priority focuses on our continued effort to build the capacity of our head office and leadership team.

During FY 2013-14, a primary objective has been to establish a management and support team at head office with the skills and experience needed to sustain a modern electoral process. With the completion of the constituency boundaries, we're also conducting a merit-based recruitment effort in order to assemble our field leadership team across the province's 61 constituencies. Our staffing effort is nearing completion, so the focus for the coming fiscal year will turn to equipping these individuals in a way that will move Elections Saskatchewan toward greater professionalism.

At head office, Elections Saskatchewan will institute an individual employee performance management process for its core staff and implement a continuous learning and professional development program. We'll also develop an orientation program for both head office and our field leadership team that goes beyond an administrative introduction, with the goal of teaching the values of Elections Saskatchewan as they are articulated in our strategic plan.

Building the institutional capacity is a second and continuing priority for Elections Saskatchewan, and it's been pursued over the 2013-14 fiscal year. Our strategic plan includes a goal of seeking to continuously improve electoral management and build the institution's capacity through disciplined planning and applied best practice. Our budget document talks about various ways this year's funding will reinforce this goal. For example, as we enter the one-year pre-election window midway through the fiscal year, it's essential that we integrate various projects that will allow us to meet our event delivery goals. To achieve this, event plans for both an enumeration and the general election will be developed and coordinated across Elections Saskatchewan to ensure major responsibilities for each service line and field management position are understood and that each essential activity is appropriately scheduled and tracked.

During FY 2013-14, we offered a first step assessment, offering specific recommendations on changes to legislation that are needed for the 28th general election. It's clear that these changes will need to be given priority by members on both sides of the Assembly if they are to be efficiently implemented in advance of the election coming in November of '15. Members are aware that Saskatchewan's provincial election law is central to the conduct of elections and that, in the context of our province, the law is dated and neither meets citizens' expectations or current electoral best practice when compared to other jurisdictions across the country and around the globe.

During FY '14-15, we will continue to work to facilitate a modernization of our electoral legislation. We will revisit the province's regulations regarding the compensation of short-term electoral event workers in order to provide recommendations to cabinet a full year in advance of the scheduled election day in November 2015. We'll also develop a plan for a second step involving more comprehensive changes, changes that will take longer to implement than the time available before the 28th general election.

A fourth budgetary priority for the fiscal year involves continuing to introduce innovation and efficiency by leveraging technology. Spending during the current fiscal year has focused on establishing a computer infrastructure that will support professional election administration at our head office and facilitate reliable links with our field management personnel located in the province's 61 constituencies. Funds for FY 2014 will continue to build on this recently introduced technology. Having recently introduced Microsoft Office 365 to Elections Saskatchewan, this technology will be used to establish an intranet environment that fosters ongoing communication between head office and field management across the province.

[15:45]

We'll also focus on leveraging technology through the

development of a customer relationship management system for tracking issues related to field management, recording public inquiries and complaints, handling media requests, and ensuring procedural compliance with political finance requirements. We will apply technology to our electoral components, demonstrating leadership in the country by piloting the use of GIS [geographic information system] technology during a returning officer's review of proposed polling division boundaries. Technical updates and functional improvements that were requested by returning officers following the last provincial election will also be introduced to our provincial election management system known as ESPREE [Elections Saskatchewan permanent register of eligible electors], and we'll begin to integrate web-based financial filing software with the aim of allowing candidate business managers to track political finance contributions and expenses along with electronically submitting their financial reports more easily.

A fifth priority for FY '14-15 focuses on pursuing partnerships and collaboration that will enhance Elections Saskatchewan's effectiveness in the delivery of elections. Elections Saskatchewan will build on the work it has already begun in continuing to partner with other institutions that are responsible for conducting elections at the local level, to consider ways by which sharing approaches and combined efforts can lead to efficiencies and cost savings for taxpayers. We'll host a workshop on electoral management with Saskatchewan cities and other municipalities to investigate ways that improvements and efficiencies can be achieved within the province. We'll collaborate with Elections Canada to highlight the importance of elections in the context of our democracy and lay the foundations for our outreach efforts in advance of the 28th general election. And we'll continue to work with our Saskatchewan colleagues at the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, looking for ways to improve the delivery of electoral events within the province.

A final priority focuses on our strategic goal to be more purposeful in facilitating the public's awareness of the conduct of electoral events. In preparing for the 28th general election, Elections Saskatchewan will focus on ensuring that a structure is in place to emphasize the importance of participation in voting. During FY '13-14, Elections Saskatchewan has worked with Johnson-Shoyama and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems to better understand how citizens in our disability and senior communities might be better served during electoral events. In fact I will release an assessment describing our findings in the weeks ahead.

During the coming fiscal year, we will develop an operational plan based on these findings for the 28th general election. We'll further facilitate accessibility by creating engaging, general audience educational material focused on voter registration, voting, and the rights of candidates in multiple formats and languages.

As the province enters a one-year pre-election window, Elections Saskatchewan is keenly aware of the changing expectations of citizens even from the last general election as they become more and more comfortable with Internet-based interactive information platforms. In preparation for this, we will complete a full refresh of the Elections Saskatchewan website in order to provide a modern, responsive, and

mobile-device-friendly interface. These changes will not only improve the users' experience but they will ensure that we meet accessibility standards for all users.

I'm hopeful that we've been able to articulate well that Elections Saskatchewan's FY 2014-15 budget marks a clear departure from past budgets. In introducing a clear distinction between ongoing administration and event-related costs, Elections Saskatchewan has effectively reduced costs related to the institution's ongoing administration while introducing its first zero-based budget for all event-related expenditures.

Elections Saskatchewan has been very deliberate in pursuing a budget that is fundamentally aligned with and supports its new strategic plan for 2014-16, a document that introduces a new approach to priority setting for our provincial election management body.

Before concluding, I'd like to briefly return to some of the budgetary assumptions that Ms. Colin described earlier. Those assumptions offered a window on some of the additional business that Elections Saskatchewan will address over the coming year in collaboration with you on the board.

I wrote to you in December to express concerns about the operational impact that delays in transitioning to new facilities is having on Elections Saskatchewan. On our end, we'll continue to give the transition, this transition our priority so as to ensure the institution's ability to implement the 28th general election and that it won't be undermined. Yet funding will still be required for key components of this project. If the recommendations put forward in my recent assessment on electoral legislation are agreed to in the weeks ahead, we will also conduct the necessary analysis so as to offer a supplementary budget.

Over the course of FY '13-14, Elections Saskatchewan has been involved in a process of considering its past and setting out a clear path for renewal. Resources allotted for the coming fiscal year are designed to reinforce a new vision for this institution, a vision that seeks to serve democracy in Saskatchewan by ensuring independent, impartial, and the professional delivery of electoral events.

In February of last year, I requested four appearances before you and began to submit quarterly reports on Elections Saskatchewan's progress. Looking at the year ahead where we'll enter into a one-year pre-election window, I'm hopeful that you'll allow me to continue engaging with the board on an as-needed basis with the aim of forging and maintaining transparent communication with you. I'd like to request meetings with the board when supplementary budgets are needed. I also hope that you found my written quarterly progress updates helpful; and assuming this, I'll plan to continue the practice of providing written reports to you each quarter. Thank you very much.

The Chair: — Okay. Thank you very much. Are there any questions? Mr. Harrison.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Sure. Thanks very much, Michael, for the presentation. We appreciate it. The information was thorough. And also, as you had just mentioned the quarterly

reports, I know I for one do appreciate those and the updates that you provided on various other matters over the last year or so, and found them helpful.

You know, obviously the number that, the thing that jumps out at all of us I think first going over this is the significant increase that's being requested this fiscal year. The board has been I think, you know, very willing to consider and look at budget increases for Elections Saskatchewan in the past couple of years. Last year I think we increased the budget. I'm not sure what the number is but I know, on the administration side, I think in '12-13 the budget was about \$1.7 million. What you're asking for next year is 2.8. So I mean there's been significant increases. I appreciate the fact that you're holding it to less than 1 per cent increase over last year but, over the last two years there have been very significant increases.

In terms of the request on this, I have some fairly specific questions in terms of the individual items and the cost breakdowns and kind of the benefit of moving forward on various projects.

One thing you had just mentioned and which I had noticed reading the materials as well was in terms of the 15 recommended changes that you provided to both myself and Mr. McCall. What would you . . . And in the submission, you indicate that there would be a supplementary request for funding to implement those . What would be the estimated cost for implementing all 15 of the recommendations that you had submitted?

Mr. Boda: — All right. We were discussing that actually just today in terms of looking at what the costs would involve. I think it's important to look at it in terms of two steps and to appreciate that we are an institution that has established as a strategic goal that we will continuously improve electoral management and build institutional capacity through disciplined planning. And so as you look at the implementation of the 15 items, it's important to understand that there will be a planning component and then there will be an implementation component.

In the planning component, the costs are much lower than they are during the implementation component and the majority of the costs will come in an election budget. So once a decision has been made with respect to changes to legislation, the majority of the costs will go into next year's election budget that's established. That said, there will be planning changes that will be made. And when we look at that, the permanent register is obviously a significant cost, and homebound voting will be another that we'll have to begin to ramp up for during this coming budget year.

If you're looking for an actual cost, we can't provide that to you because we have not done the budget for the general election. That will be done next year. And if we can conduct an assessment and give you some understanding of what would be required during the coming fiscal year. So I can't answer that question for you.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — I mean, maybe just even a ballpark. I guess what I'm looking for, Michael, is an estimate as to what a supplementary appropriation would be. Obviously any costs

incurred during the campaign, during an election process, would be a statutory cost which you wouldn't need to come before the legislature to have appropriated. I guess what I'm asking for is in terms of the planning costs as kind of phase 1 or step 1 of these two steps, what we would be looking at in terms of a supplementary appropriation this year.

Mr. Boda: — I'm not sure we can provide that number to you. In terms of the permanent registry, we've broken that down. We've provided the assessment document and then the subsequent memo and there are some quite specific numbers in there. But in terms of the other elements, I'm not sure because the cost will go up. In some of these items there'll be a greater cost, but by introducing or changing the legislation, we'll actually be able to reduce the cost in other circumstances. So I know you're looking for yes, we would need an additional \$500,000 or something like that but . . .

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes. I mean what I'm looking for, is it 50 or is it 500? And the reason . . . I mean we're looking at putting this bill in front of the Assembly in the spring sitting for the purpose of expedited passage. I mean I would like to have it. I find it kind of a bit concerning that we don't even have kind of a ballpark as to what that's going to cost when we put a bill before the House that's been negotiated between both the government and opposition. I think it would bring some comfort to me to know that we had some sort of outline as to what the supplementary appropriation is going to be once we have that bill in front of the House and passed.

Mr. Boda: — That's not an exercise that we've gone through, but if you need that we can offer some assessment and guidance in that respect. I assume you don't need that today, but we can certainly provide that if you need it and give you a sense. Certainly the largest cost that would come about would be related to the permanent registry and we have provided numbers in that regard.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes, we've seen the numbers on the permanent voters list. Anyway I don't need it today but I would appreciate having that at the earliest opportunity as we're working on drafting the bill right now.

Mr. Boda: — No, that's no problem at all. We anticipated that we would need to go through some sort of an exercise.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Sure. Okay, thanks. And in terms of kind of further specific questions, I would go to page 12 of your document, your estimate submission. In terms of the introduction of innovation and efficiencies by leveraging technology, there's some examples in there in terms of the new software system and the links or the more reliable links that you've established. I mean what are kind of the costs here you're looking at in terms of this, this fiscal year under this provision?

[16:00]

Mr. Boda: — Okay. So in terms of the innovations that are being introduced, we've focused on both head office and on the electoral components. Just to give you some examples that are there, we're piloting GIS tools for returning officers to use in reviewing polling division boundaries, and that would be in the

area of \$380,000.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — So how exactly would that work in terms of the reviewing of the poll divisions boundaries? How does that actually work with the GIS system?

Mr. Boda: — With the GIS system?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes.

Mr. Boda: — Do you want to take that?

Ms. Colin: — In the past, what has happened is hard copy maps have been produced and have been mailed out along with a kit of supplies that includes pencil crayons. Returning officers then would review the polling division boundaries that had been established, make marks on the hard copy maps, mail those back, and that process would happen as many times as required.

Using the technology that we have available to us today, the polling division boundaries are actually being drawn up in our office by a team of GIS technicians using maps that they've created as well as census population data. So they're using a lot more intelligence in coming up with the first cut of the polling division maps.

That then is electronically available to our returning officers who basically log on to an online application. They review it. They use kind of virtual sticky notes and other tools that are available to them through the application to make notations and make recommendations for changes. That then is submitted back and it's available instantly for our GIS technicians then to go in and edit or accept or comment on.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay. That's very helpful to hear how that works. So the capital expenditure on the system, then was it made in the last or current fiscal year or will it be made in the upcoming fiscal year for it?

Ms. Colin: — There has been a component of the project that is currently in a pilot phase right now. We have budgeted based on a successful pilot, so the majority of the costs associated of that will be in the next fiscal year. And the costs are largely human resource costs that would've been incurred using the old system anyways, because you still need that review, the original creation of the polling division boundaries and the subsequent review by returning officers. So it's not a whole net new cost.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — So is it done through contract with folks that have expertise in this area then that are doing the actual GIS implementation?

Ms. Colin: — Yes, that's correct.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay. And that's about \$380,000 this year?

Ms. Colin: — For the total project.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — For the total project? So what would have been incurred last year? What will be incurred next year?

Ms. Colin: — The costs in this fiscal year . . .

Mr. Boda: — It certainly would have been lower than that, but basically this project is a continuation of the boundaries, so the GIS team that was in place was supporting the boundary commission. And once the boundary commission's work is completed and the report is issued, that's about one-third of the project, and then we move into the polling division component of the project. So they have been in place but it has not been, in terms of the work that's intensively done in the field, that work wasn't done. So if you were to divide it up, the costs would be relatively lower than the \$380,000.

And what was happening, we'd looked at this from a cost-comparative perspective, and that's why we're piloting these things. We're trying to determine the most efficient and effective way to move forward. And in the past what's happened is we've sent it out into the field. It was done . . . This past last time it was done, I'm told, in the last three months before the election, and basically it was done by hand with returning officers who have no legal experience normally having to describe the polling division boundaries through metes and bounds, which is, frankly, it's a mid-19th century process that's no longer followed elsewhere.

And so what we're trying to look at is how can we increase the efficiency of this process and then what are the costs involved. And so far we're finding that the costs are either very similar or they're less, but over time we'll be able to reduce those costs using GIS technology. But further, the key is that we're able to serve our stakeholders much more effectively because they're no longer having to figure out what metes and bounds mean, what the legal description means. They're actually going to have a file that they can use on their computer and see, oh, that's exactly where the line is and they can zoom into it. So it's a cost that is hopefully lower. It's more efficient in developing it, but it also serves the stakeholders in a more effective way.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — So as a part of the boundary redistribution budget, obviously that's a big component of it, for this year the estimates show a \$415,000 allocation or ask for an allocation. What's the remainder of the costs associated with the boundary redistribution line item?

Ms. Colin: — There are some costs associated with rental of meeting rooms and some various training materials that were not included in that \$380,000.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay. So the three eighty was the GIS component of that.

Ms. Colin: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — But you indicated that was over two years though, that \$380,000 expenditure.

Ms. Colin: — The 380,000 will see us through to the end of the redistribution itself, which we've targeted to have complete sometime in January of 2015.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay. So we have 380,000 there and 20 or 30 for materials and that sort of thing. Over the last two years we've allocated . . . or potentially we're being asked to allocate \$717,000. So what would have the other expenditure have been then, that other \$300,000 for?

Ms. Colin: — A large component of that would have been for the work of the Boundary Commission itself.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay. In terms of the . . . On page 13 under the electoral components provision, the upgrades to the ESPREE computer system, what are those and what are the costs associated with that?

Ms. Colin: — A couple of examples. One specific example is developing a customized payroll module that will allow election workers, returning officers and election day workers themselves to capture their hours of pay and will transmit that electronically to Ceridian, which will replace what we had previously done using paper-based time sheets, and we had actually then manually calculated source deductions for all of those employees. So we're expecting some significant efficiencies down the road with that.

Other enhancements, some of them are just purely technical upgrades to various platforms. And other ones were based on recommendations from returning officers who had worked with us in the 2011 general election, things that would have streamlined their data entry for example or tweaking small error messages so that they actually made sense to people.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — So are we contracting with folks to do those?

Ms. Colin: — Yes. We have a vendor who has developed and supports our application.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay.

Mr. Boda: — And just to be clear, on ESPREE, you may or may not know this, but in terms of collaborating, this has been an effort that has unfolded over the past number of years where we're working with Elections Alberta, with Elections Yukon, and Nunavut, and basically we're using the same individual and using the same code in order to be more efficient and cost effective.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Right, right. In terms of, on page 14, the accessibility and public awareness paragraph at the bottom of the page, so precisely what are your plans for doing this? You probably heard me say before, Michael, my strongly held view is it's the job of parties to engage citizens in the electoral process. What's the view, what's the proposal from Elections Saskatchewan in terms of this?

Mr. Boda: — Well in terms of accessibility and public awareness we, as you well know, we have made a major effort this year to study issues related to accessibility at the polls for disabled communities, for the senior communities. And we have taken great pains to study this, and we'll conclude our study very soon and begin an operational plan or establish an operational plan during the coming fiscal year in order to determine how to move forward. And so that accessibility plan and its implementation is a significant part of this component.

We're also . . . Election management bodies are here to reduce the barriers to voters and to candidates, and so that is the focus of this component of the coming budget. And so our plan is to establish materials that make it easier for people to understand

the voting process and the process of becoming a candidate and make these available on our website in different formats.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes. In terms of increased accessibility for disabled voters and issues of that nature, the government's committed to doing what's necessary, including legislative change to facilitate that. What I'm wondering is, I mean, what are the costs? I'm not talking about the disabled part of it, and that would probably be included in your 15 points frankly, and that's one of the major recommendations and the 15 legislative changes you've recommended. How much is Elections Saskatchewan planning on spending in terms of the public awareness, education, voter engagement — that sort of work — preparation of materials?

Mr. Boda: — So again turning back to our goal to plan in a disciplined manner in order to prepare for the coming election, on accessibility we anticipate spending somewhere in the range of \$50,000 in order to get that operational plan in place and be able to move forward. Around the same, \$50,000, for materials, educational materials in different formats. We're also partnering and collaborating with the Diefenbaker Centre in Saskatoon in order to provide Saskatchewan students with a better understanding of the voting process, and we will begin to plan to work with a group who you are probably aware of, Student Vote, in order to look at how they can help us to educate Saskatchewan students with respect to the democratic process.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay. So in terms of the operational plan you'd mentioned with respect to the accessibility, disabled voter portion, so \$50,000 for that? Would that be included as a supplementary ask with the 15 recommendations, or is that going to come from the estimate that you're providing right now as a part of the main estimate?

Ms. Colin: — We've included the 50,000 in this budget.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — In the main estimate? So there won't be additional operational planning costs with the 15 recommendations then.

Mr. Boda: — I think it's important to distinguish between, it's important to distinguish between legislative change and operational change. And Elections Saskatchewan has looked, over the past year, at ways that we can improve accessibility at the polls for disabled groups and seniors. But what we've focused on here are operational preparations, so these are things that can be done without legislative change. If there is legislative change, that is where the supplemental budget comes in.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — So we could be kind of paying twice then for accessibility for disabled voters. What I'm trying to get at, what I'm trying to get at, Michael . . .

Mr. Boda: — I don't think you're paying twice. You're paying once for operational changes, and then if there are changes vis-à-vis legislation, then there'll be a supplemental budget. But we're not, we're not double dipping, if that's what . . .

Ms. Colin: — This budget assumes that the current legislation will be in place for November 2nd, 2015. So within the confines of that legislation and what we've learned through our

discussions with stakeholders, we've come up with some things that we think we can do that will increase that accessibility, things like simply providing disability sensitivity training, for example, to poll workers, things like enhancing and providing greater education to our returning officers on what an accessible polling location means. So there are things that we can do within our current legislation.

However as Dr. Boda has mentioned, more significant legislative change, like facilitating homebound voting for example, would require a significant investment and greater planning.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay. So just to be clear then, the 50,000 then would be for what you can do operationally right now under your current statute. Would there be additional costs say with the renting a different hall for instance that would have accessibility for a wheelchair-bound voter say versus . . . So I mean are there kind of additional costs that could flow out of the training that we're doing for poll workers and poll clerks and things of that nature? I mean this would just be kind of for the planning. This wouldn't actually be for the cost of . . .

Ms. Colin: — This budget doesn't include the costs of actually securing any of those locations or returning offices themselves.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay. So any legislative change then that we were to go forward with would be an additional cost. And that's kind of what I was trying to get at in terms of the earlier portion of my questioning about what we're looking at because I mean we're trying to put a budget together. June sat through 32 days of treasury board meetings over the last couple of months.

You know, we're going through a process to kind of hold our budget increase in a very kind of modest, a modest fashion. And I mean when we have to go, which we do, and kind of say, here's what we've decided as a Board of Internal Economy to go forward with, and it's hard to do that when we are kind of saying well we don't really know though what these costs are. So anyway I guess I'd just encourage as quickly as possible if we could get the estimates on that other portion.

[16:15]

On page 15, there's another item in terms of the website. I've seen government IT programs spend a lot of money for limited benefit. I'm not saying that that's going to be the case or is the case. But I guess I'm wondering, what's the budget for the new website? What's your expected outcome of the new website? What are you trying to achieve with the new website? How's that going to make things better for your average voter out there?

Ms. Colin: — We budgeted \$50,000 to create a website that is responsive, that is mobile-device-friendly, to the extent possible that's browser agnostic. Our current website was developed a number of years ago when the proliferation of mobile devices such as phones, the iPhones and tablets and all of the other variety of devices simply weren't as much of a factor. And so our current website, it's not mobile-friendly so it doesn't actually shrink or size itself to your device. It also contains thousands and thousands of documents and pieces of

information that are not searchable so therefore are not friendly. So we are going to, over the course of time mostly from an internal staff perspective, dedicate resources to kind of cataloguing and making sure that we're providing information in a way that is informational and easy to locate for staff. We are also looking at creating an interface that makes it easy to find what you're looking for, whether you're a voter or candidate, member of the public, somebody who's interested in working on election day.

So all of those kind of surface changes, they take some time. They take resources on our side to review and give feedback on. They don't cost a lot of money from an infrastructure perspective. The infrastructure we have is sound and is suitable to take us forward through to the next election.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — So how would you propose going about it then? Would it be a tendering process? I mean how would you go about finding the folks that are going to do this? Or would you do it in-house?

Ms. Colin: — We are doing a lot of . . . We're doing the content in-house. We have an established contract with an organization already that is good through to the next election. So we're going to leverage those resources.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — All right.

Mr. Boda: — Could I just mention one thing? And that is, we're taking the website refresh very, very seriously. And the reason behind it is that if you look across just this country at other election management bodies, websites for elections have gone down during the process. And a lot of it has to do with the fact that there isn't an expectation for the demand that results on the election website on election night and in the period before the election.

Just in the province alone, the city of Regina's website has gone down on election night. In Saskatoon, I was there during the last city election. It slowed. They were very, very concerned that it would go down. But that's just in the province alone. This last election, using the infrastructure that we have, it did not go down. It went down for one hour on election day, I believe. That was early in the day, so it wasn't as noticeable. But this is a fundamental problem. We plan to take this very, very seriously and have been taking it seriously, and we're doing this well in advance. It's not something we should be doing in the six months before the election, trying to figure it out.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Right. No, I appreciate that. So in terms of the 50,000 then, would that be primarily to accommodate increased capacity to ensure that it did not crash on election night? I mean I know candidates are probably the ones sitting there clicking refresh on election night, and I guess not just candidates but others that have an interest. It's not so much for kind of, you know, filling out the paperwork to be a candidate. It's, you know, seeing the results updated as quickly as possible. So is that where the 50,000 is going to, is to kind of make sure that we don't have that sort of scenario or is it going towards . . .

Ms. Colin: — The 50,000 is for the external costs associated with the development and technical work that we need to do.

However as part of this project we are ensuring that our vendor understands our business needs and that they're going to be there to support us in and around that election day period and have the plans in place and the backup plans and the backup plans for that failover hosting.

Mr. Boda: — I mean as we've articulated, during the last fiscal year and this fiscal year we have been renewing the technology and so there is purchase of servers involved and renewing it. Our servers were not up to date.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay. On page 18, on the 2015 general election, the enumeration component of that, what does that specifically relate to? It's \$105,000. Is that to do with recruitment of enumerators? Obviously we're not doing the enumeration right now but what's that for?

Mr. Boda: — She'll bring up the specific numbers, but we are working under the assumption that we will run a full enumeration during the upcoming election. So this involves planning and getting ready to implement. I guess off the top of my head the enumeration will involve . . . We will need to plan for the enumeration. We will need to . . . There will be a planning activity that we have to go through in order to prepare. We must hire 3,000 enumerators. Training materials have to be developed and at the appropriate time, if we're not told otherwise, we'll have to begin to purchase supplies for the enumeration within this budget year.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well I mean we're not going to know for certain until the federal writ is dropped. I would say there's a very, very high chance that we're not going to be having an election here until subsequent to November 2nd of 2015. But I understand that . . .

Mr. Boda: — We fully appreciate that.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes, I know and I understand that you have to be prepared in that regard. Well in terms of the planning and those matters that you had laid out, what specifically is involved in that? It's one thing to kind of say planning and prepare materials. What exactly are those, though?

Mr. Boda: — I'm sorry. Say that again.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Sorry. In terms of you mentioned that there's a cost associated with planning, the preparation of materials, what are the specific costs associated with each one of those?

Mr. Boda: — So I can tell you that the supplies . . . We have budgeted \$105,000 for the supplies. So that's out of a . . . The planning is done internally. So there is not a direct cost for that.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — So it's just for the supplies, then the \$105,000?

Mr. Boda: — That's correct.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay. What sort of supplies are those that you need?

Ms. Colin: — The enumerators are provided with reflective

vests that identify them as Elections Saskatchewan employees. They're also provided with enumeration booklets as well as developing some training material.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Did we not keep the stuff from last time around? Like in terms of the vests and that sort of thing. I can remember folks wearing them last enumeration.

Ms. Colin: — We do have some. We do have some supplies in our warehouse.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — All right. Under the, under table 4 on page 18, supplies and services, there's an additional or there's a new ask over and above last year of \$286,600. What are those supplies for and which one of the events does that fall under — boundary redistribution, general election, enumeration, or the general election?

Ms. Colin: — That does include the \$105,000 for the enumeration supplies. It also includes a budget of \$82,000 to purchase ballot paper as well as a \$50,000 budget for costs associated with any of the implementations related to accessibility, which are unknown at this time.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay. So that's where the \$50,000 comes from then? Okay. The communications and advertising component, does that include the additional funding for the accessibility packages and the, you know, student voting, things and . . . of that nature or what's that additional money for?

Ms. Colin: — In communications and advertising?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes.

Ms. Colin: — Included in there is the funding that would be required to update a number of manuals and guides for political parties and candidates. It would also include costs associated with producing any returning officer and pre-writ training manuals, and includes the costs associated with printing constituency maps.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay. No, I can see the maps one. Do you have it off the . . . at your fingertips anyway, the amount that was spent in the previous redistribution in terms of the new maps?

Ms. Colin: — I do not.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — So the updating of the manuals and guides and the training manuals for our returning officers and whatnot, do we have to redevelop those? Why do we have to spend an additional \$130,000 over last year on this?

Ms. Colin: — They are being reviewed for accuracy as well as to make any improvements that would have been submitted to us from our elections staff from the last election. They would have had comments perhaps on the thoroughness or perhaps the order of the presentation. They would also be updated to reflect any changes in policies. We're making sure that, you know, for example any reference to forms is still valid. So there's a significant component of work that goes into making sure that they are accurate, as well as we're going to be looking at the production of the manuals themselves to make sure that it's in

the most usable format.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes. No, I understand the production of the . . . I guess what I'm getting at is the content. And so do we have outside people doing that, that we're contracting to review the content or why aren't we doing this in-house at kind of no additional cost?

Ms. Colin: — Most of the work will be done internally by our field leadership team under the guidance of our operational team.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay. So why would we have the additional cost then if we're doing it with folks that we already have on staff who are ostensibly experts in these areas?

Ms. Colin: — There's costs associated with the production . . .

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — No, I understand.

Ms. Colin: — Of the materials themselves.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — I understand the production. I understand the, you know, revisions and that sort of thing. I guess it's just kind of like that seems like a lot of money to kind of print up new manuals.

Mr. Boda: — We're serving a community, a team of 10,000 people. That's 10,000 people we have to produce publications for. So that is a significant amount of publication that's involved . . .

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Is that what the majority of the money is? It's the production of the publications?

Ms. Colin: — Yes. That's correct.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Is it like almost all of the money?

Ms. Colin: — I can tell you we have not included any external costs for the development of the content.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — So then these would presumably just be the costs associated with having the printer . . . Okay. I mean I'm fine with that if that's what it costs but . . .

Ms. Colin: — There's a number of things that are in that category but it's the most . . . The majority of that budget is made up of printing costs related to the various materials that we do produce and that includes the training manuals for our field staff as well as the maps and any other materials we produce.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — All right. Well I'm good for now. Other folks. I've monopolized enough time.

The Chair: — Anybody else have any questions related to the Chief Electoral office? Mr. McCall.

Mr. McCall: — Not so much a question as comments. Just to say, as a member of this board, again there's a significant reform agenda with which yourself, Dr. Boda, was hired coming out of the Hamilton report in years previous, and there's

a significant agenda of not just information but action as well that has unfolded. And you know, we're certainly not there yet, but anyway the efforts to date have been much appreciated, certainly by myself as a part of this board, in trying to make sure that we're evaluating the requests that are coming forward. But I just wanted to go on record and say thanks very much.

[16:30]

Mr. Boda: — Could I just mention one thing, and that is that looking back at what the Hamilton report said and coming in on a reform agenda, in many and frankly in most of the cases, how we did it last time is not good enough. And that is why we are taking, we're taking the time that's necessary in order to review and to assess and to improve on the electoral process. I wish I could say that the status quo is just fine, and if it was, I wouldn't be before you making the changes that I am because that would be inefficient and it would not be cost-effective. But we have underfunded elections here for a long time, and under-resourced it. And while I'm moving ahead in an efficient way, there are changes that just absolutely need to be made and prepare us for the next three decades of work in Saskatchewan.

The Chair: — I have one question. You made a comment on tracking of financial donations. Will this be done online with a server controlled by the Chief Electoral office? Will it be used during the campaign or prior to the campaign? And what kind of information would it be collecting?

Ms. Colin: — We have just begun the work of kind of exploring that particular initiative. We have two options with respect to the hosting, and one would be hosted on a server within our premises. The other would be a secure hosting arrangement with a hosting provider such as SaskTel. We are also reviewing the requirements. A lot of the requirements for a political party and candidate reporting are outlined in great detail in legislation and the application would be designed to facilitate meeting those requirements.

The Chair: — Okay. Are there any other questions? If not, I'd like to thank you, Mr. Boda, and your staff, for coming forward. And we're not voting at this present time on any of the budgets. There will be further discussion amongst the committee members, and so I'd like to thank you for coming forward.

Okay. We still have quorum even though members are wandering around the room. Item no. 8, decision item, the review of the 2014-2015 budget and motion to approve the budgetary expenditure estimates for the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. I would like to welcome Mr. Dickson here for his grand finale, and your staff. Mr. Dickson, if you could introduce your staff and commence your presentation.

Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner

Mr. Dickson: — Good afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good afternoon, members. With me to my left is Pamela Scott who is the director of operations in what we call the OIPC [Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner]. To my right is Diane Aldridge who is our director of compliance.

This is usually when I start going through the four parts of the

statutory mandate. But as I look around the room, Mr. Chairman, I see nothing but familiar faces, so I think we'll forgo some of the background and assume that members have a pretty good sense of what the OIPC is about. It strikes me that although I've had 10 previous opportunities to come in front of the board to present the budget for the office, this is the first and only time obviously I'm here making a presentation for funding which I will never see and never have any responsibility to spend.

So in putting together the budget book, I think this was an attempt to consider the experience we've had over the last 10 years and three months in this role, consider the experience of the office, the challenges our office has encountered, and then to provide the board today with my very best estimate of what's required to ensure that the OIPC going forward, and certainly in the '14-15 year, is able to adequately address the statutory mandate that's been defined by the Legislative Assembly back in 1992 and then modified with additional legislation.

So in short you'll see the request this year is for three new FTEs, and that's comprised of two portfolio officers — and members of the board will recall, portfolio officers is the term, the title we give to those people that do the investigative work in terms of reviews of access denial and breaches of privacy investigations — so two additional portfolio officers and one administrative manager, and we've made some attempt in the estimates booklet to describe that.

I'm going to come back and speak to the need again in just a moment, but I also want to highlight the shared service initiative. Now I wasn't in the room earlier. I suspect this may have come up in the course of presentations, okay, perhaps at least twice already. Just to confirm that we have an expectation . . . We've been an eager partner in this initiative since it was first conceived three or four years ago. We understand there's a prospect that there are some spaces being examined currently which would be adequate to accommodate our office, the Ombudsman and Children's Advocate and ethics commissioner and perhaps even . . . Do we still have part of the Human Rights Commission? In a single facility. But we don't have any numbers in terms of that.

The staff, the additional FTEs I'm asking for, the reality is we actually don't have physical space to accommodate three additional people immediately. And so what may well happen is that the space will become available perhaps in a number of months time. At that point, then we would be in a position, if we had the approval, to fill those three positions.

Let me just turn to why we're requesting additional staff. I think that we don't have to look very far in terms of identifying why the need for additional resources, and I might start with a government document. The Ministry of Justice produces each year what's called *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* annual report, and this report is not on anything to do with my office, but everything to do with what government at the front line is encountering. And this tracks the access requests that are made to provincial government ministries and Crown corporations. And just looking at the latest report that came out last summer, Mr. Mombourquette who is the director of that office which is embedded within the Ministry of Justice reports a 56 per cent increase in access

requests. So this is what's being seen at the front line of provincial government ministries.

Now what's interesting is . . . And one of the things that I think is unfortunate, the report that's produced every year by Justice deals with only a sliver of access and privacy activity. And you ask, why would that be? Well here's what happens. The report, which is statutorily mandated, is only required to address access requests made to provincial government institutions. There's no mandate to talk about privacy complaints and privacy investigations. And yet I can tell you if I look at the kind of work that my office does now, the explosion has been in privacy investigations. In fact, fully 56 per cent of the files we have currently involve breach of privacy investigations.

So getting back to why that 56 per cent number is interesting but shows only a small part of the iceberg, or the challenge, it doesn't capture breach of privacy investigations which I say is the significant growth area my office has been seeing for at least four years.

The other thing it doesn't capture is all the activity at the local government level. We have the second statute, sort of the ghost statute, *The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* that captures school divisions, municipalities, whether it's a remote northern rural municipality or the city of Regina, city of Saskatoon. It doesn't capture regional health authorities which attract a good number of access requests and privacy complaints. What have I left out? So municipalities, regional health authorities, school divisions, universities, and colleges. So what happens is we . . . I can assure you and tell you from our experience and our dealings with all of these local authorities, there's substantial growth in terms of access requests and privacy complaints in all these other areas. So 56 per cent is interesting, but we have over 3,000 trustees we deal with, and there's a whole lot more activity which isn't even captured in that government report.

And what we see in our own office, and you can say enough about what's going on, being monitored by the Ministry of Justice, what's happening at the level of our office: a 67 per cent increase in new files, a 44 per cent increase new reviews, an 86 per cent increase in new breach of privacy investigations.

And members will recall that I've talked about a standard. When you're trying to measure level of service to your constituents, what's reasonable. And I'm reflecting here on I guess my own 25 years of experience as well as our 10 years of experience in this role in Saskatchewan. Some provinces mandate that reviews, the kind of work an office like mine does, must be done within 60 days, 90 days. We have no such provision in our statute.

And we have said since I started in this role that I think what's reasonable for citizens is to say to them that for 80 per cent of reviews of access denial, for 80 per cent of those, citizens shouldn't have to wait longer than five months from the time they come to our office and say, we've got a concern here; we want you to investigate. I think five months is a reasonable time. And in 20 per cent of those cases, it would take longer. When it comes to breach of privacy investigations, which tend to be more complex and more individual, more unique if you will, my view is that 60 per cent of those investigations, privacy

investigations, should be resolved within that same five months.

So that's the standard, and we've talked to the board about this since I was first appointed and when we first outlined our first business plan. And I must say nobody has ever said to me at the board level, we think that's unreasonable; it should be greater or should be lesser. So I guess by default I've gone on assuming that the board has not been uncomfortable with that sort of expectation.

[16:45]

Well how are we doing right now? The average time to be able to close one of our case files is 15.8 months — 15.8 months. And I can assure you that every jurisdiction in Canada has an access and privacy law. In no jurisdiction in Canada would the oversight office say that that is a reasonable thing, a reasonable amount of time for citizens to wait. And in fact, you know, I continue to find colleagues across the country who are amazed that that's what's expected of Saskatchewan residents, to have to wait that period of time. Remember it's an average, so if it's 15.8, what that means is you have a number of your constituents who may be waiting three years and four years, and that's certainly been part of our experience.

I'd want to make I think this further point that the complexity we find in terms of our privacy investigations continues to grow and become I guess attenuated. I can tell you we just finished doing very recently an investigation that involved over 1,000 misdirected faxes of patients' personal health information that ended up in a school, ended up in a furniture company, ended up I think in some kind of a professional office, having nothing to do with medicine. And in doing this investigation . . . Now we did a big investigation in 2010 involving misdirected faxes that was using kind of a stand-alone fax machine, what I call the older, primitive technology. In 2013 when we opened this larger investigation, what we found was this was use of the new electronic health record. The RIS-PACS [Radiology Information System-Picture Archiving and Communications System] system involves radiology reports and pictures taken by diagnostic clinics, diagnostic imaging centres.

And what happens is these things become more complex because we are dealing with . . . We are investigating things that were done by eHealth Saskatchewan, the Crown corporation that's been created to run and manage the electronic health records system for every man, woman, and child in our province. And that sort of complexity . . . We've got regional health authorities involved. You have people arguing, it's not our fault; it's the fault of eHealth Saskatchewan. The eHealth is saying, in fact some of the difficulty is we think the region has done things improperly or a doctor's office has done something improperly.

We anticipate as the electronic health record is finished and the last three domain repositories are created, we're going to see more and more of this sort of additional complexity where it's just, it's not usually immediately evident who is the responsible trustee. So I just want to mention that aggravating factor, if you will, that tends to make these kinds of privacy investigations more complicated.

So with that, just in terms of the budget summary, we were

estimated to have spent in '13-14 \$1,116,000. We anticipate returning a surplus to Finance of \$31,664 which was not spent. The budget summary on page 4 shows we're asking this year for \$1,432,908, and that ask of course captures the three new positions that we seek, the cost to equip offices and computer equipment, that sort of thing for those three new positions. We anticipate there'll be some relocation costs. As members are probably aware, there's a competition under way currently for my successor, and there's a provision for relocation costs if it's somebody coming in from outside Regina. So we've tried to factor those things into the request as well.

Just before I conclude, is there anything . . . I just asked my colleagues if there's anything I've left out that they wanted to add. They, unlike me, are going to be here for the full 2014-15 budget year, and they are going to have to live with the consequences of the decision the board makes.

Okay. Hearing no further comments, I'll conclude my observations and look forward to your questions, Mr. Chairman, and members.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Dickson. Are there any questions? Ms. Draude.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you very much, and thank you for your presentation. I have a couple of questions. You'd talked about the staffing that you believe you need, but you don't have the physical space for them. Do you have space for any?

Mr. Dickson: — We do. I think we could probably accommodate the administrative person. I mean we have a boardroom that could be taken over, certainly for a time. And I suppose we're really keen on getting the additional investigators in. There might be a place we could find. We'd always thought . . . I have a fairly large office, and we could set somebody up in a corner of that. I don't know whether that's the way the new commissioner will see it. But certainly one of the people we'd be able to take immediately, and potentially two.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — I have another, and I don't know if it's a question, but your thoughts on it. I believe we have what is seen as increasing requirements for privacy, but we're also seeing a request for, under freedom of information, for more . . . I don't know if it's information but accountability. How are we balancing that? I mean in my position, that's what the general public is asking for is more information on issues, and yet I believe my hands are tied in lots of ways.

Mr. Dickson: — Okay. If I understand the question, and you, I think, there's probably no more challenging ministry involving huge amounts of personal information and public interest. And when things go wrong, they tend to be often very high profile kinds of issues with significant personal consequences, which puts you, I think, in a very tough position.

A couple of things I'd mention and one is this, is that often we hear people say, you know, I'd like to be able to share some information about a particular incident but privacy law . . . I'm handcuffed by privacy laws. And when I hear that, I usually like to pick up the phone and phone that person and say, you know, it's not really privacy laws that handcuff you. In *The Freedom*

of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, there's a provision in there that the head, i.e., minister of a ministry can disclose personal information of an individual if the minister — so this is a call made by the minister — determines it's in the public interest.

And so I can think of cases where something particularly egregious has happened. And the employee in this sort of context would say, well I have some interest to privacy; I'm also protected by the FOIP [*The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*] Act. But it's not uncommon in any jurisdiction in Canada where the minister may say there were some matters here which are sufficiently grave in seriousness and a matter of public concern that the minister chooses to disclose some personal information to address accountability and responsiveness to a public that needs to have confidence that this legislation is fair and balanced.

So I'm not sure I'm being at all responsive to what you're asking, but I know that sometimes people feel there's information that the public needs to know to be able to kind of understand what's happened in a particular case. And I think I'm just saying that right across Canada — and it's no different in Saskatchewan — the minister actually has a discretion. And that wouldn't mean you'd take the whole file of a particular client and sort of put it out there for the media to browse through, but it may mean sometimes saying that something has happened. And it may involve an employee in a ministry who has done something improper. It may have involved a foster parent. I mean there are some circumstances where it's appropriate, and in other provinces that happens.

Generally speaking, although it looks like FOIP is constantly in conflict because it's two Acts in one and one part of the Act is about transparency and openness and the other part of the Act is about protection of privacy, what happens, the two don't actually collide that often. Most times when people are asking for information, it's not so much about personal information of a third party. If they're asking for personal information, it's usually their own personal information or it's general information which isn't about an individual.

But there are cases where they conflict and it would be . . . I recall receiving a phone call. I was out of the province and somebody from Executive Council tracked me down and there was a concern. Something had happened in a ministry and Executive Council was interested in being able to release some information about the individual which would have qualified as personal information. And I told Executive Council at the time exactly what I have just said a moment ago, that there is discretion. There is discretion. Now the minister has to wear it. The minister has to make that judgment and be responsible for it, but it exists.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — I'm aware of it because I've had to use it or have used it, but I think that it's . . . I'm just wondering if, when we get to the point of having to have the minister make that type of call, I think we've got to the point where I don't believe the minister wants to do that on a regular basis. I just think it's gotten to the point where people don't really understand and we don't understand how much we can say without breaking that trust.

For me the big issue is children that could be at risk if there isn't information shared. And I'm thinking between various professionals, whether it's health care professionals and social workers or teachers. By not sharing information, we're putting a child at risk. So when does risk, when is it a priority over what we could be seeing as confidentiality?

Mr. Dickson: — Well once again in all privacy laws in any Canadian jurisdiction, and it's certainly true in HIPA [*The Health Information Protection Act*] and FOIP and LAFOIP [*The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*] here in our province, this provision that when there is an identifiable and significant risk of harm to the health or safety of an individual, that authorizes disclosure, non-consented disclosure of somebody's personal information or personal health information. And it's the sort of thing that happens all the time. If somebody goes into emerg and is talking about a bar fight they just left and they announce they're going to go back and take a knife or a gun and they're going to settle a score with whoever they've just been fighting with, that's a perfectly appropriate case for the nurse who hears that to pick up the phone and phone the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] detachment and tell them there's been this kind of information because there's clearly a clear and present risk of injury to that named individual.

I think what you may be talking about is sometimes a kind of privacy paranoia. And this is something my office deal with, if not every day, almost every week. People who aren't clear on what the privacy rules are, who aren't clear about what I've just told you a moment ago — when it is appropriate to disclose — sometimes find that the way to avoid getting into trouble is do nothing.

[17:00]

And I've always said from the time I started in this position, I'm as concerned with health care providers, schoolteachers, social workers who don't share information when it's appropriate to protect a child, a spouse, a battered spouse or somebody else who's in imminent risk of harm, I'm as concerned about when that sharing doesn't happen as I am when there's an improper disclosure and sharing of information that's not authorized.

So it's kind of a training thing. The challenge is, you have people running around saying, well those privacy laws, you know, they won't allow me to do this and won't allow me to do that. I think privacy law is actually written quite well and there's flexibility, but it requires judgment and it requires training. Where the privacy paranoia comes in is, it's almost in every single case when my office investigates, what we find is it was not an adequate job of training the staff and they didn't have the resources and nobody had made it clear to them when it's appropriate and when it's possible to share information.

But you know, it's not always straightforward and it's not always simple. But in the same way, we work a lot with health people in the health care sector and I'm always amazed at how our health professionals make clinical judgments every day that involve weighing, sometimes, interests of the patient and interests of somebody else who may be harmed and things like that. And although it's not easy, those decisions need to be

made and are made. Our job, all of our job, is to make sure we provide the support to those people so that they have the training and they have access to the resources to help them make those tough calls when they're appropriate.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Chair, I just have one other comment, if I may, which you've talked about, and the example you gave is something that's one case and something that's imminent. What I'm talking about is something more pre-emptive when it comes to issues like . . . And I'll use the example of the Hub, where you have professionals sitting around the table talking about individuals, a child that may be seen in various areas. Nothing has happened. He doesn't have a knife out. He's not going to go murder somebody. But maybe by sharing information, we can add to that child's life. We can make sure that we give them the support that's needed.

Right now we can't do that because it's not imminent danger. It's not something that's going to right now change somebody's life, but in the long run it could. And I think that this probably isn't something that you and I can change right now. But that's my issue right now, is that our laws are to the point where we make it impossible to share the information we should — we can in some cases — that could make a difference.

Mr. Dickson: — Yes. Well I appreciate your observation. I'd have to say two things. The first one is that in fact our office had never been consulted when the Hub was developed. And the Hub was I think developed in large part as a police initiative, as a community policing initiative. And part of the difficulty is our municipal police services aren't part of FOIP. They're not part of any privacy law. They typically have no . . . They're not exposed to privacy training. They don't have a privacy expert in their organization to help them deal with difficult situations.

And so we've actually undertaken an own-motion investigation into the Hub. And we worked with the Ministry of Justice more than a year ago in terms of developing what this investigation would look like, and we've had certainly good support from the ministry. And our director of compliance in fact has recently been in Prince Albert meeting with groups involved to do this own-motion investigation. And so I can't prejudge what the findings are going to be, but I think we are looking in considerable detail in terms of how it works in practice.

And I just would make one observation. I mean I haven't been part of these interviews. That's been Diane Aldridge. But I just say that when these kinds of shared services things are developed — and I was involved when they were being developed in Alberta — the important thing is to recognize that we have some privacy laws that have to be addressed. You can't ignore them.

And what we found in Alberta when we were trying to develop, there was — some context — what was called a community school, and you involved social workers and health care workers and police and so on. You have to spend a little time figuring out what privacy laws apply.

And what you discover is, if it were to happen in Saskatchewan, municipal police services aren't covered by any privacy law whatsoever. RCMP are covered by the federal Acts, *Access to*

Information Act, the federal *Privacy Act*. There's a federal commissioner for each. Health workers are subject to *The Health Information Protection Act* with a whole set of rules for them. LAFOIP applies in other cases. If there's somebody there that's in the Boys and Girls Club or Red Cross or Canadian Mental Health, there may be no privacy law that applies to those organizations.

So what you need to do is spend some time kind of figuring out a protocol. And the easiest thing to do is if you can arrange to simply get the consent of the family, if we were dealing with kids. If the parents are prepared to consent, you say this is this information-sharing system we've created which is we think going to benefit your Mabel or John or Betty Lou. Then you're able to do that kind of sharing.

But you need to think about what happens. So when there's a problem in one of these things, and this is what I've found, everything goes along swimmingly as long as the parents are okay with the recommendations being made for the child or the plan that's being developed. What happens when they disagree, and then they make an access request for the records? Well somebody who's sat at the table has got records. They've got information from the police that's being shared, and from a school that's being shared, and all kinds of information. And they often haven't thought through beforehand how they're going to handle those access requests.

So I just come back to what I said before. I'm certainly not saying you can't provide shared service and you can't find ways to do it. And it's common in almost every province in Canada to have shared service models. But you need to do it the right way. And there are some rules and there are some requirements you have to work your way through. And if you don't do that, then you may well run afoul of a law like FOIP.

The Chair: — Okay. Mr. McCall.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I guess first off I'd like to say, having missed the official opportunity to do so, to say thank you to yourself for the service to the people of Saskatchewan. I guess you'd referenced at the beginning of your presentation, I believe, that this is the 10th time at this particular set of proceedings. And that's a lot of water under the bridge, certainly. For me, it's only my third time.

And I guess that one of the things that I'm interested in is just the case that is made, and which is quite a compelling case, in terms of the volumes of demands being made on the office and the resources that year in, year out aren't forthcoming. And I guess it's, I guess I'd start first off with, say that there was recognition made that we need to put these three FTEs into play. What would you do with them? Where would you put them, in all seriousness, Mr. Commissioner?

Mr. Dickson: — Well I think . . . As I may have suggested earlier, we have some space I think to accommodate maybe not all three, but we'd have some space to accommodate one or two until such time as hopefully this joint proposal comes to fruition. Have you got some thoughts in terms of . . .

Ms. Scott: — I could probably answer that question for you. We could look towards perhaps renting out an office of one of

the other independent offices, moving one of our more senior personnel over to that office so that we could free up an office so that the portfolio officer and investigator could be trained up at that time. We would look at anything, really, to be able to hire the three FTEs immediately. We are hoping . . . We certainly don't want to go ahead and spend capital costs in our existing space if we know we're going forward with shared space. That seems to be a bit of a waste of taxpayers' dollars. So we would just try and find some, you know, space. Maybe the Legislative Assembly has an office. Maybe the Ombudsman has an office that they could lend us for a short period of time.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that. I guess the second question I'd ask in looking for clarification. I believe it was at the close of last year's meeting where there was some talk of the Ministry of Justice working with the commissioner, the office, to see if there wasn't some kind of better clarification of resources or some kind of work plan that was offered up as not quite a trade-off or as a consolation, but there was, I do recall there being some commitment made to that. Could the commissioner update the committee as to what happened with that undertaking?

Mr. Dickson: — Are you sure about that? I stand to be corrected, but my recollection from last year was that at the end that, I think it was Mr. Harrison who had made the observation that he understood there would likely be a review of our legislation. I don't know which of the three statutes, or maybe it was going to be all three. And my recollection is that he had suggested that rather than make a decision on our resource request a year ago, that better to see what came of this . . . I'd call it legislative review. I'm not sure that's exactly the term he'd used, but I think that's what he meant. And that would be a more appropriate time, after the legislative review had been undertaken or launched, to review a request for additional resources.

So subsequent to that, I contacted the Minister of Justice and said in effect, okay, how can we help with the review? How can this thing be expedited? And the Minister of Justice came back and said, well we actually don't . . . Once again this is just a paraphrase. There was nothing sort of imminent. Yes, they were planning on doing a review of the legislation, but there was no commitment in terms of when that would happen. And so I'd have to say, here we are a year later and I'm not aware of any initiative that's been kind of formally launched to review any of the three statutes.

So I don't know. In my dealings with the minister, obviously I've been making recommendations for legislative change for a long time, and when I thought there might be an opportunity — and I thought there might've been one at the board meeting a year ago — I followed up with the minister. And I've continued to follow up with him throughout 2013, and there's just been no indication that something is happening there. I'm sorry. It's not a very fulsome response, but it's the extent of my knowledge.

Mr. McCall: — I appreciate the clarification.

The Chair: — Mr. Harrison.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Sure. Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to follow up a bit on that. My understanding is that

there's an intention to go forward with the review. I'll follow up with the minister. I'm glad you've done so as well, commissioner.

Just kind of in conclusion from the government side, I wanted to say thank you as well for the work that you've done over the last 10 years as the founding commissioner, as the leader that's built the office, that's done I think by all accounts a very, very capable job over the last 10 years.

[17:15]

And thank you for your lifetime of public service, whether it be 20 years practising law, 10 years in the Legislative Assembly in Alberta, having defeated Rod Love as well. That would've been an interesting campaign. I'd like to hear that story at some point. But just on behalf of the government, thank you very much for your service to Saskatchewan, for your service to Alberta, and service to Canada.

Mr. Dickson: — Thank you very much for the generous comments. Maybe I can just quickly say though that — I said this the other day, as the Speaker will recall, at a bit of a reception — but when you're the head guy of an organization like this that accomplishes a lot, there's a tendency for you to get way too much credit. And the reality is that all of the things that we've produced in our office . . . And I'm proud of the, you know, almost 100 reports we've put out, 100 issues of a newsletter, over 70 web-based resources, but each of those resources and newsletters and reports bear the fingerprints of the seven remarkable women in my office.

And so I'm very appreciative of your comments, but I want you to know that that really needs to be shared with the seven people in the office. Because it's easy to sign your name at the bottom of the report, but there's a lot of work that goes into each one of those things. But thanks very much.

The Chair: — Okay. Are there any further questions? Well if not, Mr. Dickson, I'd like to say I'm too young to have been here 10 years ago, but that's probably not the case. I'm glad to see though that you have developed certain traditions in your office, and the request for more FTEs is one of those traditions that I think you have carried out every one of the last 10 years. And I do recollect a year or two where you had some success in that area. It may just have been administrative staff. I remember one of those one time. There may have been others, you know.

But I wish you well in your future endeavours to become Walt Wingfield, as I said at the reception. And for those who don't know who Walt Wingfield is, there is Google to find out. So thank you very much for your service to the province and to the people of Western Canada for your career. And I wish you and your wife and your mother well as you move to Ontario.

Mr. Dickson: — Thank you very much.

The Chair: — So we are not making any decisions at the present time on votes, so thank you very much. This will be held for further discussion.

Okay. We will move on with item no. 9, decision item, review of the 2014-2015 budget for the Legislative Assembly. It comes

in three parts: (a) motion to approve the expenditures for the Refurbishment and Asset Replacement Fund for projects, (b) motion to approve budgetary and statutory expenditure estimates, and (c) motion to approve revenue estimates.

I'd like to welcome Mr. Putz, the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and his staff. If you would introduce your staff, Mr. Putz, and proceed with your presentation.

Legislative Assembly

Mr. Putz: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Immediately to my right is Lynn, and Lynn Jacobson is our executive director of member and corporate services. To my left is Dawn Court, director of financial services. And I also want to introduce a number of our managers and staff who have joined us here today. I hope I don't miss anybody. A few have come just to observe proceedings, but all of these good staff . . . and I want to echo what Gary Dickson said about his staff. These people are very passionate about serving this institution and they do their utmost every year. It makes me look good. So I just want to echo that from what Mr. Dickson said. It applies equally to the Legislative Assembly Service.

With us today in no particular order we have Ken Ring, Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel; Melissa Bennett, our Legislative Librarian; Iris Lang, Principal Clerk; Lynn, I've introduced. We have Ginette Michaluk, our director of human resources. Brad Gurash, director of member services. I know you're going to correct me on Ginette. We did that last year. Yes, I remember it well. Darcy Hislop, our chief technology officer; Lenni Frohman, our director of parliamentary publications; Lorraine deMontigny, director for visitor services. We have also joining us Cindy Hingley, our financial analyst; Pat Kolesar, assistant legislative librarian. I didn't know you were going to be here today, Pat. I'm glad you've recovered well enough to join us here today. Thank you. And Joelle Perras who is a member of our parliamentary publications branch.

So I want to thank you for this opportunity to make a few brief introductory remarks regarding our budget and then I'm going to turn over the presentation to Dawn who will take you through a number of the specifics of our budget request. And Dawn's presentation then will be followed by some very . . . a number of very brief outlines of our proposed refurbishment and asset replacement fund projects. And of course the staff who have joined us here today would be very pleased to address any specific program delivery questions you might have on any number of our services.

So just getting right into it with respect to our budget request for 2014-15, it has been developed to ensure that we are able to maintain our core service delivery to members of the Legislative Assembly, and of course the public as well.

As such, the base-level funding will allow us to maintain our status quo programming, Mr. Speaker, status quo programming, and still continue with our commitment to find efficiencies and to anticipate future service delivery needs. I want to remind all of you that a comprehensive list of our core services is contained in our *Guide to Members Services* along with the names and the contact information of the responsible LAS staff members.

I also want to remind you that we report twice a year on the many specific actions and projects we undertake in pursuit of our organizational goals and objectives, and Dawn will touch on some of our action plan for the upcoming year when she addresses you momentarily.

One final reminder, the budget that we present is for the Legislative Assembly. It includes the Members of the Legislative Assembly, caucus operations, Office of the Speaker, Board of Internal Economy, and of course the Legislative Assembly Service.

Our budget proposal represents an overall increase of 1.239 million, which is an increase of 4.74 per cent over last year. That is comprised of an increase on the non-statutory funding of \$103,000, which equates to a 1.09 increase and a 1.136 million or 6.81 per cent increase on the statutory funding side of the budget. With respect to the non-statutory budget or the Assembly operations, it's important to note that 64 per cent of the budget relates to salaries, and that comprises about \$6.1 million.

You will see shortly in Dawn's presentation that we've worked to be fiscally responsible and to minimize our funding request by refining expenditures by redirecting one-time funding to fully offset the status quo increases and to partially offset new initiative requests, resulting in a net increase of 1.09 per cent. On the statutory side, as I previously mentioned, it is a 1.136 million increase, which includes a CPI increase of 2.2 per cent and an increase in the utilization within the directives.

So at this point I'm going to turn things over to Dawn, and we look forward to addressing any questions you might have at the conclusion of our presentations.

Ms. Court: — Thank you, Greg. It's been a long day, so I'm going to keep my comments pretty brief for you but would be happy to answer your questions like Greg mentioned. If I could get you to turn to page 4 to 6, we're going to talk a little bit about the LAS key actions for 2014-15. Our key actions for 2014-15 include both core business activities and some new initiatives, which a modest funding request is being made tonight to enable us to focus on these priorities. I'm going to highlight a few of these key actions to provide the board with a high-level overview of our priorities for '14-15, and if you have any questions as we go along, please feel free to ask them.

To start with, our goal no. 1 is sustained and enhanced institution of parliament on page 4. This year we will focus on the committee's branch will be focusing on assisting PAC [Public Accounts Committee] with the recruitment of a new provincial auditor. We will begin to focus on the development of a new orientation program for the 28th legislature; improving records management practices within the LAS, which is a new initiative; and we'll also focus on the next step of the LAS communication planning with specific focus on visual identity and branding for the Legislative Assembly. This is also a new initiative.

On page 5, our goal 2 which is purposeful services with accountable governance. For '14-15, we'll be focusing on finalizing a Legislative Building security review and make recommendations to you, the board, for funding of multiple

security enhancements. We will improve capacity to respond to critical security incidences and increased health and safety concerns by increasing contractual security. This is a new funding request.

The library will be hosting the Association of Parliamentary Libraries in Canada conference, which is a one-time funding request.

On page 6 is our goal 3 which is effective responsive work environment. Within this goal, we will continue to retain resources to continue the development and implementation of our HR [human resources] initiatives, continue to focus on training and professional development with a focus on finding efficiencies, and to focus on value-added activities through training on the lean methodology. And this is also a new initiative.

On page 7, you will see that this is a new page that we've added this year. And this is the highlights page that just provides you, the board, with a sample of our many core services of the LAS.

I would at this time like to provide you with a brief summary of the budget assumptions and principles that were used to develop the 2014-15 budget. These details can be found on page 8 and 9 of your book. In the development of this budget request, we considered the following key elements: to develop a budget that is fiscally responsible and is mindful of the direction provided to executive government, which provided for a 3 per cent growth target in expenditures for 2014-15; the reallocation of one-time funding in order to lessen the financial increases required to maintain our current level of services and to consider the changing financial pressures that arise over a typical four-year parliamentary cycle. And the primary assumption that was used for the development of this budget is an anticipated CPI of 2.2 per cent as well as in range progression and range adjustments for eligible employees, which have been incorporated into our base funding.

As you will see on page 9, the LAS is asking for an additional \$1.239 million in funding for 2014-15, which is an overall increase of 4.74 per cent. This is further broken down into statutory funding requirements for payments and allowances to members in the amount of 1.136 million, or a 6.81 per cent increase. And for non-statutory or Assembly operations, \$103,000 increase resulting in a 1.09 per cent increase over last year.

If I could get you to turn to page 12 and 13, we'll now focus on the details of our budget. On page 12 you'll see that this page outlines the proposed budget recommendations for the statutory budget. The first two components are actually offsets from funding that was provided in '13-14, which results in a \$50,000 savings for the redirection of funding provided for public hearings and the redirection of \$25,000 from the 10K term provision.

For increases related to 2014-15, we have a \$537,000 increase in MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] travel and living expenses, a \$377,000 increase in constituency service expenses and telephone services, and a \$211,000 increase related to the CPI increase of 2.2 per cent. The caucus grants will also increase by 43,000, and that's also a CPI increase. And

43,000 is related to the economic increases mandated for directives for CAs [constituency assistant] which is a 1.25 per cent increase.

If we move on to the non-statutory budget, you will see we are proposing the redirection of \$319,000 worth of savings from '12-13. Those are related to funding that was provided for interjurisdictional conferences last year. One hundred thousand was related to the public hearings. The redirection of severance that had been provided for in the Speaker's office in last year's budget of \$52,000, and the redirection of funding provided for the advertisement of two statutory officer competitions for 40,000.

The increases that we anticipate for 2014 relate to status quo salary increases of \$120,000, an increase in contractual security services for 75,000, one-time funding for libraries of \$50,000, library operational increases of 27,000. We're asking for 25,000 for lean training, which is a new initiative; training and professional development increases which totals \$23,000; an increase in warehouse rent and transportation, 21,000, and that's related to the contract that was negotiated by Central Services; term resources and member and corporate services of \$20,000; status quo contract increase for commissionaires of \$15,000; records management for 15,000; and the remaining 13,000 are just small, miscellaneous increases throughout the LAS.

The last component of our budget is the Refurbishment and Asset Replacement Fund, RARF, which was established in 2007 to fund improvements to the LAS and the Legislative Assembly's facilities, replacement of furnishings, non-capital equipment, and major capital asset acquisitions. The fund is incorporated within the LAS budget until the year 2016-17 when the fund is up for renewal.

At this time we would like to provide you with a brief overview of these projects. Each of the managers responsible for the projects will briefly present their proposal, and Darcy has a three-minute demonstration of some of the digital restoration work which was approved as a multi-year project. So if I could get Darcy to come up.

Oh, while you're setting up, I do want to just point out quickly that there is a bit of a typo on page 15 of the document. And this is related to the de-acidification of Saskatchewan government publications. We are asking for \$108,000, but the project costs in your book on page 15 says 125,000. So that should read 108. We missed it.

Mr. Hislop: — Just some quick backgrounds first. I take full responsibility for finding the clips. I thought it would be interesting to look at some of the earlier digitized material, and I tried to find a couple events that I thought would be interesting from the LAS perspective — Greg's — for the Legislative Assembly, with the first election of the Speaker. And how could you resist Mr. D'Autremont's inaugural speech? Twenty minutes I thought might be a bit much.

So last year the board approved 160,000 for the digitization project. We allocated 100,000 of that towards the actual conversion work. Fifty thousand was allocated for infrastructure to house those digitized files, and a small amount was to help

archives with some infrastructure as well.

This copy that I showed today is what we call a proxy copy. It's fine for viewing via the web for video streams, sort of equivalent to what you find on our intranet site. The actual conversions will have the full resolution as well as those proxy copies. To date, as of last week, they had just about completed all the reel-to-reel audio tapes, and they hope to get through most of the U-matic tapes, which are the oldest videotapes, by the end of this year.

And so for the '14-15 fiscal year, we're looking at I believe it's \$125,000 to complete the project. We originally phrased it as a three-year project, but with the board's assistance financially last year, we'll get a significant amount done. I'd be glad to answer any questions if you have.

The Chair: — There seems to be a lot of smug looks that their faces were not included in this demonstration.

Mr. Hislop: — I had one other remark. You may have noticed that, Mr. Speaker, lighting conditions were not fantastic. And with the board's support in 2000, 2008, we did upgrade the Chamber lighting, so our quality today is much better. That's actually how it looked on the broadcast back then.

The Chair: — Okay. Any further questions for Darcy? I'll allow Mr. Putz to continue.

Mr. Putz: — In keeping with our heritage theme today, we have a project from the library for the de-acidification of the Saskatchewan government publications in their collection. As you know, we have a statutory mandate to be the depository for those records, so Melissa is going to tell you about a proposed project under RARF to preserve some of those documents for posterity.

Ms. Bennett: — So our proposal's on page 14 and 15 of the budget book, and so looking at no. 1 which focuses on, as Greg said, the de-acidification of Saskatchewan government publications in the library's collection. And we have brought some samples with us, and I'll ask Pat, our assistant legislative librarian, to come up after I've given you some highlights, just to show some samples to you.

So under *The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act*, the Legislative Library is the official repository for Saskatchewan government publications. Copies of all publications produced by the Government of Saskatchewan are required to be deposited with the library, and the library's mandate includes responsibility for the long-term preservation of these publications.

The situation that we have with these publications is that a majority of them, particularly those dating prior to 1988 were printed on paper that is deteriorating and is at risk for eventual crumbling due to the acidity of the paper, and this has to do with the history of paper production. Prior to roughly the 1850s, paper was produced in smaller quantities and was largely produced from cotton and linen rags. Cotton and flax fibres have relatively long fibre structures, and paper produced from them was quite strong. After the 1850s, paper demand increased substantially and paper production shifted to using wood which

was pulped resulting in smaller fibres, and additionally at that time chemical agents were typically added to the paper to prevent bleeding of inks.

It was later learned that this chemical agent reacts with moisture in the environment to produce sulphuric acid. A significant effort was undertaken by major world libraries in the 1980s to raise attention to this problem. This effort eventually resulted in the development of a de-acidification treatment that neutralizes the acids in acidic publications. It also resulted in the development of an international standard for an alkaline permanent paper that is now an option for publishers and printers. Publications that are acidic will develop bronzing of the paper and varying degrees of brittleness. The brittleness eventually causes the paper to break and crumble. A sample test of Saskatchewan government publications in the library collection shows that most if not all volumes printed before 1988 are acidic, and our older materials are showing pronounced bronzing and varying degrees of brittleness.

[17:45]

De-acidification inserts an alkaline buffer into the paper that neutralizes the existing acid, and it also provides an alkaline buffer that will neutralize acids that the paper may absorb in the future due to acids in the broader environment. So de-acidification cannot reverse the deterioration that has already occurred, but it does neutralize the acids and prevents further deterioration and extends the lifespan of the publications significantly, and the Library of Congress estimates it will extend the lifespan of publications by several centuries. It costs approximately \$5,000 to de-acidify 200 publications. And this request is for \$108,000, and we're estimating that that would de-acidify around 4,300 publications in our collection.

Just a reminder, as it was pointed out earlier, to disregard the sentence under project costs. We are requesting \$108,000 for the upcoming budget cycle. We do consider this to be year 1 of a multi-year effort, but it's really premature for us to estimate costs in subsequent fiscal years.

And I'd be happy to answer any questions that you have. And I'll ask Pat to come up as well. She has a few sample publications that we can pass around to show you the situation with a couple of the documents.

The Chair: — Mr. Harrison.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — The primary question I had was just with respect to how we're going to phase or the proposal for phasing. Which documents are first, and what are we actually talking about in terms of the items? What are we working on first?

Ms. Bennett: — Our focus first is on legislative publications and statutory publications. We consider those to be the most critical to our collection, and we want to start working from there.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — So those would be old *Hansards* and that sort of thing.

Ms. Bennett: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay.

Ms. Bennett: — Also we have an issue with our *Gazettes* as well as Royal Commissions. We consider those to be an important component of that part of the collection.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Have any of these . . . In any of the *Hansards* that we have going back, I mean, some of them a century, have any of those been digitized at any point? They have?

Ms. Bennett: — Yes. Some have.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Some have.

Mr. Putz: — All of them back to 1947 have been digitized, and Lenni can correct me if I'm wrong. They're available on our website.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Are they?

Ms. Frohman: — The *Hansards* are.

Mr. Putz: — The *Hansard*, yes.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Are there plans to go back any further with the . . .

Mr. Putz: — That is the extent of going back. That was when we began *Hansard* as we know it today. Previous to that there was notes taken by the Clerks at the table, and there's also sort of a newspaper *Hansard*, but nothing done by the Assembly service or the Legislative Assembly itself.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay.

Mr. Putz: — And when the Clerk did it of important speeches, the Clerks in those days did shorthand. Don't ask me to do that. Budget speeches and that sort of thing were taken down and included in the *Journal* of the day just so there'd be a record of what was actually said on what was deemed to be the important speeches.

The Chair: — Okay. Any other questions? Does Pat want to show us . . .

Ms. Kolesar: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We just have a few samples to give people an idea of what things look like. The first one is the 1937 volume of the *Saskatchewan Gazette*, which as you can see — and I'll pass it around — is showing significant bronzing. And if you're very, very careful — and I'll try not to look if you do this — and you attempt to fold the corner over, you will feel it begin to snap under your fingers. So at this point, the bronzing will never be removed. It will still be as weak as it is now, but it won't hopefully get any worse soon. So that's the first example.

And a couple of other samples are earlier. They go back to the territorial days. We have the *Public Accounts of the North-West Territories* for 1895 and 1896. Less prominent bronzing on them, less fragile, but if you look on the inside you'll see the fly-leaves that were inserted by the binder are considerably more bronze and they've actually, some of them, broken out.

And again we'd like to prevent this sort of thing from getting any worse than it already is.

And Melissa mentioned in her introduction that a lot of publications up to the 1980s and 1990s are also showing these problems. I have the annual report of the Legislative Library. The first one is for the years 1982-1983. It was printed on regular paper available at the time, and if I mark it with a testing pen, you'll see that that line has turned yellow. That indicates that there's acid in this paper. In 1992 we published our first report on non-acid paper, and again we can test and see that purple line remains purple, showing that there's no acid. Now once you get into this period, you pretty much have to put a little dot on something and check them all. So there will be as we get closer to today, we'll find some that don't have to be sent away, some that do, which is why we can't really estimate at this time exactly how many items there are going to be.

Ms. Eagles: — And you send these away you say to . . . [inaudible].

Ms. Kolesar: — We have a sample sent out currently to Preservation Technologies international in Ontario. Those are my office copies by the way so I'm not . . . They're not the ones that belong to the library.

The Chair: — Is this the infamous Craig James?

Mr. Putz: — [Inaudible] . . . categorizing him as infamous? Craig James did start here in the Legislative Library. The reason the Speaker is saying that is he's now the Clerk of the British Columbia Legislative Assembly.

We have one third and final project to present to you. There's a fourth one but I'd leave it up to the Speaker whether he wants to say anything about that, but it's rather a very minor project.

The third project we want to mention is the Chamber desk lock replacement, and this is something that's under the jurisdiction of our Sergeant-at-Arms who under our standing orders is responsible for the fixtures in the Chamber. But Patrick couldn't be with us today so Ken is going to present the very small project that we're proposing here on his behalf. So, Ken.

Mr. Ring: — Thank you, Mr. Clerk. So just pretend I'm Pat. I'm almost there. And I'm going to speak to you about the Chamber desk locks, something that members probably know more about than I do because we don't have any locks on the table for the Clerks, but I did do a bit of investigation in the last few days. And the issue there is the locks on the desks date from the early teens. Some of them we believe are the original locks, and they're becoming less and less reliable. There are only four keys for the 58 desks or 57 desks in the Chamber, so if you have one key you can open up several desks if you try hard enough. And so we'd like to change those.

One of the challenges that Government Services is having finding a lock replacement is that the desks open up as opposed to a drawer pulling out. And once you open the desk, it's narrower than the way furniture's made now. So they're having difficulty finding a lock that will fit that actually is a clasp as opposed to just something that stands up like a regular desk drawer. Those won't work because the desks lift up.

So the cost for it will be between 7 and \$100 for locks that . . . if they can find one, and then carpentry of about \$150 per desk so that they can replace those locks because they're not working as well as they used to and they don't provide a sufficient level of security. So unless you have any questions on that, that would be the extent of that. It's on page 17 and we're asking for \$12,000.

The Chair: — And the final item is the restoration of a pre-Legislative Building artifact, a Chamber desk. We had a desk donated to us by the granddaughter of a former MLA, Thomas Arnold Anderson, who was a member of the Provincial Rights Party. They didn't call them parties. He was Provincial Rights and he was an MLA from 1908 to 1912 for the constituency of Last Mountain.

And in 1912 they moved into the new Legislative Building and the Chamber and the previous members were given their desks. So they didn't actually bring them over to this building. So they would have been in the Territorial Building or Government House, the Territorial Building. And so we actually have three of them that have been returned to the legislature I believe. There's one in the library, is there not, Melissa? One of the original member's desks is in the library? Okay. And there is one in the Speaker's office and this is the third one.

And we are also starting to have a collection of former Speakers' chairs. We have, I think, two currently and we may have a possibility of a third one being donated back, because Speakers were also given their chairs to take home when they were no longer the Speaker. And their great-grandchildren don't know what to do with them now. Go ahead.

Ms. Eagles: — Mr. Minister, you mentioned about the desk. How many . . . Like, you said there was three. Out of how many, or don't you know that?

The Chair: — No. It would be around 20 maybe or somewhere in that kind of a number. You'd have to go and look at the pictures on the wall. There wasn't 58 or, you know, a large number. It was a small number.

Ms. Eagles: — No. I knew that. Yes, yes. Okay.

The Chair: — So these are important artifacts.

Mr. Putz: — I don't think we know how many desks were produced. But for instance, the desks that members currently sit in, at one time we had 66 members and I think at one time they produced 75 desks — maybe Lorraine knows for sure if she's here — because they expected the province to expand. So I would presume that there were more desks than there were members at the time too. But we just don't know.

And as Mr. Speaker said, this is the third one that we know of. Two have been restored and are in the building, one in the Speaker's office and one was moved from the library to the display in the rotunda during the centennial year and that's where it remains.

The Chair: — Okay. Any further questions on RARF? Okay, we will carry on then. Any questions, Mr. Harrison?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — No.

The Chair: — Any other questions related to the LAS budgets?
If not, Mr. Harrison.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Great. Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I just want to put on the record the appreciation we have for the presentation from LAS, but also from all of the independent officers who made thorough presentations and answered our questions in a thorough and forthright fashion. So I want to put that on the record.

I think that there's been discussion between the parties, Mr. Speaker, with regard to deferring consideration of the actual decision making on the budget allocations. We've only been in possession of the materials for two or three business days in some cases, and we're making decisions that are in the neighbourhood of \$40 million in the aggregate. So I think there's a feeling that perhaps we should have an opportunity to do some more thorough work with regard to these matters and have an opportunity for our colleagues to be involved in those discussions as well.

And further to that, and it's through no fault of any of the officers or the LAS or anything of that sort, everybody kind of followed the rules as they were put forward in terms of submission of the budget estimates that they had.

[18:00]

I would suggest that we might want to think about, for next year and subsequent years, having an earlier date of submission for the independent officers and for the LAS such that we would be able to consider or hear the submissions in December and then have the opportunity to make the actual decisions perhaps subsequent to Christmas. But at least have a period of time in which we can discuss, deliberate, and have our colleagues have an opportunity to take a look at the submissions and estimates as well.

So I guess I would be moving that we adjourn committee and that we reschedule for an appropriate time where members can be present to actually do the decisions with regard to the estimate submitted.

The Chair: — Okay. We have a motion on the floor for adjournment. Any discussion? I know you're not supposed to discuss adjournments, but the member had a long discussion with his adjournment motion. So if anybody else would like to have any? Otherwise I'm assuming that is to the call of the Chair for the next meeting in discussions with government and opposition. We don't need a seconder, I don't believe, for adjournment. All in favour of adjournment?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. This committee stands adjourned to the call of the Chair.

[The board adjourned at 18:01.]