



Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

HANSARD VERBATIM REPORT



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BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

Hon. Dan D'Autremont, Chair
Cannington

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff
Saskatoon Silver Springs

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 12:32.]

The Chair: — Okay, we will start. I'd like to call this meeting of the Board of Internal Economy to order. With us today we have the Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff, Government House Leader; the Hon. Jeremy Harrison, Minister for Immigration and other things; MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] Doreen Eagles, government caucus Chair. We have MLA Warren McCall, the Opposition House Leader; and MLA David Forbes, the opposition caucus Chair.

Before you, you see the agenda for the day. I wonder if someone would move adoption of the agenda, please. Mr. McCall. Seconder? Mr. Cheveldayoff. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. First item of business on the agenda is item no. 1, a tabling item: response to the audit letter regarding audit of the Board of Internal Economy, Legislative Assembly Service for the year ending March 31, 2014. You have it in your package under item no. 1. Are there any questions?

We will revert back to the agenda item that doesn't have a number, the minutes of the previous meetings. If someone would move that the proposed minutes from meetings 09/14, 10/14, and 11/14 be adopted. Would someone move that? Mr. Harrison, seconded by Mr. Forbes. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Okay, now we can deal with item no. 1: tabling of the audit letter regarding the audit of the Board of Internal Economy, Legislative Assembly Service for the year ending March 31st, 2014. I table that.

Item no. 2, tabling and decision item: approval of the Legislative Assembly's third quarter expenditure report for the fiscal year 2014-15. If you look in your information, that is item no. 2. Any questions? If not, could we have someone move the adoption that the third quarter expenditure report of the fiscal year 2014-2015 for vote 021, Legislative Assembly, be approved? Mr. Cheveldayoff. Seconder? Mr. McCall. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Okay, item no. 3, tabling and decision item: approval of the Legislative Assembly mid-year report on progress 2014-2015. You will find that under item no. 3 in your binders. Any questions? If not, would someone move adoption of that report? Ms. Eagles. Seconder, Mr. McCall. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Item no. 4, tabling item: report of the Chief Electoral Officer pursuant to subsection 7(6) of *The Election Act, 1996* regarding actions taken during the constituency of Lloydminster by-election. You will find that under item no. 4 in your binder. Any questions? If not, I will table that item.

Item no. 5, discussion and decision items: special warrant funding requests, Office of the Advocate for Children and Youth. Mr. Pringle, would you come forward please, and your staff.

This item deals with a personnel matter, so if we could have a motion to go in camera please. Mr. Harrison. Mr. McCall. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — This meeting now moves in camera with Mr. Pringle and his staff member.

[The board continued in camera from 12:38 until 12:55.]

The Chair: — Okay, this committee is reconvened. We have before us a motion. If someone would move:

That additional funding in the amount of \$133,000 be approved for vote 076, Advocate for Children and Youth office for the 2014-15 fiscal year; and

That the said amount be transmitted by the Chair to the Minister of Finance for approval as a special warrant by February 1st, 2015.

Would someone move that please? Mr. Harrison. Seconder? Mr. Forbes. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Okay, that was item 5(a). We will now move on to item 5(b), decision item: review of the 2015-16 budget and motion to approve the budgetary and statutory expenditure estimates for the Advocate for Children and Youth. Before us we have the child advocate, Mr. Bob Pringle. And Bob, if you would introduce your staff and proceed with your presentation please.

Advocate for Children and Youth

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and board members. I have the honour of having Bernie Rodier here, our director of administration, who has been with me every year, and I appreciate her great leadership.

I appreciate again the opportunity to meet with you, and Happy New Year to you and your families. At the outset, I want to say a heartfelt thank you for your support. And as I enter my fifth year, you've been very supportive to the work that we do, and thanks for your interest in the health and safety and the well-being and the value of our children. We've always felt that from your board, so we appreciate that.

One year ago we were talking about moving into new space in Saskatoon with the Ombudsman. Of course, that has gone well; we appreciate your support there. And you know, we continue to work together well and share services and resources where we can and try and gain all the economies that we can in that arrangement, which has really worked well for us.

It's pretty clear, and I'm sure you feel it as well — and we get feedback from the community on an ongoing basis, but also to the fairly high-profile public reports that we release — that there's clearly a growing public expectation in Saskatchewan, and rightly so, that our children be safe and protected, and that all of our agencies who serve children, whether government agencies or child-serving agencies including First Nations agencies, 17 agencies around the province, that we all be, including our office of course, that we all be accountable and transparent.

And I feel this increased, I wouldn't say pressure, but it's really an increased expectation, and there's no question about that. And you know, in the last year there was a series of articles about child deaths in the media every single day, and that raised a lot of awareness about, a perception about children dying. And of course the public gets concerned when that happens, and again rightly so. And we see, we get notified of every child death and every critical injury of children, and then we have, we process those in terms of whether we do a quick review or a full-fledged investigation.

But clearly the expectation that we feel is clear, and it's a responsibility that we are — because of your direction, because of the fact we report to the legislature, as you know — we are a voice for children, and we're expected to ensure that their rights are met. Their rights to be safe and protected and to be at the centre of all planning around them is what our children have a right to experience, and you hold me accountable for that.

[13:00]

Now that is a bit of a challenge for us right now because in 2014 we experienced perhaps the single biggest increase in the number of files that come to our office. Our total files, and I could go into some of that detail if you wanted me to later, but it's up almost 8 per cent, 7.8 per cent in the last year. And I think this is primarily because of the greater awareness about our office. We had three major public reports last year, and so I think that there's an increased awareness about what we do and the role we play.

And I don't think it has to do with the situation deteriorating. I think in many ways services are improving; I'll talk a bit about that in a minute. But certainly we're increasingly relied on and counted on by the public and child welfare stakeholders to resolve issues that place children at risk and where their families are moving through crises. So this increasing reliance on our resources, our office, and our need to respond to fulfill our legislative obligation I think is the reason for the increase.

In addition to that, of course, we are increasingly invited to important initiatives, to be part of those, to bring the child's rights lens and the child's rights voice to these. Now a couple of examples would be the counsel for children, a very good initiative. The independent legal representation for children in the child welfare system is a major step forward in child welfare, but the increased work for us there of course is we train the lawyers in children's rights.

And also another major area again, which we've been very vocal on in the past and we're really thrilled about the response, and that is to make it safer, to work together with the Ministry

of Justice and others to make it safer for children who have been sexually abused to testify safely in court. Again, this is a major initiative.

We've outlined some of the other initiatives that we've been invited to be engaged in, not to compromise their independence, but to bring the child's rights lens to those issues, and then to ensure that any initiatives are consistent with our Act in terms of the rights that children have to be at the centre of all planning around their lives. So as I say, these are important initiatives, but the other ones are highlighted in your report.

We work with organizations around the province. We're a small office. Around the province our advocates travel throughout the province, and we also work of course with the community-based organizations and the 17 First Nations child welfare agencies in the province.

Now I think it's important to recognize the complexity. We have two child welfare systems in the province, on-reserve and off-reserve, but you'll know as members of the legislature that at the end of the day the Minister of Social Services has accountability for all children in the province and their safety. And those are agreements with the First Nations agencies, then funded federally once the agreements are signed, to allow those agencies to provide child welfare services. And so they're delegated, and the ministry still has the oversight. And we still have the oversight, so we're responsible there too.

So these two systems, there's complexities within each of the systems, the provincial system and the First Nations system, and there are interface challenges. Our report, *Two Tragedies*, identified a number of those interface challenges where the two systems are challenged to work together. And there's still a lot of work to do here. And so we're actively engaged in trying to promote that kind of a common approach as common policies to assess the risk of children and common approaches.

And so I'm going to turn to some numbers here, but just a couple more comments, is that everyone in this room, everyone in this province, we value our children. We honour and respect our children. We all prioritize their safety and their protection. And we're making some good progress on long-standing issues: for example, better tools to assess whether a child can be left at home or needs to be removed, and then what kind of services are required; better prevention services; keeping families together; some progress in FASD [fetal alcohol spectrum disorder]. I mean this stuff is a work-in-progress, but we're not there yet, and I want to emphasize that. There are still many services required in the province.

The commission on addictions and mental health, I think, is a very good report, but there's no new services yet. So there's optimism there, but the services need to be put in place.

There are still unequal services to children across the province, which is always a challenge in a big geographic province like Saskatchewan. And there's also greater need required in some of the health care oversight in terms of service to children.

There's a greater need for consistency. It's one of the biggest challenges in the province, is have consistency between the regions, even where there are very good policies, and there are

many very good policies. And then compliance with those policies is another major issue and then, as I said, the interface between the on- and off-reserve child welfare systems. So we're making good progress, but there are still many children at risk and there are still many systemic changes that are required. And we're working hard with ministries and the First Nations and other agencies to try and address some of these.

So what I'm trying to say is the oversight role that we play is still needed. And I want to say that this board, the legislature, you've been very kind to us in my four years, and you've given us resources to generally, to generally maintain the integrity as an independent oversight officer. So I'm very grateful for that. But I'm also appealing to you to trust my assessment that we need additional support — I know, in a very tough year — additional support, another body or two, in order to be able to carry out the mandate as you expect me to do that. And so we're working flat out. And so my view is, I believe my view is to lay before you what resources we need to do the job you're asking me to do. So that's what I'm trying to do today. I'm not going to talk about what we do or the guiding principles or the model. That's all in the submission, unless there's some questions.

Then I'll just turn to the program of focus request. We're looking at some resources to address with some timeliness our investigations of the critical injuries and the deaths. There's a need to continue to move that backlog along. We're making good progress on that with the ministries of Social Services and Corrections, but if you wait too long, that's a justice issue in itself, right?

We need some support to continue with the oversight provided in health care. It's a huge system, and we need some support to strengthen our relationships with the child-and-youth-serving ministries and agencies. And that's very important in the First Nations agencies. You have to have that relationship.

So with these additional pressures if you will, with regard to new personal and non-personal services, a funding request in the amount of \$197,000 and non-salary funds as follows: one new investigator, one new administrative support person, non-salary costs to improve accessibility for communicating with young people across the province online, which is a way that they're communicating. And young people are contacting us more. We're getting more calls from young people all of the time. It used to be we'd get calls from adults, but to be a voice for youth, we need to be interacting with youth. And we need to be working with them, and we believe we're doing that.

The risks of not proceeding and not getting the support is related to the diminished, I believe to some degree — not to overblow it, but to some degree — certainly the diminished credibility and effectiveness of the office, missed opportunities to support communities and service providers to ensure that children's rights are protected, and preventable harm continuing to occur which could undermine public confidence in the office.

So on the summary, we made the budget request on two assumptions. One, 1.7 per cent economic adjustments for personal services and 2.5 per cent CPI [consumer price index] adjustments for non-personal services, which was our understanding of the guideline. And so for 2015-16, the

Advocate for Children and Youth is requesting \$2.792 million in budget funding. Within the 2015-16 budget request, the following program pressures are being requested totalling this amount: a status quo increased costs, in other words increments and cost-of-living adjustments that are negotiated in the COLA [cost-of-living adjustment] and so on of \$72,000, a new increase program cost and pressures totalling 197.

And in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, and board members, the status quo program request in the amount of 2.595 million is a zero-growth budget and maintains existing staff and existing service delivery levels. And this reflects a 2.9 per cent increase over the 2014-15 budget request, and then the additional 197 is being requested to address other programming pressures that I've tried to outline. To best address the pressures as outlined in my submission, I would respectfully ask that the Board of Internal Economy recommend to the Legislative Assembly a total appropriation for the Advocate for Children and Youth office, vote 076, in the amount of 2.792 million for 2015-16.

While we believe approval of our full funding request best addresses existing pressures, a second option is presented for the board's consideration, a second option in the amount of 2.647 million which is a \$124,000 increase over 2014-2015. And again this would include the so-called statutory requirements of 72 and then a request of a smaller amount of 52,000 to address a smaller portion of the previously identified pressure points. And thank you again for your patience, and I'd be happy to take any questions.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Pringle. Are there any questions from the committee? Mr. Harrison.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Not so much a question, I just wanted to thank you very much, Bob, for your submission and your thorough explanation as to your request for this year.

Just by way of background, I just kind of want to, you know, put on the record that we're going through a very challenging budget process right now. Treasury board has been working very hard on going through that process. Line ministries have been asked to put forward a minus 1.5 per cent budget for their submissions, and I can tell you, you know, it's a challenge. So you know, not to prejudge any of the discussions or the discussions that are going to happen amongst members of the board, I want to thank you but also to just put that by way of background onto the record.

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much. Which is why we gave you the second option too because, I mean, we live in the province as well, and so we're trying to lay out what we feel we need to but to also to be as reasonable as we can. Thank you.

The Chair: — Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much and thank you for your presentation. It was very thorough. Just a couple of specific questions. I'm curious you don't have in here what your staff complement looks like, and I'm wondering how many investigators do you have now? And what is your backlog? What kind of impact do you think this one person, this one investigator would have? And is that person probably going to be in Regina? Like looking ahead in terms of what we're going

to be talking about further down the road, would that person be in the Regina office, or are you . . . That's further, to be discussed more later.

[13:15]

Mr. Pringle: — Yes. Thank you very much. Well we have three investigators, full-time investigators. And there are various reasons for the backlog. Some of that has to do with that we do not have coroner's reports yet. For example, we do not have, even for 2013, coroner's report on one child death in 2013, and certainly only about half of those for 2014.

So with an additional investigator, we're able to put in place . . . A couple of years ago, we cut our backlog in half, but we still, you know . . . And there's the court processes that have to go forward. There's lots of reasons why there may be a backlog. But having said that, we've made good progress. But we're still dealing with some investigations, you know, from 2011, 2012, and so we're trying to be a little more current. And some of those, we can't do anything about because of the court, the coroner and so on. We can't speed those up, but we still feel as there's work we can do.

So again, it's the actual, the detailed investigations, I mean they're very time consuming. We actually do not do that many full investigations. What we do is we work with the ministries to help them strengthen their internal investigations. So we kind of help sign off the framework that they use, and then that means we're getting better investigations internally when something happens. Then we don't have to do as many ourselves, although we may have to pursue parts of those.

And then every investigation has a number of questions, a number of recommendations, that we have to track those and follow up with the ministries and make sure that we . . . Until those recommendations are implemented, we don't write those off. They're a standing recommendation we continue to press for. So that alone is a fairly major part of it, is negotiating around changes that we want to see, especially systemic issues. So we believe one more investigator would put us where we need to be, and we'll be able to keep current.

Mr. Forbes: — I think the question was, would that person be in Regina or Saskatoon?

Mr. Pringle: — Yes. Well I mean, I can talk later if you want me to about our interest in the space. I mean, this is an opportunity, is an opportunity for us. Do I have a specific plan to place a staff member in the Regina space this coming year? No, I don't. But I'm here all the time and the advocate's here all the time; so there were three of us here yesterday. So we're here but we have no place to go when we're here, right? But certainly in the longer term, I think it's a desire of the legislature, and the feedback I've got, that we would like to be pooled with our counterparts, but that might be a year or two away in terms of someone located here.

The Chair: — Any further questions? I have a question or two. In Saskatoon you share an office space with the Ombudsman, and I believe that the Ombudsman has brought forward some new ideas on efficiencies within the office space. I'm wondering if any of those ideas are resonating within your

office as well.

Mr. Pringle: — You mean efficiencies in Saskatoon?

The Chair: — Yes.

Mr. Pringle: — Well Bernie might be better able to answer that. We're meeting on a regular basis, our directors of administration, on mutual efficiencies. But I'm going to turn that over to Bernie . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, if they're the ones, if they're brand new ones that are not ones that we have in place now, I'm not aware of what they are. But I'm aware of what we are now doing, but if there's some new ones beyond that, I've not been apprised to what those are.

The Chair: — I'm just wondering if there was some cross-pollination happening there.

Mr. Pringle: — Well I think there's very good co-operation. I mean we've always done that, as you know, Mr. Speaker. We've been — and members — we've been sharing an office space for many, many years, you know, using the same photocopier and all of those things, and we have our separate files and so on. But as far as I know, we're co-operating on all the areas possible, but there may be something I'm not aware of.

The Chair: — Thank you. Within your budget request, you note in-province travel. Now this budget would have been prepared, you know, towards the end of December, in that time period, and the price of fuel has changed dramatically since then. Would you have any kind of an estimate as to what the roughly 25 per cent drop in the price of fuel will have on your budget?

Mr. Pringle: — I believe we don't have that calculated, Mr. Speaker, and board members. We have two CVA [central vehicle agency] vehicles, and then we pay mileage to our advocates who, as you know, travel throughout the province. And that's a very good question; I just don't know. . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . CVA charges are determined by the central vehicle agency and then the mileage is collectively set. So we don't have control over that. I mean, our mileage rates, I can tell you that most community-based organizations have higher mileage rates than we do. I mean we appreciate what they are, but so I don't know what to say to you on that.

The Chair: — Okay, thank you. That's all the questions I had. Okay, if there are no other questions, we will hold the decision making in abeyance for now, and we will return to it later. So thank you, Mr. Pringle. Thank you, Bernie.

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much.

The Chair: — Okay. Item no. 6, discussion item: joint funding request for shared tenant space in Regina office of the Ombudsman, Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and Lobbyist Registrar, and Office of the Advocate for Children and Youth. And I notice that you have the deputy minister for Central Services there, so we could get any fuel prices we need.

I'd like to welcome the Ombudsman, Ms. Mary McFadyen; the

Privacy Commissioner, Mr. Ron Kruzeniski; and the deputy minister for Central Services, Richard Murray. So if you would like to proceed, Mary.

Joint Funding Request for Shared Tenant Space

Ms. McFadyen: — Thank you. Thank you for adding this item to the agenda and for allowing us to file our material at such a late date. Because of that, Mr. Kruzeniski and I would be the main occupants of this space, he and I will give the main submission. We're thankful Richard Murray came as well, if there's any questions that we can direct to him.

This is a project that several officers of the Legislative Assembly have been discussing for about 10 years, and it would see the Office of the Ombudsman, the Privacy Commissioner, Conflict of Interest Commissioner, Advocate for Children and Youth co-locating their offices in Regina. And since the middle of last year, even though it's been talked about for 10 years, since the middle of last year we've made a lot of progress on this initiative.

However, given the direction from Premier and cabinet to executive government about exercising fiscal restraint and limiting spending, we do appreciate that the timing of our request today may not be ideal. I just want to get that out there. In fact we did ask the Speaker a couple of weeks ago if it was appropriate for us even to bring the matter forward at this time. But given that we have done a lot of work on this in the last six months, and given that the project has already been before the board on several other occasions, it has remained on the agenda, and we appreciate having the opportunity to provide you with an update of what we have done and to get your direction.

In 2013-14 the board had approved \$60,000 funding to be used for us to assess what our functional requirements were and to design and develop drawings for some space. However, nothing was done at that time, mostly because the Privacy Commissioner's office and my office were both in transition because the officers had left. So that money was returned. So anyway with respect to the project, when the idea was floated around 10 years ago, it had merit and it still has merit today.

If we co-located our offices, we would hope that would provide some cost savings and a greater opportunity to find efficiencies. We all require the same types of accommodation and space such as meeting rooms, interview rooms, washrooms, and we could share these common spaces. As well, the idea was that it would be sort of a one-stop shop for citizens, meaning that it would be beneficial for citizens to have these offices in one location where citizens could come to complain about government. It would make it easier for citizens to access these services.

So since the middle of last year we brought this idea closer to reality. We got together in July. We determined what our needs were. Central Services has been very helpful. They've tried to find us appropriate space, and a request for proposals to find a location was initiated late last year. The project is timely. The leases for my office and Mr. Kruzeniski's office are up for renewal and both of our offices have outgrown their space. My office has been in its same space since 1994, and we have grown in numbers. For example, in 2011 the Ombudsman was

given the increased mandate in the health sector and was given the public interest disclosure mandate. This increased our staff in Regina by two people. We also host Mr. Barclay in one of our offices, as he does not have permanent space elsewhere, and we're happy to do so.

We have some people double-bunked and sometimes we're even triple-bunked. And often we have to use our one interview room as an office, which limits our ability to serve citizens.

And just before I close and I hand it off to Mr. Kruzeniski, while we appreciate the initiative does not necessarily reduce our space, it's not intended to significantly increase our space. But we're planning for the future; the space would meet our present needs and we should be positioned for the next 10 years if we get the appropriate space. So we wouldn't be back here again.

So I'll let Mr. Kruzeniski get into the details of our submission. Thank you.

Mr. Kruzeniski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and members of the board. And I want to thank Mary and her staff, and Pam in our office, for the work they've done on this project. And as Mary had said, this has been discussed for a good number of years. And a fair amount of work occurred in 2014, and that's why we brought it forward even though the economics of oil have intervened.

In many respects I believe the stars have all aligned for this project. For example, in the information and privacy office, our lease is up June 30th. So we'll be asking Mr. Murray to either renegotiate that or work on this proposal. With the decisions made by the board last year, last August, three additional staff were added to my office, which was greatly appreciated, and we had to find temporary space in the same building. We found space on the 12th floor and, although it's workable, it's not the most efficient way of doing business.

We have a boardroom and we use that boardroom, but it's not used all the time. And it strikes me an opportunity for four officers to co-locate and use such things as boardrooms. We'd just get a lot more bang for the buck, so to speak.

Mary has mentioned her lease is up and into short-term renewals. Mr. Barclay, his office is expanding at a rapid rate, and he's in temporary space and really needs a permanent home. If we don't proceed with this shortly, alternate arrangements will be made and then part of the opportunity is lost. And Mr. Pringle, in the little discussion about that earlier, I just saw a real opportunity here for a presence in Regina, a permanent base when Mr. Pringle is here or the advocates from his office are here, and just a great opportunity.

[13:30]

As Mary indicated, we went through the RFP [request for proposal] process. And one of the sites sort of meets so many of the criteria that we collectively need: a storefront where it's easy to put up signage, a separation from other government ministries that people may be complaining about in the downtown core where a lot of our meetings take place, where we're meeting with people from many of the ministries there.

So many things just kind of aligned up. And obviously one can think ahead and say, if we don't grab this opportunity, then will that space be available in the future. As Mary said, we are aware of the economics of oil, and it would have been nicer to be bringing forward this three, four months ago but it wasn't working that way. A lot of work was put into where we are today, and that's why we brought it forward. I sort of view this as a 10- to 20-year initiative that once our offices got co-located, we would be there for a very long time.

So, Mr. Chair, and board members, if you see your way to agree with this proposal, of course we'll be absolutely delighted. If you see some difficulties because of the current economy, I guess we would ask that you allow us to come back and speak to you some time in the future when things look a little bit better. I particularly want to, as Mary has done, recognize Richard Murray. He and his staff have been really helpful, with some of the short, tight lines in January, they've been helpful in getting us here today. So I would ask if you have difficult questions, you direct them to Richard, and Mary and I will handle the rest.

The Chair: — Okay. Well thank you very much. Also joining the members at the table are Mr. Ron Barclay, the Information and Privacy Commissioner; and Mr. Pringle, the child advocate as well. Or Conflict of Interest Commissioner. Sorry, Mr. Barclay. Did you have something to say?

Mr. Barclay: — Yes.

The Chair: — Okay.

Mr. Barclay: — Yes, I did, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I wanted to echo the remarks of Ron and Mary in respect to the shared space project, as it has rather major implications for my mandate. Prior to my new responsibilities as the registrar for the lobbyist, I have for the last five years had space with the Ombudsman, and it's been a very good marriage. It's been very beneficial to me and cost prudent as I use their executive secretary at no cost and only pay a nominal amount for rent.

Unfortunately, when my mandate was expanded, there was no room for my new staff. We have made temporary arrangements for space in Victoria Tower until the shared project was completed. Now if this project is cancelled, the temporary space — although satisfactory for a few months — is completely unacceptable on a permanent basis, so I'd have to acquire new space. And I gather the only cost, well it's a major cost, but the only costs are renovations. So that would be part of the puzzle. If I do move, then there would be renovation costs. Because once we launch the lobbyist registry, there's going to be a lot of public interest and we'll be having a lot of public coming to our office to start the project. Also I would have to hire a new executive secretary, as I would no longer be in a position to use the executive secretary in the Ombudsman's office. So that's another factor to take into consideration.

And I've also, over the last five years, been able to consult with the Ombudsman and now their counsel, Greg Sykes, who is very knowledgeable in respect to the lobbyist legislation. And I feel that that relationship has been worthwhile for me and worthwhile for my office.

The only other benefit I would lose if we can't move, and I understand that we may be moving into the old Bay building and, as you know, I live in the TD Bank building, and I was thinking of perhaps persuading you to let me have a pedway to go across the street when it's cold.

The Chair: — A zip line.

Mr. Barclay: — Yes. But other than that, no it really affects my operations. And I'm hopeful, I realize that we're in a serious problem with costs, but I'm hopeful that you will seriously consider it.

The Chair: — Mr. Harrison.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Sure. No, I really want to thank all of the officers for being engaged in this project. And I know the board has asked, I think on a number of occasions that, you know, we take a very hard look at this, and I very much appreciate the officers for doing so.

I want to thank as well Central Services for the work that's been done. And I know this has obviously been turned around on a pretty tight time frame, with the RFP closing only two weeks ago, and the building tours taking place last week. Is that right? ... [inaudible interjection] ... Yes, which really shows the dedication that Central Services has had for this as well.

So you know, we'll be obviously having a discussion at the board here later today with regard to the proposal. But you know, whatever we decide, I really want to acknowledge and thank the officers for your commitment to working together on this.

The Chair: — Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much and thanks for the proposal. I'm curious about the signage and sort of the branding and how you foresee that. Have you talked about that, or is that just going to be four shingles, and yours will be 44 per cent and then somebody else's will be 12 per cent or you have to work out who gets the top?

Ms. McFadyen: — That was one of the issues we looked at when we were looking at space, was would we all be able to have a sign so people could find us. And so that was one of the things that we looked at at each property that we looked at. The space that we were the most interested in, there would be a place to have proper signage so people could find us. But we would each still have our own ... We all do different roles, so there wouldn't be one big conglomerate logo. We'd still have our own little logos.

Mr. Forbes: — Well I'm curious about that because you talk about one-stop shopping. So you'd want to say ... I don't know, but if ... [inaudible].

Ms. McFadyen: — No, and we'd make sure the signage was clear so people knew where to go.

Mr. Forbes: — This is ... You're still yourself.

Ms. McFadyen: — Yes, exactly.

Mr. Barclay: — Mr. Forbes, we've had some experience with signage because we're in the same office as Tony Merchant. And when you have the Merchant sign on the side of a building, it sort of takes precedence over everything else.

Mr. McCall: — But no complaints are us sign coming any time soon.

Mr. Kruzeniski: — If I might just add, our office is currently in a 12-storey building and, you know, you may get some space on the directory inside near the elevators, but you're certainly not going to get signage outside. And I think what was ideal about the one site we were looking at, is it is on the main floor, and the common phrase is storefront. But it would be very easy to have signage out there, and people walking by, they'd know exactly who's located in here. So being on one floor and being on the main floor just creates that opportunity for quite good signage.

The Chair: — Any other questions? I have some. You're looking at basically \$1.5 million here. I wonder if Richard could give us somewhat of a breakdown of the renovation costs and the design space costs — unknown challenges, opportunities, relocation costs, etc. If you could give us a breakdown of those costs.

Mr. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll note that we do not obviously have a detailed design at this time. We have some industry-standard figures that we work with when we look at space. Those figures run between 110 to \$130 a square foot for space like this, and then we'll add or subtract based on challenges associated with the space. So if we know the space is not a good fit or it misses the mark or it's already well fitted out and it's going to require a significant amount of demolition or things like that, then we'll add to or subtract from those numbers.

By the way, I made a vow to my staff that I'd switch to square metres on January 1st, and today I've already drifted away from that. So \$1,200 a square metre to \$1,400 a square metre. And I will note that the Elections Saskatchewan space that we fitted up last year, we took a shot at, \$1,250 a square metre was our estimate. And I'll just note that I assured the committee of the board that we would bring that one in on time and on budget, which we did. So our original estimate was \$1,250 in terms of a thumbnail estimate. That one came in, all in at \$1,243 a square metre. So we tend to be pretty adept at these early estimates.

Of course we will go from the early estimate, so our estimate of 1.499 million is based on \$1,327 a square foot, a little bit on the higher side of the range, based on what we know needs to be done there. And we're fairly comfortable with that number. That is what we call a class A estimate though, so it could range plus or minus 25 per cent at this point. But again I'll remind the board that we came in very close on the Elections Sask space.

The Chair: — That current space that you're looking at, that you received the RFP on, is it designed as office space currently? I don't know really what was in there.

Mr. Murray: — It is. Farm Credit Corporation had been in there, so it's fitted out as office space now. Not a lot of boardrooms, and a lot of open space. One of our challenges here

is that independent offices co-location is going to require space for four officers whose needs are a little bit different than for clerks, let's say, and 10 senior management. And there's also a much stricter confidentiality and security requirements than we might find in a FCC [Farm Credit Canada] equipped office.

So we went through the RFP process and we assessed it on the basis of signage opportunity, storefront access, accessibility, availability — is it on a bus route or not? — all of which are challenges in one form or another with the space that all of the officers are currently located in. Entry elevators shared with others. Nothing could be more embarrassing than coming in to complain about your ministry and finding your deputy on the elevator. That would be a challenge. And so separation clearly, ideally on the ground floor. A public reception area, secure.

We received eight bids back. Sorry, seven bids back. They kind of ran the gamut, and then we shortlisted down to four. Tours were provided, and this space is really is spot-on ideal. It's an excellent location, right on a key corner, half a block from buses, and kind of meets all of the other, all of the requirements in a very, very sensible way and would represent a total annual cost of about \$5,000 a year less than all of these other current spaces, some of which were signed when lease rates were a little bit higher in the city.

We took a sort of an early step at negotiation with the landlord to say, could we, if we went 10 years, could we see a reduction? We saw a reduction there. And we're also fairly comfortable in our fit-up costs, which we recognize may be bad timing, but yes, approximately \$1.5 million.

The Chair: — Two of the offices are up for renewal this year. Two of the offices have very little space available to them currently, so this would be making space available to them. With the possibilities of renewals of those office spaces, what kind of an impact is that going to have on the budget process if this option is not selected? Are we apt to see those costs increase? Now certainly for Mr. Barclay who doesn't have office space, is going to need it, we're going to see an increase there. We're going to see capital cost for renovations. But for the other two, would there . . . will the rents be increasing, decreasing? What'll be happening?

Mr. Murray: — I'll jump in and I'll suggest that Mr. Barclay will need 180 to \$225,000 in fit-up costs if this does not proceed. And that's again based on purely a rough estimate based on space requirements. Could be higher than that. I know Mr. Barclay's kind of cramped into some small space so could be higher, depending on the actual space requirements.

The other leases, one of them, Ombudsman, expires on January 31st, so next week. That will be renewed for 12 months at current rate as per the existing lease. And I sort of can't predict on where that one will go if, you know, we're back to January 2016 and looking at . . . The markets suggest today that it's \$425 a square metre now, so that one we're looking at after some amount of negotiation \$370 a square metre on the current space. So it's in the ballpark. And I think all these leases probably would be renewed in the ballpark of where they're at now.

The Information and Privacy Commissioner's space expires on

June 30th. We'll go over . . . [inaudible] . . . month to month on that until we know what, you know, what specific decision has been made. That one is 435 a square metre, so it is also in the ballpark of, you know, sort of not inappropriate for the current market in the city parameters.

[13:45]

The Chair: — Okay. Any other questions? David.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes. Can you tell us where this space is or is that confidential?

Mr. Murray: — Yes, absolutely I can. The space is located at 1915 Hamilton Street, so it's next to the Aegean Coffee Shop. It's on the back side of the building that Central Services is currently located in. Some may know it as the old Bay building. It is now Harvard, the space.

Mr. Forbes: — Sure.

Mr. Murray: — Oh yes, a very nice space on the southwest corner of Hamilton and 12th Avenue.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Isn't that where the coffee shop is?

Mr. Murray: — Yes. It's right immediately adjacent or you might think of it as being behind the coffee shop.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay.

Mr. Murray: — And zip line accessible from the condos across the street. And I guess if I may, I'll just note that these other leases, they're a mixed bag. There's a mix of class B space. There's parking challenges. There's accessibility challenges. There's elevator issues. So that current space isn't working. This is a, we believe, a very nice solution to this problem. We do appreciate, with all due respect, the challenges of the budgetary process of this year. Thank you.

The Chair: — Okay. Thank you very much. We will continue this discussion later. So thank you for your presentations.

Mr. Barclay: — And the other thing is I think what I'm saying to the members, they should come down by bus to save money.

The Chair: — Yes, or walk.

Okay. We will move on to item no. 7, decision item, review of the 2015-16 budget and motion to approve budgetary and statutory expenditure estimates for the Office of the Ombudsman. So ladies and gentlemen, in your binders, item no. 7. I'd like to welcome the Ombudsman, Ms. Mary McFadyen, and staff. If you could introduce your staff member and proceed with your presentation, please.

Office of the Ombudsman

Ms. McFadyen: — Just before we get started, did you want Mr. Murray to make himself available later? Just before he leaves.

The Chair: — Yes. But that would be approximately 5 o'clock,

6 o'clock, something like that. So you could return to work.

Mr. Murray: — Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: — Yes, you can come back. You could come back for about 6 o'clock. We have sandwiches and soup.

Ms. McFadyen: — Thank you. Today I have Andrea Smandych with me from my office. She's the manager of corporate services. I think she's been here before, so everybody knows her. I'm pleased to be here today. It was just over a year ago that I was here, very nervous and making my pitch to be considered for the Ombudsman position. So I'm very pleased to be here again, having been appointed, and to present our '15-16 budget.

Since I started on April 1st of this year, everyone has been very welcoming. I've had the pleasure of working with and getting to know the officers. And I also count myself very lucky to have inherited a great staff at the office, including Andrea. And I also want to take the opportunity to thank Janet Mirwaldt who did a great job as acting before I arrived.

Today I will just propose to talk about the highlights of our submission. I will talk a little bit about our role, the type of work we do under both of our mandates, and then I'll talk a little bit about the work we've accomplished over the last year that we're very proud of. And then I'll comment on our future direction and our known pressures. So while we do have some increased pressures and anticipate our workload may increase in the upcoming year, we are not requesting an increase in our budget for the upcoming year other than what is required to maintain our existing programming.

Our office has been going strong for 40 years. We fulfill our role by helping the Legislative Assembly ensure that the executive branch of government delivers its services to its citizens fairly and in a timely manner. We carry out that role by receiving complaints from citizens about government services. We try to resolve those complaints informally, if possible and appropriate. By taking steps to resolve the complaint before we conduct a full investigation, we help citizens in an efficient and timely and cost-saving way. However sometimes it is inappropriate or not possible to resolve a complaint informally, and in those cases we will conduct formal reviews.

And then after conducting a formal review, we may make recommendations to the government institution in order to address the issues complained of. And one of our goals is that our recommendation should not only help the individual who brought the complaint to our office, but it should help other citizens in the future so that they do not encounter the same problems when they are accessing government services.

We are very proud that our work often results in changes to government practices, policies, and programs to make them more fair to all citizens of Saskatchewan, and we could not do this work without having good relationships with the government agencies that fall under our mandate. We work really hard to foster those relationships, and that has helped us do our job.

As for our statistics, on the Ombudsman side they have been

relatively steady. They have not fluctuated dramatically over the last few years. In 2014 we had about 3,000 complaints in total. Of those, 2,312 were within our jurisdiction. We also received 673 that were outside of our jurisdiction, meaning that the organization or the issue complained of did not fall within our mandate.

I know there was some interest in that figure last year at the board, so this figure includes complaints that we might receive about a municipality, which is not within our mandate. Sometimes they're about federal government organizations or programs — someone's complaining about their Canada pension; that's not within our mandate — complaints about court decisions, or private matters between individuals. So it's very much a gamut of what we would receive that doesn't fall within our jurisdiction. But when someone contacts us, even with a matter that does not fall within our jurisdiction, we still try to provide assistance. We try to give them information they need so that they can contact the right agency that is able to deal with their complaint.

So during 2014 we did have some significant changes at our office. At the start of the year our Saskatoon office relocated into a new shared space location with the advocate's office. And the board was very supportive of this initiative, and we thank you again for that support. Another change of course was that I joined the office in April. And as you know, our office has two locations — one in Regina, one in Saskatoon. That has its challenges, also has its opportunities, and we do make a continuous effort to make sure that the service that we give in both locations is consistent and that we use our resources efficiently.

When I appeared before the board last December in 2013, during the interview process, I was asked what some of my goals would be if I was appointed Ombudsman. I said one of the things I was interested in pursuing was making sure that the Ombudsman was serving all citizens of Saskatchewan and that all citizens were aware of our services.

In that regard, in our submission we have provided a breakdown of complaints we've received in 2014 by region. And one of the initiatives that we've pursued this year was the idea of the Ombudsman's office on the road, meaning that we looked for opportunities to provide services outside of Regina and outside of Saskatoon. For example, today our office is visiting Eatonia and Kindersley, and we are doing an information session. We will also set up a temporary office in Kindersley to take complaints directly from citizens, and the town office was very kind to provide us space.

In two weeks, on February 5th and 6th, we're going to be in Meadow Lake. We're doing two workshops at the Meadow Lake campus of North West Regional College, and we're participating in the law 30 class at Carpenter High School. We are also setting up a place to meet directly with citizens during the day.

As well as our mandate to receive and review complaints about government services, the legislation specifically says that we have the mandate to become involved in public education for the purpose of informing the public about fairness and the role of the Ombudsman. And the office has taken this part of its

mandate very seriously, and I continue to support that work. So we continue to provide public education on a regular basis.

In the past year we have provided fair practices training for many government organizations, including Social Services and Corrections among others. The training explains a little bit about what the Ombudsman is, but it is aimed at helping public servants who deal with the public understand what fairness is, how to better communicate with the public they deal with when they carry out their duties. And the training is really a bit of a pre-emptive ombudsman, in a way. So if we can help public servants deal with the public fairly, this should lead to less complaints coming to our office.

Since 2012 the Ombudsman has also served as the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner. That Act sets up a structure under which public servants are able to disclose allegations of wrongdoing within their government organizations, and the Act also provides that those who bring forward these allegations are protected from reprisal. So the commissioner's role under that legislation is to provide advice to public servants about the Act and to investigate allegations of wrongdoing that come directly to the commissioner. The commissioner also has the mandate to investigate complaints of reprisal brought forward by public servants who feel they have been retaliated against for bringing a wrongdoing to light under the Act.

This year we took steps to increase awareness of what the legislation was about and to make sure that public servants understood the Act. This included ensuring information about our Act was distributed throughout all government institutions, and we reached out to unions that represent public servants. We believe it is important that public servants understand that there is a safe way to speak out if they have concerns about wrongdoing in their workplace.

Also under the Act, government institutions must have procedures in place to deal with disclosures or wrongdoings. They must appoint a designated officer to deal with those disclosures and to ensure that information about the Act and their internal processes are widely communicated within their institution. So this year we undertook a compliance review to determine whether government institutions were meeting their obligations under the Act. We asked all government institutions to participate, and we received a very positive response. And we will be reporting out on the results of that review in our annual report.

I believe that there's more awareness out there now about the purpose of the Act. We have had an increase of 24 per cent in activity on our website, so to us, that shows that more people are interested in learning about the public interest disclosure system. Our statistics for this year, for 2014, reveal that the number of inquiries we've received from public servants under the Act is about the same as it was since 2012. This year we received eight inquiries and four disclosures which we are currently investigating.

As for future direction of the office, one of our top priorities right now is our investigation into long-term health care. In November, the Minister of Health requested that we review the care of a specific individual at the Santa Maria Senior Citizens Home in Regina. This investigation is ongoing. It has also

resulted in our office receiving more complaints about long-term health care. To date we have received 33 other complaints. These complaints come from all health regions and involve all different types of long-care health facilities.

We are dealing with each complaint individually. Some complaints have required our immediate attention, and we have taken steps to address these immediate issues. Some of the issues raised in these complaints we will be able to deal with as part of our larger investigation. Our goal is to determine whether there are system-wide factors contributing to the issues and concerns that residents and families have experienced with respect to long-term care and to make recommendations to address those concerns. We have three investigators dedicated to this investigation right now. One is handling all the individual calls and complaints that come to the office, and the two others are focused on completing the larger investigation.

On the public interest disclosure side, we will continue our public awareness role aimed at ensuring public servants and government institutions understand the reasons for the legislation. We will also continue to investigate any allegations of wrongdoing or reprisal that come into our office. And we do constantly review how we do things to see if there are ways we can be more efficient. In this regard, another decision we've made this year is we're going to combine our annual reports for the Ombudsman and commissioner because we believe this will be more efficient both in time and expenses.

[14:00]

As for our specific operating request, as I mentioned, we're not requesting any more resources at this time other than what is required to maintain our existing positions. We will operate within our means, and we will look for opportunities to save costs whenever we can. We're lucky we can share a number of services with Mr. Pringle's office in Saskatoon. In Regina we have had Mr. Barclay in our office since 2005. We provide him with support services at no charge.

There are a number of costs out of our control; this is, for instance, salaries. We have three in-scope employees. The known and anticipated collective salary increases are set out on page 14 of our submission. Under the collective agreement, the increases are estimated to be \$2,400. These positions receive increments annually until they're at the top of the range. That's \$4,700 this year.

The rest of our staff is out of scope. The economic increase has been estimated at 1.7 per cent and the flexible benefit plan increase at 1.7 per cent. Performance pay is estimated at within the range of 30,300. So the total anticipated increase from salaries for both in-scope and out-of-scope is \$77,800.

As for ongoing costs for goods and services, we've used an estimated 2.5 per cent increase for general inflation and the cost of doing business, which amounts to \$21,000.

For our computer system, our servers are in Saskatoon and they serve our office and the advocate's office. We've a network line down to the Regina office which we've had ongoing issues with, with speed and accessibility, and we anticipate this will be \$12,000 per year to improve the line to resolve our issues.

Therefore the total ongoing costs we are seeking is \$33,000 for ongoing costs.

So in conclusion, we've been fiscally responsible, and we understand that we have a large mandate to fulfill with finite resources. We are requesting funding to maintain programming at a status quo level for the next year, and we request the board to recommend to the Legislative Assembly an appropriation for our office for 3.533 million. This would ensure we can address our known increases and meet our legislative responsibilities under both pieces of legislation.

As well we are also asking the board to review and approve the wording used to describe our mandate and program activity in the Estimates document. It's on page 2 of our submission. We've reviewed the wording this year, and we feel that the changes proposed better reflect our dual mandate as both the Ombudsman and the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner's office. Thank you. That's all I have. I'd be pleased to take any questions.

The Chair: — Okay, thank you very much. Good job for your first time ever doing the presentation. Any questions? Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes, I had two points. But first, you alluded to the training on fairness and hoping that it had an impact on the number of complaints coming forward. Do you have any sense of whether that's the case or not?

Ms. McFadyen: — It's very hard to measure, I think. It's one of those things that we hope it does, and everybody that's taken this training has felt that it's helped them deal with people. We do also offer that training to constituency staff, and we've had many of your staff participate in these sessions. It should help.

An example I can give you is the Workers' Compensation Board. We used to receive quite a few more complaints than we do now about their services. And one of the recommendations we made is that they set up a complaint system so that people can go if they have issues and deal with internally. And when they did that and set up that office, it substantially decreased the number of complaints we received to, I think we had about 100 this year. So I do think there's value in this. It's pre-emptive work. I think we'll never end all the complaints, but it can't hurt.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes. And my other point, I appreciate your report and I thought it was quite excellent. And I was looking at your change in wording, and I don't really have any serious problems, but I do like some parts of the old wording.

And you've done a good job of recognizing that you're an officer of the Legislative Assembly and that's why you're here. You've done a great job of, you know, making reports and being available to the Legislative Assembly. Sometimes that's forgotten and sometimes people think the officers are actually just parts of the government. They're actually part of the Legislative Assembly, not part of the government formally.

And so, taking out the word Legislative Assembly, I'd be disappointed to see that go, just because it really signals to the public that you're not a government agency. You're an officer

of the Legislative Assembly, and that to me is a huge and very significant part. And that's why you have that ability to be unbiased, in that you're working for the people of Saskatchewan and not the government.

Ms. McFadyen: — That's a good point.

Mr. Forbes: — So I just wanted to highlight that part.

Ms. McFadyen: — We could add that into our mandate.

Mr. Forbes: — Sure. Otherwise, I understand that language has to change and stuff. But I noticed three or four times in your submission, you recognized that you are an officer of the Legislative Assembly.

Ms. McFadyen: — Right.

Mr. Forbes: — That's spot-on because that's what makes . . .

Ms. McFadyen: — If you remember, I used to work for the judicial branch of government.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes.

Ms. McFadyen: — And I'll tell you, that was hammered in my head every day at work.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes, there you go. Okay, there you go.

Ms. McFadyen: — I know the three levels of government off by heart.

Mr. Forbes: — I may be picky, but every time . . . But it's a small but critical part.

Ms. McFadyen: — So if we just added in a sentence to our vote 56, revise that "carries out these duties as an Officer of the Legislative Assembly," is that . . . would that allow . . .

Mr. Forbes: — I'm okay with that. I mean, I don't want to get into editing here, but . . .

The Chair: — Yes. What about "The Ombudsman, an officer of the Legislative Assembly, helps . . ."

Ms. McFadyen: — Yes. That would be perfect.

Mr. Forbes: — There you go.

The Chair: — Okay. Mr. Harrison.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes, thanks very much, Mary, for the presentation, and for the very thorough documentation that you provided. With respect to the submission, I think I might have missed your explanation on it, but if you could just go through it for me again, kind of specifically with regard to page 16 where the increases for '15-16 are listed. The two I would like additional explanation on: performance pay increase and the computer system expenses.

Ms. McFadyen: — The computer system expense is, our server for our office is in Saskatoon, and we share it with the

Advocate's office. Then we have a line that comes down to Regina because we use the server in Saskatoon, and the line is very slow and we have problems with it. And so it is estimated that to increase the speed it would be, it would cost us \$12,000 per year. And I've explained . . . Anything else you have, Andrea, on that? That's what that expense is: for the computer system to make the line better. We feel that it's better than us setting up our own server in Regina, that if we can share the same server.

With respect to the performance pay increase, that is for the out-of-scope employees, and it is what the estimate has been given for the July '15 performance pay increase. That would go to all out-of-scope employees in the government.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Is that incremental then to performance pay that would have been paid in previous years?

Ms. McFadyen: — It would be the one that's due for this year, for the performance for . . . It would be paid on July 1st of this year, but it's probably for last year's performance.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — But it's incremental though to previous performance pay?

Ms. McFadyen: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay, is that in line with the other, say line ministries, or with . . .

Ms. McFadyen: — Yes, yes. Yes.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay.

Ms. Smandych: — The bulk of our staff are out of scope, and so there's 21 staff that would be categorized in that area to come up with that amount.

The Chair: — Okay. Any other questions? If not, thank you very much for your presentation.

Ms. McFadyen: — Thank you very much.

The Chair: — And we will enter deliberations later on the budget.

Ms. McFadyen: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Okay. Item no. 8, decision item, review of the 2015-16 budget and motion to approve budgetary expenditure estimates for the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

I'd like to welcome Mr. Ron Kruzeniski, the Privacy Commissioner, and staff. Mr. Kruzeniski, if you could introduce your staff please, and proceed with your presentation.

Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner

Mr. Kruzeniski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and members of the board. I have with me today Diane Aldridge who's the director of compliance and was acting commissioner for about five months in part of this fiscal year, and Ms. Pam Scott,

director of operations, who has been responsible for preparing the materials you have in front of you.

Mr. Chair, I was appointed July 1st and have appeared in front of you since and presented to you a five-year plan. And what I'd like to initially do is give you a very brief update of some things that have happened in the office according to that five-year plan.

We've adopted a collaborative early resolution approach and it is certainly showing early signs of working very well. In addition, in September we had a lean event and streamlined our current processes, and as a result of that we set upon a goal of getting all complaints and reviews dealt with in 40 days, 80 per cent of the time. We are making extremely good progress along that line and I would estimate that in 2015 we will have hit that 40 days, 80 per cent of the time. We've issued in this time period some 40 reports, 26 of which are on the website and public, and the others have gone to the applicants and the minister.

We've reviewed amendments to *The Health Information Protection Act*. Those amendments are in the House, have received first reading, and all of you will have an opportunity to deal with those coming up in the session.

We've reviewed the freedom of information Act regulations and those have been approved and they've resulted in the revamping of two forms, two key forms. One is the access to information form and one is the request for review form.

We've moved towards a paperless office, and we're there but not quite there. We've got all our current files now stored electronically. We're starting to move backward as time permits, and we're currently back to 2011.

We've worked on the shared space proposal, and you saw that presentation earlier this afternoon. And it certainly took some work but a great co-operative joint effort.

We've started a Twitter account. And of course it's easy enough to start one, but we're attempting to keep it alive and active and interesting and have postings two or three times a month there.

And finally something I'm quite pleased of. We've engaged in a joint venture with the Public Service Commission, the Ministry of Justice, and our office to develop online modules that will be available to all people in the public service, and we're hoping that that's online by March 31st.

So it's been an exciting six and a half months, and I have a great deal of thanks to the colleagues sitting here with me up here today and the rest of the staff at the office for making this happen.

Diane Aldridge appeared in front of the board in June of last year, and you approved an FTE [full-time equivalent], which was in effect my executive assistant, and I thank you for that consideration. That has been most helpful. In August I appeared in front of the board and filed with you the five-year plan, and you approved two additional staff resources, again very helpful. We have hired an additional analyst and an additional early resolution officer. Both of those started in November of this

year. And those approvals have certainly helped us make a dent in the workload in the office and begin to catch up. We have incorporated those three additional staff into the budget proposal that is in front of you. Unfortunately last year those staff were there for a partial year, but now those costs are annualized.

We've also incorporated into the budget the additional rental costs. And as I indicated in the shared space proposal, we were able to find some space on the 12th floor of our building and put two of our staff there.

[14:15]

So we are requesting, and our proposal is a budget of \$1.605 million. Now that is in effect an increase of \$337,000. And in these economic times, it makes me cringe to talk about a number that large, but that does include funding now for 11 staff instead of 8.

We have assumed the 1.7 salary increase, a cost of living increase that staff will get, and we've assumed increments that out-of-scope staff would normally get, you know, when working for a ministry and guided by the PSC [Public Service Commission] guidelines. So the salary increases are 193,000. The majority of that is the three staff that I referred to. If you add the 193,000 and 44,000, which is the increased rental cost, you end up with a cost of about 237,000.

We've increased the budget in a couple of other areas in what I consider smaller amounts. Legal representation: we've worked out a memo of understanding with the Legislative Assembly and when it comes to interpretations of statutes, we are able to use the services of Mr. Ring. But we have actual situations where people serve notices of application on us and we're required to appear in court. In 2014 this happened, and before we knew it, our legal costs were \$2,000 and it sort of got settled before it ever got to court. I'm expecting that this will be happening a bit more often. And it is quite necessary, since we don't have legal staff in our office that can go to court on our behalf, that we found it necessary to propose to you that we add \$15,000 to the legal budget. So that in effect is being increased from 5,000 to 20,000. This should allow us to attend in court two or three times in the year if so required.

We've increased our communication costs by \$10,000. During this year we were having what I would call serious network problems, and the Legislative Assembly IT [information technology] unit was encouraging and recommending, and we could clearly see that our communications to the Legislative Assembly were slowed down and being impaired. This is a payment paid to SaskTel and was sort of necessary. Our servers are in effect housed here in the Legislative Building and the communications lines to get to the servers become quite important.

I talked to you in August about our website and wanting to revamp it, redesign it. I'm coming to you with a modified proposal today. We want to make the website our primary education vehicle, but it was developed in 2003. It is old; it is out of date and, number one, it looks old and it has old features on it, and if you look behind the scenes or under the hood, it's on an old platform and it's old software. We've tried to make

some changes along the way this year, but they are extremely difficult to make.

The LAS [Legislative Assembly Service] IT unit basically can no longer support our type of website. And why? Because they've moved on to newer platforms such as the one that houses the Legislative Assembly website. So that website needs a redesign and a redevelopment. We've tried to modify the costs and we've proposed in the budget \$25,000, which I think is a bare bones attempt.

We do not think it is as big a project as when the LAS developed its website because that website had such things as the calendar that just made development and design much more expensive. So we are asking, I guess in a sense as our top priority, consideration of this website redevelopment so that we can better educate the public.

In our August submission we talked about a case management system, and the decision of the board was, you know, referring it into the regular budgetary cycle. We're not asking for any funding on this at this time. It is only here because it was here in August.

In the materials given to you, we talked about a request for information going out in January. That has not gone out yet and considerations will be given around it going out in February and March. And just what we're searching for is the least expensive solution to keep track of our information and our files and what does our office need and what would be the least expensive way of doing it. So we may be back to you next year, depending on our analysis and the information we get there.

Finally, Mr. Chair, in August we talked about an education officer, and that was referred to the regular budgetary process. It is part of our five-year plan. I believe there's a real need in the office. There's a need to coordinate workshops and seminars and our website and our Twitter account and all the educational tools that we plan to use. Having said that, we do understand the economics in front of us at the time. We put it in here because it was part of our August submission. I would say it's sort of at the low end, or the lowest of our priorities and probably, depending on your decisions in the next day or so, we might be back to you on that one in the future.

So as my other officers have said — and we all recognize it's a trickier year, recognize the request is somewhat sizable — 193,000 of the increase of funding, and I'm mainly referring to page no. 9, Mr. Chair, in our submission here, 193,000 is really due to the three additional staff and cost of living increases; 44,000 is due to additional rents because of those additional staff; 15,000 for added legal expenses; 10,000 for additional communication costs; 25,000 for website design. And in the numbers you have in front of you is the education officer of 79,000, which I've said is our lowest priority. If that one is removed from any approvals you give, it would be a subtraction of 79,000. All of that gets us to an increase of 337,000. And we've also incorporated into that number a savings from last year of 29,000, and that really is things like furniture for the new staff, those kind of one-time costs that were met last year. So 29,000 has been in effect taken into account in us arriving at the \$337,000.

So I think I'll stop there, Mr. Chair. I ask that you give our requests a serious consideration, and we are pleased to answer any questions that you may have at this time.

The Chair: — Well thank you, Mr. Kruzeniski. Very well done for your first time as well before the Board of Internal Economy presenting the budget. Do the members have any questions? It appears not.

Mr. Kruzeniski: — It makes me very nervous.

The Chair: — Well I'll give you one. On page 8, third paragraph, it says the increase in funding also includes a CPI increase of 2.5 per cent. That 2.5 is for your operational cost, not including salaries. Is that correct?

Mr. Kruzeniski: — Yes.

The Chair: — Okay, thank you. That's what I wanted to clarify. Okay. Well thank you very much. We will consider this in, later, today's deliberations. So thank you.

Mr. Kruzeniski: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Okay. Item no. 9(a), decision item. Why don't we . . . No, we will carry on. Review of the 2015-16 budget and motion to approve the budgetary expenditures, estimates for the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. I would like to welcome Mr. Barclay, the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. And, Mr. Barclay, if you would like to introduce your staff and do your presentation, please.

Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and Lobbyist Registrar

Mr. Barclay: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, members of the Board of Internal Economy. To illustrate how much I enjoy your company, I travelled from Palm Springs on Sunday to be with you. Well I think the last time I was here, you said you were going to give me two months off so I could go to Palm Springs, but you stipulated it was July and August.

Before I introduce my budget, I wish to introduce to you our new deputy lobbyist registrar, Sandra Arberry who is on my right. She joined me on Monday. The Lobbyist Registrar's office is a newly created independent office whose mandate is to promote transparency about who is attempting to influence government decision making. Sandra has had previous service with the Government of the Northwest Territories, Elections Northwest Territories, the city of Yellowknife, and more recently Elections Saskatchewan. She brings with her significant experience in strategic planning, interpretation of legislation, and building relationships amongst a variety of stakeholders. Sandra's academic qualifications includes an executive M.B.A. [Master of Business Administration] and a Bachelor of Arts with majors in criminology and political science. In this new role as deputy registrar, Sandra will be focusing on designing, implementing, and operating the province's lobbyist registry, promoting and educating the general public, stakeholders, and the lobbyist community about *The Lobbyists Act*, and ensuring compliance and conformity of lobbyists to *The Lobbyists Act*. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I am confident that you will be pleased that Sandra is not a lawyer.

I also wish to acknowledge the assistance I have received from Dawn Court who's on my left — I couldn't operate without her — director of financial services; and Lynn Jacobson who's behind me, the executive director, for their contributions in the preparation of my budget. And I'm pleased to announce also that we've already made arrangements to enter into a contract with an IT consultant to help us choose a suitable registry system. The agreement is with Mary Carlson. She's had a wealth of experience with the various lobbyist registration systems throughout Canada and 15 years experience as deputy registrar and lobbyist in British Columbia.

Now before I get into my lobbyist budget, I wanted to have a few remarks about my role as Conflict of Interest Commissioner. And I'd like to echo the comments of David Forbes in respect to the independence of the officers, the independent officers. And I think it's critical that they must have that independence and perceived independence. I view my role that I'm responsible only to the Legislative Assembly, not to the executive government or any political party. And I'm going to share with you how critical this independence is.

When I was a young lawyer, I was arguing a case in the Supreme Court of Canada. And after I presented the argument . . . The Chief Justice at that time was Chief Justice Dickson. Although his legal career was in Manitoba, he had a close connection with Saskatchewan and in fact was a neighbour of the MacPherson family, and M.A. MacPherson was the attorney general in the Anderson government. And he used to go in and watch the House when the House was sitting. But it was a big thrill for me. He called me up to his office, I think because of the Western connections, and he talked, you know, some time in your career, he said, you might want to consider being a jurist. And he said, what is so important about being a jurist, and I want to share with you, he said, I only answer to the law and your conscience. And when I lecture the new MLAs, I emphasize that, that I am completely independent. And I think the role will work if you follow those ideals.

[14:30]

I appreciate the fact that my appointment has been renewed by the Legislative Assembly, and I welcome the continued confidence that you have given to me. I have had a good relationship with all the MLAs, and I'm very proud to share with you, I think I've been in the office five years and we have only had one complaint about the integrity or ethics of a member. And I think we all must be very proud of the MLAs on both sides of the House. They're highly ethical and honourable, and it's been a real privilege for me. I have sort of a unique responsibility because I deal with all the MLAs on a one-by-one basis, and it's been a real privilege for me to exercise that responsibility.

Now before I present my lobbyist budget, I want to briefly deal with the budget of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. And this has always been a rather simple budget because it usually involves my salary and a few other items, and I think over the last five years, with my Scottish background, I've always had a budget that was even less than my predecessor. This year there is a change and the only change from last year is the salary increase which was approved by the board last June. The increase was twofold. In view of my lobbyist duties, I'm now

working 90 per cent of my time rather than 60 per cent of my time as Conflict of Interest Commissioner, and also my salary is now calculated on the base of the average of the DMs [deputy minister], which is now applied and it will apply to all the independent officers. But I think my budget as far as the conflict — we're dealing with them separately — is pretty straightforward. Unless you have any questions, I'll move quickly on to the lobbyist budget, and I'd ask that you would approve the conflict of interest budget.

If there's no questions about the conflict of interest, my budget, I'm now going to turn to my lobbyist mandate. And I have some good news. After my budget was prepared and filed with the board, and after the sudden drop in oil prices, Sandra and I revisited the necessity of hiring an executive secretary for next year.

As I plan to remain pro tem in the Ombudsman's office and use their executive secretary at no cost . . . I thought Mary had left. And the idea would be that Sandra and the IT consultant would share the temporary space until, and I've got a big question mark, until the joint space project with the Privacy Commissioner, the Ombudsman, and the child and youth is finalized. But that's obviously in your hands. I think Sandra has been influenced by my Scottish philosophy, that we should mind the public purse and not make unnecessary expenditures. An amended budget was filed with the board and this resulted in a savings of \$34,000. The salary of the executive assistant is 64,000 and we're removing that position. And we may want to use a temporary secretary — and showing my age, we always called them Kelly Girls — and that would be about \$30,000.

I do want to emphasize however that we wish to ascertain before we make a final decision about an executive secretary — so it may be a year from now — and we'll have to see how the program unfolds before we make a final decision.

But as to the lobbyist budget, we've now hired both the deputy registrar and making arrangements with a consultant. And we're now . . . And this is really our mandate this year, is to choose a suitable registry system. And once this has been accomplished, we will then arrange to have the system designed, implemented, and maintained once in operation.

We will be doing further research into the registry system used in Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia, and Manitoba. And we will, on the advice of our expert, consider options for the development of an online lobbyist registry including licensing and modifying either Alberta's Lotus Notes system, BC's Oracle system, or Ontario's Microsoft system, or develop a new system.

Now I purposely have not done this. I have not included an item for the cost of the system as this would be too premature. The cost could run anywhere from 350,000 to \$1 million, based on the experience in other jurisdictions.

Once our consultant has made a recommendation as a suitable system, my intention is then to come back to the board for the approval of those expenditures. We just have no way of even predicting what they're going to be. And removing that item, I think the budget is reasonably straightforward. I don't regard it as a major issue, but we have a figure for a consultant's fee of

\$135,000, and that's critical to proceed with the lobbyist registration system.

I indicated that we'll be signing a contract with our consultant next Tuesday for February and March. So she will be starting to work immediately, but that'll be in this year's budget. And the sum of 135,000 is the cost of the consultant for the following year, and it is critical for the success of our endeavour that this amount be approved.

Other than that, the budget proposal is rather straightforward. I was \$100,000 under budget last year, and if we can follow that philosophy, then we may be in a pretty good position. Are there any questions about the budget for the lobbyist legislation?

The Chair: — Okay. Thank you, Mr. Barclay. Questions? Mr. Harrison.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thanks very much, Commissioner. We appreciate the presentation and appreciate the submissions that have been put before us. I think a couple of questions, and firstly thank you for your prudence in terms of the admin assistant position and not hiring that on a full-time basis at this point.

In terms of the consultant, you just kind of spoke to it, but precisely what is the consultant going to be doing? Is this limited to the determination of options with respect to the computer system or is it broader than that, or what specifically is it for?

Mr. Barclay: — It is broader. If you'd just bear with me a moment, I sent a progress report as to some of her functions and responsibilities. He's the minister, of course, in charge of the lobbyist legislation, and if you'd just bear with me for a moment. And she presented a fairly lengthy presentation that I had sent to the Attorney General. She's talking about a high-level project plan, and she's talking about stakeholders, the database, the regulations, and compliance, and stakeholders, she said. Who are the lobbyists? Many people are lobbying, unaware of the fact that they are. How do we reach them? What stake do public officers have in the law? The public, the pros and cons of establishing an advisory committee. Then she gets in detail about the database and communication plans, website development, human resources. She's had a tremendous amount of experience. We're meeting with her next week, and we'll probably have a little better grip on her mandate, but I'm quite impressed with her qualifications.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — So what would be the time frame we'd be looking at then prior to getting a recommendation from the consultant and be able to move forward with the implementation of the . . .

Mr. Barclay: — That's a very good question. I don't want to rush in. At the experience in other jurisdictions, it's anywhere from a year or longer. And I've shared that with both the government, including the Leader of the Opposition. And I think the message from him is to get it right. And I'm thinking it could take a year, but I'll have a better idea when we spend some time with the consultant. It seems like a long time, but that's the been the experience from one coast to the other.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes, I guess. Well we want to see it done . . .

Mr. Barclay: — So as soon as possible, but we want to do it right.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes, done correctly. Okay. The other question I had was with respect to the travel and business expenses, the relocation one particularly. What's that? Was that for moving the office or . . .

Mr. Barclay: — That is for Sandra. Her family is in Yellowknife and this board has already authorized that.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay. No, I was just wondering what that was. Okay.

The Chair: — Any other questions? Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Barclay: — Oh there's one . . . Dawn's going to — I don't understand it — she's going to explain to you about subvotes.

Ms. Court: — This should be real quick. As you saw with the Ombudsman's office, they were requesting a mandate and a subvote change. For the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, this is the first time that the lobbyist will be included in the main estimates. So we need to ensure that those words are reflected back into the estimates so that Mr. Barclay has the legal authority to enter into financial expenditures.

So on the document that I handed out to you, you'll see that the current wording is really just representative of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. And we've proposed some new wording in there, and then we've also proposed some new wording for the subvote description for your consideration.

The Chair: — Well noting it already, based on David's earlier comment, we should probably include Conflict of Interest Commissioner and officer of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Barclay: — I think that is very important. I emphasize it all the time. It's what we're doing. That's what it's all about.

The Chair: — Any questions related to the mandate information? Okay. We will deal with this in a motion at the same time that we deal with the budget process.

Mr. Barclay: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, members of the board.

The Chair: — Okay. Oh, David.

Mr. Forbes: — When you're looking at the computer system, you're looking at existing computer systems only. There won't be a . . .

Mr. Barclay: — There's one thing I didn't mention, and I apologize, is the land titles system, ITS . They've approached us recently. They're in Saskatchewan, and we've talked to one of their executives, so I think they're going to come up with a proposal too. So it's not necessarily a system . . . There's problems in other jurisdictions with some of the systems that

are in vogue right now.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes. Yes, I guess my comment would be, I'd be more in favour of one off the shelf than trying to develop a brand new one.

Mr. Barclay: — Oh exactly. We thought for a while that the Alberta system would be ideal, with a lot of the same clients and the same problems. But all of a sudden they're having a problem with their systems, so it's . . . But I agree with you. If we can piggyback on another system and try and save the government some money, I'm in favour of that. But we'll get a better handle on it when we start meeting with our consultant next week.

[14:45]

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you. Yes.

The Chair: — As a former ITO [information technology office] minister, custom-built applications cause lots of headaches down the road. And living with a programmer — my son — while it's good for him and his company financially to custom build applications, they do cause a lot of problems later on when that custom builder is no longer available.

Mr. Barclay: — Yes, I agree with you, Mr. Speaker. I don't want to reinvent the wheel, so I think we're all on the same song sheet. Yes.

The Chair: — Any other questions? Okay. We will deal with the budget deliberations and the mandate information at a later date.

Mr. Barclay: — Thank you very much.

The Chair: — And it now being 2:45, half an hour before our planned break, we will take our break now. So this meeting stands recessed to the call of the Chair in 15 to 30 minutes.

[The board recessed from 14:45 until 15:19.]

The Chair: — Okay. This committee will reconvene. We will move on to item no. 10, decision item, review of the 2015-16 budget and motion to approve the statutory expenditure estimates for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer. I'd like to welcome Mr. Boda here today and, Mr. Boda, if you would introduce your staff that you have with you and commence your presentation, please.

Office of the Chief Electoral Officer

Mr. Boda: — Sure. We have with us today Jennifer Colin — she is our deputy CEO [chief electoral officer] for corporate services and electoral finance — and Jeff Kress, our deputy CEO for operations at Elections Saskatchewan. And thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I know it's a long day for you. If it's okay, Mr. Speaker, in the interests of time, instead of offering a line-by-line evaluation of our submission, I'd like to take about 10 minutes to instead focus on some of the highlights of the document, leaving some time for questions in the half-hour.

I think that I have to begin by picking up on a conversation that I've been having with you and other electoral stakeholders across the province since 2012, and that has to do with the path for renewal that Elections Saskatchewan is on. As you know, the board asked Mr. David Hamilton to conduct an assessment of Elections Saskatchewan in 2009. The Hamilton report suggested that a modernization of the provincial election management body was required. Members of the legislature and members of this board ultimately agreed that this was to be pursued, and then in 2012, I was asked to join you in Regina to effect that change.

In January of 2014, a strategic plan for Elections Saskatchewan was established based on Mr. Hamilton's recommendations and a path for reform that I identified listening to various stakeholders across the province. We began to pursue it. For some time now I've emphasized the need to change the lens through which we view elections in Saskatchewan.

Our estimates point to the fact that we need to see elections as part of an ongoing four-year cycle, not as a one-off event that we can prepare for in the six months leading to an electoral event. With this in mind, the coming year in many ways will be a crescendo to many months of planning needed to deliver on a promise we made to stakeholders — 800,000 voters, our registered political parties, and the more than 200 candidates that the electorate will hear from during the upcoming campaign.

Our 2014-16 strategic plan established a number of key institutional priorities, priorities on which our estimates and our activities are based. I don't think that I can emphasize enough how intentional our team at Elections Saskatchewan has been in using these priorities we outline clearly beginning on page 11 of your document, if you want to follow, as a guide for establishing the path forward for the coming fiscal year.

Maintaining our focus on these priorities has not been easy in light of some key demographic, economic, and social challenges our province has experienced over the past electoral cycle. We touched on these in chapter 3.4 of the estimates. Looking at our population, not only has it increased by 5.5 per cent since 2011, but its makeup has changed as well. The population is growing older, and there's a marked increase in the use of different languages in the province.

On the economic front, we have had to be realistic that a dramatic increase in wages combined with a very low unemployment rate poses some real challenges to engaging 10,000 election officials this year.

A marked decline in voter participation has become a problem that we simply can't ignore. Turnout has gone down, gone from 83.9 per cent in 1982 to 66.7 per cent in 2011.

Elections Saskatchewan does not consider providing voting incentives to be its job, but it does believe that it's important that it works to ensure every eligible voter is aware of what they need to do to register and to vote, and that administrative obstacles to participation are minimized.

We also can't ignore that the expectations of voters are changing due to a rapid evolution in technology. We're

committed to changing the way that Elections Saskatchewan communicates with voters who are unbelievably engaged in social media, while not forgetting those voters who rely on traditional media sources for their information.

And finally, we've prioritized the need to address the concerns of those who require special provisions in order to access various elements of the electoral process. We believe that it's our role as an election management body to ensure that everyone has access to participate in exercising their constitutional guaranteed franchise right.

Ultimately we have had to keep the challenges I've just talked about at the forefront in developing our budget estimates. But there's more. We've also had to account for the impact that a first step in modernizing our election system will have as well.

Legislation has been changed to increase the number of constituencies from 58 to 61. Access to advanced polls is no longer restricted, and there are new eligibility rules for Canadian Forces personnel. Homebound voting will be part of the coming general election for the first time in our history, allowing eligible voters to cast a ballot at home.

We'll also see the beginnings of an historic transition from a process of creating a voters list for every general election to introducing a more efficient, permanent, or continuous register of voters at the end of the enumeration period. And with the introduction of these and other reforms driven by legislation, it's also important to educate and inform voters on improvements and changes to the process from the last time they went to the polls in 2011.

So I've taken some time to highlight three areas that fundamentally influence the estimates that you have before you today: our mandate, key challenges that we have, and legislative change. But before coming to a close, I'd like to offer a basic overview of the budget itself, and many of these figures come from chapter 4 of the document that's in front of you, beginning on page 37. Elections Saskatchewan's '15-16 submission totals \$23.1 million.

In FY [fiscal year] '13-14, we began a careful process of segregating our budget into two discrete components. Our first focus is on costs related to ongoing administration. These are costs that are incurred to ensure that Elections Saskatchewan can operate on a day-to-day basis and that are there regardless of an electoral event. A second focus is on costs related to actual planning, organizing, and delivering an electoral event such as a boundary review, an enumeration, or a by-election. By breaking down the full budget in this way, the estimates show \$2.7 million for ongoing administration and 20.4 for the conduct of electoral events in the coming year.

Now I'm not going to focus on the ongoing administrative costs that begin on page 39 and in table 4.1 other than to say that the principal story there is that our ongoing costs have increased by just \$39,000. We've been able to identify cost savings this year that will allow us to add two of the four additional staff members that will be needed to establish and maintain the permanent register.

The event-related estimates beginning on page 40 are clearly

more complex as we enter into the last year of our election cycle. And you'll see there that table 4.2 outlines the variances for the '15-16 budget compared to last year. And of course you'll see a marked increase from the last year.

On page 41, table 4.3 shows that the majority of the 20.3 million event budget, so 72 per cent or about \$15 million, is actually allocated to costs that are required by legislation and associated with staffing, facility rental of our returning offices, polling locations, and other costs.

On page 41 at the bottom, table 4.4 shows a breakdown of our budget for the enumeration at \$2.2 million, or that's 11 per cent of the event-related budget. We are of course in the midst of a transition from conducting a traditional enumeration to instituting the permanent register of voters. With this transition we've already begun to see savings. The 2011 enumeration cost was \$3.23 million so we expect to see in real terms financial savings in the range of \$1.5 million, along with being able to provide a better quality of list for election administrators across the province and for our political parties and for our candidates.

[15:30]

On page 43, table 4.6 shows that \$500,000 will be required to ensure that the initial elements of the permanent register will be in place at the conclusion of the enumeration period. Approximately \$200,000 has been allocated to address voter accessibility initiatives. Some of this is to be used to conduct homebound voting, which is now mandated by legislation, while other spending includes ensuring that polling locations meet current accessibility standards, developing and delivering training to election workers on how to support people with disabilities at the polls, and supplying polling locations with accessibility support tools.

A remaining \$1.5 million or 7 per cent of the event budget will be allocated to a number of other activities that are necessary to implement the election, including statutory requirements to advertise specific election-related information in newspapers, website updating, production and delivery of voter information cards, and costs related to training more than 10,000 election officials.

The '15-16 estimates have also been developed based on some key assumptions. If you have a look at the background that we've presented in chapter 1.3, you will better understand why we have had to assume that the 28th general election will be held on November the 2nd of 2015.

While we anticipate recommending changes to the existing schedule of fees in regulation, the current budget estimates have been generated based on those in place for the 2011 general election.

And finally we've developed these estimates based on Bill 139, amendments to *The Election Act* which give the Chief Electoral Officer considerable discretion and flexibility with respect to timing and methodology on how the enumeration is to be conducted.

So at this point, I do want to thank you for the opportunity to present not just the figures but to present our rationale for doing

the things that we need to do to support the 28th general election and democracy in Saskatchewan more generally. We would be happy to answer questions.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Boda. Members, questions? Doreen. Ms. Eagles.

Ms. Eagles: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Michael, for that presentation. And when you talk about the permanent voter registry, I was just wondering, is there still going to be a period of revision? And if so, how will that be carried out?

Mr. Boda: — I'm going to let Jeff Kress address that question.

Mr. Kress: — Thank you, Michael. There most definitely will be a period of revision. The legislation states that the Chief Electoral Officer can state a day or dates for revision. The timing and the length for the revision is still to be determined.

Ms. Eagles: — And is the cost of that revision included in the permanent register budget?

Mr. Kress: — The cost of the revision — and Jennifer might have something to add here — will be included in the cost of the enumeration in total.

Ms. Eagles: — Is it in this budget?

Mr. Kress: — Yes, indeed.

Ms. Eagles: — It is? Okay. Okay, thank you.

Mr. Kress: — You're welcome.

The Chair: — Mr. Harrison.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thanks very much for the presentation, Michael, appreciate it. Very thorough documentation which answers, you know, a lot of questions that we might have otherwise had. Thank you for that. In terms of the . . . And I understand that you have to plan for a November 2nd election. I accept that. I understand that. And regardless if the election's on November 2nd or April 4th, it's going to be conducted in this fiscal year one way or the other. So you know I'm very, very confident that it's going to be in April, but I know you have to plan for November.

In terms of the reimbursement component of the submission, which is about \$4.4 million in total between the candidates and the parties and the auditors and what not, that would, in the case of a November election, probably be paid out for the most part within the context of this fiscal. But if we go to the April 4th election date, those expenses would be incurred almost entirely, if not entirely, in to the next fiscal year.

I guess what I would ask for your feedback on would be whether you would see it as appropriate if we were to remove the reimbursement costs from this fiscal? If we do have a November 2nd election, you would then come for a supplemental appropriation in terms of paying those out, but that we would remove them from this fiscal budget with the expectation that they would be paid out in the next fiscal year.

Mr. Boda: — I'll begin with just a couple of comments, and then I'll let Jennifer add on. Clearly within this documentation we've articulated why we need to plan for a November the 2nd election, and it's very obvious that April 4th is another opportunity.

I think what I want to be careful to articulate is that in our planning — and we have thought about just these questions — there are not just two scenarios, but we have to account for when the feds could possibly have an election as well. Because we are working together with them in terms of election data, we have to think about, well what if they have an election early, what if they have an election late — all of these sorts of things. So there are many, many scenarios that we've had to think about. This has taken some heavy lifting on our end, and it will continue to take some heavy lifting to move forward.

With respect to the reimbursement costs, I'll let Jennifer answer that. We have done some thinking on that.

Ms. Colin: — Sure. And you are correct, obviously: if the election takes place on April 4th, that reimbursement, as well as the payment to our election officials who work on polling day, will be incurred actually in the next fiscal year. We do, even though the reimbursements may not be completely complete at the end of the fiscal year, we do make an accrual to reflect that the expenditure was incurred in this fiscal year. So certainly that's \$4.4 million that we wouldn't be spending out of our allocation if the election were delayed till April.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes, I guess what I'm looking for feedback on is whether that would cause a problem for you if the submission were to reflect those expenditures to take place in the next fiscal year as opposed to this one, as opposed to in this submission.

Ms. Colin: — The expenses would not be incurred if the election was not in November. So if the election is held in November, the full cost of the reimbursement would be incurred in this fiscal year. If the election is held in April, obviously that's deferred till next year. And you know, that's the board's discretion to determine what's appropriate in that case. If the allocation were provided to us, it would not be spent if the election were not held in November.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes. I guess what I'm getting at is I'm very, very confident the election's going to take place in April. And politics is my business. I know your business is preparing for the next election, but I'm very, very confident the election's going to happen in April of 2016. So I guess if we were to take the reimbursement component out from this year's budget — with an undertaking of course that if the election does happen in November that you would, you know, come to the board and of course would be granted the funds for that — whether that would be, you know, a really big deal for Elections Saskatchewan.

Mr. Boda: — We have discussed that option. And if you were to take out the 4.4 and we would have the ability, should the election be called, we would simply want to come back to you, ask for the supplemental, and then be able to pay it out. But otherwise I don't think that that is a problem for us.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Forbes: — I was just curious as I was reading through this, and you're talking about doing the enumeration in June. How does that tie in with the ... Now again, this is all so hypothetical, whether the feds ... Have you got a sense of what they're planning? Are you talking with them, what they're doing in terms of getting prepared for when their fixed election date is?

Mr. Boda: — I suppose the fundamental issue is that we have to be very careful not to confuse the public as to which election is being conducted. That's one thing. The other issue is, obviously it'd be highly problematic to run two major events, electoral events, at the same time because we use the same workers in many instances.

We are in regular touch with Elections Canada as to what their plans are, but of course they don't have any particular insight other than they know they have a legislatively mandated election for October the 19th. Given this and looking at all the different scenarios for when a federal election could be called, that's the very reason why we are planning to conduct the last enumeration in June. And that would allow us to, if we were going to have the election in November which is what it's legally planned for, that would allow us to land properly, to have a good quality list for the political parties and candidates in the province.

If the federal election was held on October 19th, and we instead had to go to April the 4th, we would have in place at the end of the enumeration period the initial permanent register. The initial permanent register will allow us to make use of the federal data, and we will be able to ensure it's not stale dated. And we will be able to update our register so that it is of good quality for April of the next year.

Now if we were to do that, if we didn't have the permanent register in place, the initial permanent register, we would have a problem because in February we would have to go ahead and enumerate again probably. And it's not really feasible to enumerate in February in Saskatchewan, as you well know. Not only would we not be able to get workers, but it would be very difficult. So again as I mentioned before, we are thinking about the various scenarios and have come up with what we see is a very strong plan.

Mr. Forbes: — So in the federal ... The feds already have a permanent registry. So they're not doing this enumeration process in the same way that we're doing it, ahead of time. They're going to disallow for the additions during the writ period or whatever.

Mr. Boda: — Actually, the feds will do enumerating in a way that's almost, it's sort of akin to what we're doing in the sense that they do targeted enumeration. In order to improve the quality of their list, they don't do a full enumeration. And our methodology calls ... We won't actually do a full enumeration this next time. We will do something closer to a targeted enumeration.

So they will be out and about in key locations where there's high mobility and where there are a number of changes or they're not quite certain their list is of the quality it should be. So, sorry, it's low coverage. High mobility and low coverage, they identify those areas.

Mr. Forbes: — And do you know when they'll be out and about doing that?

Mr. Boda: — Well they'll do it in advance of the October 19th election. So it'll be in September when they're out and about.

Mr. Forbes: — And the other thing I didn't see in your presentation — it was very thorough, so thank you for that — but is a discussion around poll maps. So we've got the constituency maps, but you don't have the poll maps. When will the individual polls be decided or what's the plan for arriving at that? When will they be available?

Mr. Boda: — Can you clarify? Are you talking about polling divisions? You're talking about the polling divisions or the polling locations?

Mr. Forbes: — Polling subdivisions.

Mr. Boda: — Polling. Great, thank you for teeing me up. We have a great announcement to make today.

Mr. Forbes: — They're ready?

Mr. Boda: — We've delivered them to your chief official agents. We had a meeting with them last week, and that was one of the things we were able to deliver. We had made a promise that we would have them available in January ahead of the election, and we were able to deliver on that.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay, but they're not online now, are they?

Mr. Boda: — I can't tell you exactly whether they are online yet, but they ... Are they online? Have we made them? They will be made available online. The shapefiles will be there, and they'll be accessible to your chief official agent.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Thanks.

Mr. Boda: — Thank you for that.

The Chair: — Any other questions? I have some. Jennifer mentioned that if the money isn't spent, it's accrued and carried over to the next year. I'm not sure that's the case. I think that if the expenditures are not made that it returns to the Ministry of Finance and then it would have to be reallocated again. Is that not the case?

[15:45]

Ms. Colin: — I just want to clarify. So if the election is held in November, there are certain deadlines for parties and candidates to submit their returns, and then we have a certain period of time to review them and assess the reimbursable amount. So because those costs were incurred in the '15-16 fiscal year, we will accrue the amount, not pay it out. We will accrue the amount and pay it out once we've completed our review and

assessed the reimbursable amount.

We don't keep unused funds in our budget. It's simply a matter of matching expenses to when they were incurred. So if the election is in April, those expenses are not incurred until the '16-17 fiscal year and therefore that's when they would be expensed. So we would show an expense in our '15-16 budget if the event is November, regardless of whether the monies have been paid out.

The Chair: — But if the election didn't happen until April of 2016, then none of the ... Well there would be some expenditures obviously prior to that — the enumeration and the rent, etc. — but funds for particularly party and candidate would not be distributed until 2016. So therefore it would be in the 2016-17 budget.

Ms. Colin: — That's correct.

The Chair: — Yes. Okay.

Ms. Colin: — So if the full allocation were given to us and the event were delayed, there would be a significant portion of those funds that would not be used and would be deferred to the next fiscal year.

The Chair: — How about the salaries of the electoral officers? Obviously they would have been working in the '15-16 year, but they probably would not have submitted their claims until 2017 fiscal year. Would that be counted as '15-16, or would that be counted as '16-17?

Ms. Colin: — Are you referring to if the election is in April?

The Chair: — Right.

Ms. Colin: — Then none of those costs would be incurred until after polling day. So a significant amount of our salaries relate to costs that are associated with administering the polls. And so there's a small ... In the event that the election were to take place on April 4th, we would have a small period of advance polling expenses, but the majority of those expenditures would be incurred in the next fiscal year.

The Chair: — So if the election was held on April 4th, 2016, the majority of the expense, 21 million, would actually take place for payment in '16-17 fiscal year?

Ms. Colin: — It's very difficult to assess whether the majority of the expense would be incurred only because there are certain things that we do in advance. And if we ... Depending on when we find out about the delay, we may have already incurred costs that we will just simply have to incur more of. So for example, a returning office. If we've gone out and secured returning offices across the province and then we find out afterwards, we would evaluate whether or not it makes sense to continue to keep renting those returning offices for the extended period between November and April or whether it would be more cost effective to shut them down and reset them up.

So we've assessed that it's approximately \$6.5 million that we would say would be deferred to the next fiscal year, and that's largely the reimbursement of party and candidate expenditures

as well as the portion of payment to our election officials. And then, like I said, depending on how much notice we get, we may actually incur more costs if the event were delayed than just simply deferring.

The Chair: — How far in advance would you need to rent the returning officers' space, the returning offices? Do you need them six months in advance? Do you need them a year in advance? What kind of a time frame would be optimal?

Ms. Colin: — The returning officers will be beginning to look for those locations with the goal to securing them for April — or for August. Sorry, I apologize. So they will be in place and staffed for August and September and October in advance of the November election. So it is at a couple of months in advance just to make sure that they have the appropriate staff and they're set up obviously with computers and telephones and furniture and all of those things that we have to do on a very short-term and temporary nature.

The Chair: — Well I would suggest that by August you will know whether or not the federal government is going or not. If they haven't gone in June, they're likely going in September, October. So it's unlikely that they would go during the summertime. So that gives you a good indication.

Mr. Boda: — Yes, and there is a possibility they could delay.

The Chair: — Yes.

Mr. Boda: — And that's why ... I mean I know you've read our document. It's September 13th is the date.

The Chair: — Is the cut-off.

Mr. Boda: — Yes.

The Chair: — On page no. 8, and this is just a wording, personal concern, it talks about the vision for Elections Saskatchewan. And in that shaded area, I just wonder what the important message is there.

Mr. Boda: — There's a number ... There's four shaded boxes ...

The Chair: — The first one.

Mr. Boda: — To be widely recognized as a professional, service-oriented, and innovative election management body?

The Chair: — Yes.

Mr. Boda: — These boxes are drawn from our 2014-2016 strategic plan directly, and that is the vision for Elections Saskatchewan as it was placed in the strategic plan.

The Chair: — Yes. I guess my concern is, is the vision for Elections Saskatchewan to be a professional, service-oriented, and innovative election management body or to be widely recognized?

Mr. Boda: — You'll have to clarify that.

The Chair: — Well is it a verb or an adjective, widely recognized?

Mr. Boda: — Well to go back to the pre-2012 time period, upon my arrival, Elections Saskatchewan wasn't understood to be . . . It wasn't well known in the province. It wasn't known as the election management body for the province. In fact, we still struggle with this quite a bit and that is that sometimes when we will rent a room and we're doing some training and we'll be at a hotel, even the hotel will put up a sign to say Elections Canada is here today. And as a result, we do find that somewhat problematic because there's confusion among the voters as to what we do and what Elections Canada does. There's confusion during the electoral period. That's why we're being very careful not to recommend having electoral events at the same time as Elections Canada because we are distinct.

Saskatchewan is distinct from Canada. It is part of Canada, an important part of Canada. And so we want to be widely recognized, recognized by the people of Saskatchewan as an election management body that is focused on those three items. But those three items are really reinforced in the values that we've established for the institution and that has to do with the third box on that page.

The Chair: — Well personally I would think that Elections Saskatchewan would want to be a professional, service-oriented, innovative election management body and that would create the recognition, not that the vision would be widely recognized.

As elected members, we quite often get confused, not ourselves, but the public confuses us with the federally elected people as well. And I don't think any of us have the desire that it be widely recognized that we're different from the federal government but rather that it be that we are professional, you know, and I think that's the critical part, not that we're being widely recognized.

Mr. Boda: — Well I'm not sure where we're . . . I apologize because I'm a little . . . I don't fully understand the question, I guess. But what I do understand is that what Elections Saskatchewan is increasingly committed to is changing, or having its values of independence, impartiality, professionalism, accountability, innovation, and service to our stakeholders at the very heart of everything we do. And in everything that we do, we want you as stakeholders to know that that's what we believe. We're going to, every day in the work that we do, these are the values that we're going to stick to. You can count on that.

The Chair: — I guess from my point of my view I agree that those are the things we want, and if you are those things, then you will be widely recognized, but that the goal doesn't necessarily have to be that you be widely recognized — that you earn that.

Mr. Boda: — I do believe that there is a public function to the election management body in a way that it's consistent with how election management bodies are around the globe. So we will be this, and we will articulate it to our stakeholders. So I do believe that there is a public function for an election management body. Not that we're . . . I think that you will be

able to understand that we're not in the papers every day, and we don't exactly go around looking to be in the papers every day. We want to be competent election managers and that's the direction we're heading. Thank you.

The Chair: — On page no. 15, engage stakeholders in post-election reviews, and your last sentence in that first paragraph under that heading, "A critical part of this plan will involve supporting an informed review of those recommendations by an assigned committee of the Legislative Assembly." You know, the first thing I thought of when I read that was, are you suggesting that our committees are not informed? And secondly, it's the legislature that assigns pieces of legislation or review duties to the committees, not the Chief Electoral Officer. So do you have comments about that?

Mr. Boda: — I don't disagree. I don't think that's what it's saying. Whatever the assigned committee is by the legislature, the Chief Electoral Officer does not assign.

The Chair: — And the legislature may choose not to deal with those reviews. That's up to the legislature to determine whether they will or not.

Mr. Boda: — The legislature can make that decision. Thank you.

The Chair: — On page . . . since I wrote over this . . . 16, leverage partnerships in events of delivery, it talks of partnering with Information Services Corporation, large urban municipalities, various agreements. Are you looking to partner as well with other than the large urban municipalities, meaning other municipalities — rural municipalities, northern municipalities — or is your partnering going to be limited to Elections Canada, Information Services Corporation, and the large urbans?

Ms. Colin: — We do partner with municipalities. I think the reason why it references large municipalities is primarily because they are the ones who have the capacity to maintain data sets that are useful to us. Certainly if there's opportunities to partner with rural municipalities or organizations in the North, we'd absolutely pursue those. This was primarily in the context of data sharing regarding either voter information or municipality maps that we could use.

The Chair: — Because the small urbans, the rurals, the northern do maintain their voter lists as well because they have voters that vote in their jurisdictions. And I know from a past election, one of the issues that the enumerators need to be cautioned of is that just because you're on the tax roll of a certain community doesn't mean you're resident in that community, that you may be resident in some other community. I know in the past, one enumerator just went to the municipal office and took all the names off of the titles and that was who their voters were. And some of them were estates.

Yes, that's my questions. Did anybody else have any further questions? Okay. No more questions. We will give this consideration further today. So thank you very much.

Mr. Boda: — Thank you.

[16:00]

The Chair: — Okay. We will proceed with item no. 11, decision item, review the 2015-16 budget for the Legislative Assembly. Items (a) decision and motion to approve expenditures for the refurbishment of the asset replacement fund projects; (b) decision item, motion to approve budgetary and statutory expenditure estimate; (c) motion to approve revenue estimates.

So I'd like to welcome Mr. Greg Putz, the Clerk, to the committee and, Mr. Putz, if you could introduce your staff and do your presentation, please.

Legislative Assembly

Mr. Putz: — Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce the LAS staff who are joining us here today. We as usual have a very large contingent because we have a great many services we provide to you, and we want to make sure that we're absolutely ready to accurately answer any questions you might have this afternoon.

So in no particular order of importance . . . It's just the way I wrote them down so don't infer anything into this. We have Ken Ring, Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel here with us today; Melissa Bennett, Legislative Librarian; Lynn Jacobson, our executive director of member and corporate services; Dawn Court, director of financial services; Ginette Michaluk, director of human resources; Brad Gurash, the director of member services; Darcy Hislop, our chief technology officer; Lenni Frohman, director of parliamentary publications; Lorraine deMontigny, director of visitor services; Kathy Burianyak, senior committee clerk; Cindy Hingley, our senior financial analyst; Joelle Perras, our communications analyst; and, Janis Patrick, manager of member payments.

I hope I didn't forget anybody here. That's almost our whole staff here. But like I said, they're here to address any questions that you might have about our budget or any of the services we have and our action plan.

But before we get into that though, I would like to begin by making a few introductory remarks regarding our budget and then turn the presentation over to Dawn who will take you through the specifics of our request.

The budget proposal before you was developed to ensure that we are able to maintain our existing services to the members and public. And I want to just put that into perspective. The Legislative Assembly Service provides approximately 80 specific services and we support 400-plus individuals, which include all of the MLAs obviously, your CAs [constituency assistant], the caucuses, officers of the Assembly to one degree or another or most of the officers anyways, the Speaker and his office, as well as the LAS itself.

And most of our service commitments are catalogued in the *Guide to Members Services*, which contains a description of the services and names and contact information for key staff. It's this document here, which I like to remind members that the *Guide to Members Services* is published twice a year and is available on your members' portal and available on demand in

printed version on request.

I like to make reference to the guide at budget time because it does illustrate our core services, which are the basis of our budget submission of course. And these core services are also at the heart of our key actions for the year. And you've read this but just to remind you that our action plan is, the theme of our action plan this year is, Ready for an Election, Ready for the Future.

In general terms we have four broad objectives for fiscal year 2015-2016: the first is being ready for members' needs preceding and following a general election; preserving the Assembly's records for the future, and that's on page 4, goal 1; evolving services and adapting internal processes, that's on page 5, and that's goal 2; readying our own staff for the future and that's on page 6, and that's goal 3.

And the details as I've just alluded to can be found on the initial pages of our budget submission, but we'll leave that for any questions that you might have with one exception. The one exception is I do want to touch on election preparedness.

We are actively planning for both dissolution and new member induction, and this includes seminars for retiring members, dissolution policy guidelines for board consideration, which we hope to have before you very early in the new fiscal year, as well as induction and orientation for new and returning members and their CAs immediately after an election. Beyond that planning, you've also probably noted that our budget submission does not include any election costs and the reason for this is because federal law requires a Canadian general election in October 2015. Saskatchewan electoral law, as you well know, accordingly requires that a Saskatchewan provincial general election shall be postponed from November 2015 to April 2016, and at this point we have no reason to presume any other scenario. So unless events prove otherwise, our plan then is to come back to the board with a separate election funding request. But having said that, we have worked out the numbers. We are ready to discuss an election scenario if the board so wishes.

And I also want to point out that this budget does not include additional funding for security. The board discussed this topic last fall at the end of October after the tragic circumstances in Ottawa, but at this point the Speaker and the Sergeant-at-Arms do not have the results of our security review. Any future funding requests for security will be predicated on the results of the review. If you so wish, we can tell you what has happened from October to now but we would request that we do that in camera later on.

So in closing my remarks, let me just provide a little context for Dawn's remarks. Since 2012 — and we've mentioned this before — LAS [Legislative Assembly Service] has developed an approach to budgeting that focuses on spending trends which in turn helps us to be more effective and efficient with the funding provided and to better anticipate future service delivery needs. So because of this focus, the three-year average increase has been 1.04 per cent, which has been significantly below the expenditure growth targets for executive government, and in 2015-2016 this is no exception.

Our budget proposal represents an overall decrease of \$382,000, which is a decrease of 1.4 per cent over last year. This is comprised of an increase in non-statutory funding of \$191,000 or a 1.99 per cent increase and a \$572,000 or a 3.22 per cent decrease in statutory funding. So as you'll hear in Dawn's presentation, the LAS has worked diligently to be fiscally responsible and to minimize our funding request for this year. And we've done this by refining expenditures and redirecting one-time funding to fully offset our status quo increases and to partially offset new obligations, resulting in a net increase of 1.99 per cent.

So I want to close by thanking the managers who are here today. I can't say enough about the dedication of our staff. They are truly devoted to the Assembly, and they truly care about the institution. And I know that they'll be happy to answer any questions any of you have on any of our service delivery programs. And, Mr. Speaker, I'd be remiss if didn't thank you for providing us advice and helpful input as we put together this budget. So what I'm doing, if there's any blame, Mr. Speaker can share that with us. So with that, I'll turn it over to Dawn who will take you through the rest of the presentation and outline some of the specifics.

Ms. Court: — Thanks, Greg. Good afternoon, members, and Mr. Chair. Since Greg did such a great job at providing an overview, I'm going to go right into the details of our budget. So at this time I'd like to provide you with an overview of the budget principles and assumptions that were used to develop the 2015-16 budget, and these details can be found on page 8 of your document. So our principles and assumptions include: developing a budget that is fiscally responsible and is mindful of the direction provided to executive government; the reallocation of one-time funding in order to lessen the financial increases required to maintain our current level of services; includes in-range progression and range adjustments for eligible employees have been incorporated into our base funding; and to consider the changing financial pressures that arise over a typical four-year parliamentary cycle; and lastly, the primary assumption that we used for our budget development was using a 2.5 per cent CPI growth.

As Greg mentioned, for our 2015-16, the LAS funding requirements have decreased over last year by 382,000 or 1.4 per cent. This is due to a decreased funding requirement of \$572,000 in the payments and allowances to members which is more than offsetting the increase in non-statutory funding or Assembly operations of 191,000.

If I can get you to turn to page 12 and 13 of your budget document, we'll go through the specifics of the budget. So on page 12, we have identified the opportunities and the pressures within our statutory funding requirements. So as you will see in the detail box, we are anticipating a net \$444,000 decrease in MLA travel and living expenses and this is primarily due to \$577,000 experience drawdown based on historical trending analysis; \$123,000 increase to reflect mileage rates; a \$2,000 increase for executive air standby; and we have an \$8,000 transition allowance for a retiring member in '14-15 which will be the last payment.

We are also anticipating a \$300,000 decrease in constituency service expenses, and that again is based on historical trending;

\$118,000 decrease in telephone and related expenses; \$184,000 increase, which is related to the CPI increase for member payments and allowances; \$70,000 in constituency assistant expenses and benefits; and a \$36,000 increase to the CPI for the caucus grants.

On page 13, which is the non-statutory component of our budget or the Assembly operations, we have identified three offsets which total \$89,000 and those are related to the library conference, the one-time funding for lean training, as well as accommodation savings that we'd like to reallocate to our pressures for our '15-16.

Those pressures include \$124,000 for salary increases; a \$70,000 new initiative which is a multi-year service agreement with SaskTel to replace 130 end-of-life satellite receivers for the television broadcast of Assembly proceedings; a \$25,000 increase for interparliamentary grants to host the national CPA [Commonwealth Parliamentary Association] regional seminar in the fall; \$20,000 for the commissionaires' contract increase; \$18,000 for the visitor services conference which will be held in 2015; 7,000 relates to telecommunication and maintenance agreements; 7,000 for requirements for conferences and professional memberships due to the cost of living; and \$5,000 increase for our warehouse space which has been provided to us by Central Services; as well as a \$4,000 revision to the Saskatchewan legislative internship program to include both the fall and spring sittings of parliamentary calendar.

And lastly, our last component of the budget is the Refurbishment and Asset Replacement Fund, or RARF, which is located on pages 14 through 20 of your book. RARF was established in 2007 to fund improvements to the Legislative Assembly's facilities, replacing of furnishings, non-capital equipment, and major capital asset acquisitions. The fund is incorporated within the LAS budget until 2016-17 when the fund is up for renewal.

Within RARF, we have identified six projects, two of which are ongoing projects and the remaining four are new initiatives. However, the only new substantive RARF request is the library catalogue software platform renewal, which Melissa will speak to in a minute here. And if the board wishes to discuss any of the other projects, after Melissa's done, we'd be happy to do so. Thank you.

[16:15]

Ms. Bennett: — Thank you very much, Dawn. And good afternoon, members of the Board of Internal Economy and Mr. Speaker. So I'm giving you highlights on the RARF proposal on page 15 of the budget book, and it is an important proposal for the library to renew our library catalogue software platform.

So the Legislative Library maintains its catalogue software platform in partnership with several libraries in Saskatchewan, and has done so for many years. We've piggybacked I guess, so to speak, through this partnership and had very good cost-effective maintenance that way. In 2015-2016, this partnership is scheduled to acquire a replacement system.

Library catalogue software is the IT infrastructure for operating all core library functions. It enables us to operate our

acquisitions, our cataloguing, our discovery, our circulation, our patron records, and our repository management, and that's our repository of digital Saskatchewan government publications. We have over 200,000 records in this system. The existing software, which is called Voyager, has been in place for 18 years. And by way of comparison, the software system that we had prior to Voyager was in place for 10 years.

The partnership is phasing out this legacy system and transitioning to a new system, and so in this RARF budget proposal we are recommending budgeting \$125,000 for our portion of the cost. The risk for us of not proceeding is the risk of the partnership proceeding with this initiative and us not being able to be part of that. We currently don't maintain our own catalogue platform in-house. So from my perspective, the main concern would be that where the partnership goes, we want to be able to go. We don't want to be in a position of having to go it on our own, and in fact that would introduce greater costs than what we're asking for in terms of what it would cost to continue with our participation.

So I think those are the key highlights. And if you have any questions, I'd be happy to respond.

The Chair: — Okay. Thank you. Any questions? Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Forbes: — Well I have a couple, actually several. So when you're talking about the historical trends for the MLA expenses — and I think we should get better accounting in seeing what the trends are — but are we still liable for the 550,000 or whatever the number is for travel if everybody actually fully used their allowances? This is a trend, the unused part, and in the past you budgeted for the whole amount, whether or not. And now you're saying these are the trends, but we're still liable for, in the case everybody does use their full amount. Is that right?

Mr. Gurash: — Yes, you're correct. Under statute, the members do have access to that full pool of money. Last year the reason that we made the decision to not adhere fully to our historical trending analysis that we'd used the two years prior to that was due to a number of the directive changes that came in in October of '13. What essentially happened is I didn't have enough data to allow the model to be relevant at that point in time.

Now we're a year into that model, and I'm more confident in the data that I'm receiving through our financial system. So I had more confidence being able to look at where our expenditures were at, at the time this budget creation process began in October, November of the fall here, and then projecting out to the end of April and then using the historical year-over-year changes that we see. But you are correct that we would have . . .

Mr. Forbes: — Now I see one of your assumptions on page 8 is you're based on 65 sitting days, so you're assuming — and this would be interesting — and we're assuming we're back in the fall for a Throne Speech. And that's what you're planning for?

Mr. Putz: — That's correct. Of course if we do have an election under our calendar rules, then the calling of the first

session would be up to the government. But we're assuming based on this that we'll back in October, with an election in April then of course, and we'd have our fall sitting.

Mr. Forbes: — So is it a requirement to have a fall sitting? Because I'm just thinking about how this all plays out. We don't know until September 13th whether we're going or not. Is it a requirement? Does the government have to plan for a Throne Speech? Will there be a calendar published that the government has to live by? Or is this just an internal document that . . .

Mr. Putz: — Our calendar is based on an agreement with the members of the Assembly, and they put that into their standing orders. And of course, the members of executive government are members of the legislative . . . in our system by convention. Legally the government could ignore our calendar, but because they are members they have agreed to do this. And we would expect that we would follow our calendar unless there is some extraordinary circumstance, and that in this case would be an election.

Mr. Forbes: — And then I guess my other question would be, and you've alluded to it a bit, in terms of the safety in the building that there's nothing included in this. But you might give us a bit of an update, you know, on what's going on. So I'd be curious about that.

Mr. Putz: — Okay. Unfortunately our Sergeant-at-Arms can't be with us. But Ken has been fully briefed, and he's ready to give an update if members so desire as what we've done to date in regard to those reviews.

The Chair: — We will provide that information once we go in camera. Any other questions? If there are no other questions, well thank you very much. We will proceed with our further deliberations; we might as well carry on for the next roughly 45 minutes. And so would someone move that we go in camera. Mr. Harrison. Second? Mr. McCall. I think we will need some of the staff here for . . .

Mr. Putz: — Would you like to do the security thing first?

The Chair: — Sure.

Mr. Putz: — [Inaudible] . . . get that, then you can do your regular deliberations.

The Chair: — Right. Okay. And we can call the staff in as we need them.

[The board continued in camera from 16:22 until 18:15.]

The Chair: — We are ready to proceed. I call this meeting of the Board of Internal Economy back to order. We will deal with the budgetary items. Okay, item 5(b), approval of the 2015-16 budget for the Office of the Advocate for Children. I will read out the proposed motion:

That the 2015-16 expenditure estimates for vote 076, Office of the Advocate for Children and Youth be approved in the amount of \$2,598,000 as follows: budgetary to be voted, \$2,354,000; statutory, \$244,000.

And further, that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Would someone move that, please?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I so shall move.

The Chair: — Mr. Cheveldayoff. Seconder? Mr. Forbes. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Since the Advocate for Children and Youth isn't here, nobody is asking questions on this one . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No, but I couldn't see any questioning looks.

Okay, item no. 7, approval of 2015-16 budget for the Office of the Ombudsman. Can I have a drum roll please? Would someone move the following motion:

That the 2015-16 expenditure estimates for vote 056, Ombudsman be approved in the amount of \$3,521,000 as follows: budgetary to be voted, \$3,277,000; statutory \$244,000; and further, that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Someone move that motion? A correction. That should read 3,518,000. So that would be 3,274,000, and statutory, 244,000. Okay, Mr. Harrison. Second, Mr. Forbes. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Okay. We have the motion dealing with the mandate for the Ombudsman's Office. The motion reads:

That the mandate statement for the Ombudsman, vote 56 that is displayed in the main estimates document be amended to read as follows.

The mandate statement: the Ombudsman, an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, helps to ensure the government is accountable and fair when it provides services to the public. As Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner, the Ombudsman also helps to ensure the government provides a workplace where wrongdoings can be safely raised and appropriately addressed.

Subvote description: *The Ombudsman Act, 2012* gives the Ombudsman the authority to investigate or informally address complaints of unfairness in government actions. *The Public Interest Disclosure Act* appoints the Ombudsman as the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner, with the authority to provide advice to and investigate disclosures from public servants with allegations of wrongdoing or reprisals within their government institutions.

Would someone move? Ms. Eagles. Seconder? Mr. Forbes. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Item no. 8, approval of the 2015-16 budget for the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, motion that reads:

That the 2015-16 expenditure estimates for vote 055, Information and Privacy Commissioner be approved in the amount of \$1,505,300 as follows: budgetary to be voted, \$1,505,300; and further, that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Would someone move that?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I so move.

The Chair: — Mr. Cheveldayoff. Seconder? Mr. Forbes. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Okay, item no. 9(a), approval of the 2015-16 budget for the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, motion that reads:

That the 2015-16 expenditure estimates for vote 057, Conflict of Interest Commissioner be approved in the amount of \$176,700 as follows: budgetary to be voted, \$176,700; and further, that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Will someone move that motion, please? Mr. Harrison. Seconder? Mr. Forbes. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Item no. 9(b), approval of the 2015-16 budget for the Office of the Lobbyist Registrar, motion that reads:

That the 2015-16 expenditure estimates for vote 057, Office of the Lobbyist Registrar and establishment of the lobbyist register be approved in the amount of \$422,097 as follows: budgetary to be voted, \$422,097; and further, that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Someone move that motion. Ms. Eagles. Seconder? Mr. Forbes. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Okay. Approval of the mandate statement for the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. The motion reads:

That the mandate statement and subvote description for the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, vote 57 that is displayed in the main estimates document be amended to read as follows.

Mandate statement: the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, who is an officer of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, is mandated to coordinate disclosure of assets held by members, provide advice on

conflict of interest issues, conduct inquiries and provide opinions on compliance with *The Members' Conflict of Interest Act* if requested by a member, the President of Executive Council, or the Legislative Assembly. Under the provisions of *The Lobbyist Act*, the Conflict of Interest Commissioner will promote transparency about people and organizations who are attempting to influence government decision making.

Subvote description: coordinates disclosure of assets held by members, provides advice on conflict of interest issues, conducts inquiries and provides opinions on compliance with *The Members' Conflict of Interest Act* if requested by a member, the President of Executive Council, or the Legislative Assembly. The Conflict of Interest Commissioner also serves as the Lobbyist Registrar, which will oversee the lobbyist registry; promote and educate the general public, stakeholders, and the lobbyist community about *The Lobbyist Act*; and ensure compliance and conformity of lobbyists to *The Lobbyist Act*.

Would someone move that motion please? Mr. Forbes. Seconded? Mr. Cheveldayoff. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Item no. 10, approval of the 2015-16 budget for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, motion that reads:

That the 2015-16 expenditure estimates for vote 034, Chief Electoral Officer be approved in the amount of \$16,564,000 as follows: statutory, \$16,564,000; and further, that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Will someone move that motion? Mr. Harrison. Seconded by Mr. Forbes. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Okay. Item no. 11, approval of the 2015-16 budget for the Legislative Assembly, motion that reads:

That for the 2015-16 fiscal year the following Refurbishment and Asset Replacement Fund projects be approved: security infrastructure, 100,000; Legislative Assembly Services directed projects, 150,000; for a total of \$250,000.

Will someone move that motion please? Ms. Eagles. Seconded by Mr. Forbes. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Item no. 11(b), motion that reads:

That the 2015-16 expenditure estimates for vote 021, Legislative Assembly be approved in the amount of \$26,971,000 as follows: budgetary to be voted, \$17,209,000; statutory, \$9,762,000; and further, that such

estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Will someone move that motion please? Mr. Cheveldayoff. Seconded by Mr. Forbes. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

[18:30]

The Chair: — Carried. We have a motion to rescind the previously moved motion dealing with the budget of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, vote 021, Mr. Cheveldayoff. Mr. Forbes seconded. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. I have a motion that reads:

That the 2015-16 expenditure estimates for vote 021, Legislative Assembly be approved in the amount of \$26,971,000 as follows: statutory, \$17,209,000; budgetary to be voted, \$9,762,000; and further, that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Would someone move that motion please? Mr. Harrison. Seconded by Mr. Forbes. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Item 11(c), approval of revenue estimates for the Legislative Assembly. A motion that reads:

That the 2015-16 revenue estimates for vote 021, Legislative Assembly be approved in the amounts of \$4,200 as follows: revenue to be voted, \$4,200; and further, that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Would someone move that motion please? Ms. Eagles. Seconded? Mr. Forbes. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. We have one other piece of business as a guide to the Chief Electoral Officer. Okay. I recognize Mr. Harrison.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to put on the record that those that were probably paying close attention to the budget submission by the Chief Electoral Officer, compared to the budget that we approved just now as the Board of Internal Economy, there was a \$6.5 million variance in that budget.

What that \$6.5 million was would be expenditures that would be incurred subsequent to the completion of the 28th general election which would be, in the case of an April 4th election, incurred in the next fiscal year. The intention of moving those \$6.5 million or taking that off of the appropriation would be that they would be then funded in the '16-17 fiscal year. If an election is held prior to April 4th, 2016, as scheduled on November 2nd, 2015, the government would undertake to

ensure that those costs are incurred or are, as a supplementary estimate put before the Board, most expeditiously dealt with, and funded as a supplementary appropriation from the Board. And the government would undertake that if we were so fortunate as to be re-elected as government.

The Chair: — Any other questions? Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Forbes: — And I appreciate that. I think it's appropriate to recognize that it's anticipated that the election will span two fiscal years, and it's appropriate to have those expenses placed in the years that they would happen. And so that's our anticipation, so we think this is an appropriate way to go forward.

The Chair: — Okay, thank you very much. I believe that concludes today's business. Thank you to all of the LAS staff and the staff of the officers and the officers themselves for participating today and coming forward with your budgetary submissions. I hope that everyone is comfortable with the decisions that were made. This is a year when revenues will be tight, and I believe that the Board of Internal Economy and the officers and the LAS have recognized those difficulties. So thank you very much. Mr. Harrison.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes, I just want to thank as well the officers and staff that have put together these submissions. It's a tremendous amount of work, and we very much appreciate the work that you've done on, not just that, but over the course of the year.

I want to thank as well members at the committee. This is a fairly unique committee in that we operate on, in a general sense, on a consensus basis, and I think work together very well. So I'd like to thank my colleagues on the government side and the members on the opposition side as well.

The Chair: — I recognize Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Forbes: — And from the opposition side too, thank the officers and their staff and the Legislative staff for the excellent presentations, and the committee as well for dealing with this. And we look forward to next year for sure. So thank you very much.

The Chair: — One last piece of business: could I have someone move adjournment of the committee?

Mr. Forbes: — Oh, I'll move that.

The Chair: — Mr. Forbes. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[The board adjourned at 18:39.]