



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

Mr. Warren McCall
Regina Elphinstone-Centre

Hon. Jim Reiter
Rosetown-Elrose

[The board met at 12:30.]

The Chair: — Okay. It being 12:30, I would call this meeting to order. First order of business would be to introduce the members that we have present: the Hon. Jeremy Harrison, the Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff, MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] Doreen Eagles, and MLA Warren McCall.

Before we get started, I think it would be worth our while to give a moment's consideration to the people of La Loche and send our condolences and our support to the people, to the victims, to the families, and to the residents of that community in this time of sadness and tragedy in their community.

Our first order of business is the approval of the proposed agenda. It's in your binders. Would someone move that we approve the agenda as presented? Mr. McCall. Second? Mr. Harrison. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Okay. The next order of business is the approval of the minutes from the meeting 6/15. If there are no questions related to those minutes, would someone move that we adopt the minutes as presented? Mr. Cheveldayoff. Second? Mr. McCall. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Item no. 1, tabling and decision item, approval of the Legislative Assembly Service third quarter report on progress for the year 2015-16. You will find that item in your binders under tab 1. Are there any questions related to the third quarter report of the LAS [Legislative Assembly Service] service? If not, would someone move that we approve the item? Ms. Eagles. Second? Mr. McCall. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Item no. 2 under tab 2 in your binders, tabling and decision item, approval of the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and the Office of the Lobbyists Registrar first, second, and third quarter fiscal forecast for the fiscal year 2015-2016, as of December 31st, 2015. Are there any questions related to those reports? If not, would someone move approval of those reports? Mr. Harrison. Second? Mr. McCall. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Item no. 3 found under tab 3 in your binders, tabling and decision item, approval of the Advocate for Children and Youth third quarter financial forecast for the fiscal year 2015-2016. Are there any questions related to that report? If not, would someone move approval of the report? Mr. McCall. Second? Mr. Cheveldayoff. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Item no. 4 under tab 4, tabling and decision item, approval of the Elections Saskatchewan third quarter financial forecast for the fiscal year 2015-2016. Are

there any questions related to that report? If not, would someone move approval of the report? Ms. Eagles. Second? Mr. McCall. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Item 5 found in tab 5, tabling and decision item, approval of the Ombudsman Saskatchewan third quarter financial forecast for the fiscal year 2015-2016. Are there any questions related to that report? If not, would someone move approval of the report? Mr. McCall. Second? Mr. Harrison. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Office of the Chief Electoral Officer

The Chair: — Item no. 6 found in tab 6, decision item, review of the 2016-17 budget and motion to approve the statutory estimates of the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer. At this time I would like to call forward Mr. Boda and staff to do their presentation.

I'd like to welcome Mr. Boda, the Chief Electoral Officer, to the Board of Internal Economy deliberations today. Mr. Boda, if you could introduce your staff please and do your presentation.

Mr. Boda: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to appear here before the board today. I have with me today Jennifer Colin, my deputy in charge of corporate services and electoral finance, and Jeff Kress, deputy in charge of electoral operations.

And with your permission, Mr. Speaker, we'd like to take a few minutes to offer some comments regarding our 2016-17 fiscal budget request, and after that we'll be happy to take some questions.

I think the board is quite aware that Elections Saskatchewan has been on a path for renewal since mid-2012. That reform process began with the 2009 Hamilton report, an organizational assessment of Elections Saskatchewan that was commissioned by this board. And implementing the changes recommended in the Hamilton report was part of my mandate when I was appointed to the position of Chief Electoral Officer for this province.

This path for institutional renewal has involved setting some overarching priorities, developing a strategic plan, and being deliberate and disciplined in ensuring that Elections Saskatchewan continues to make steady progress in achieving its stated goals and objectives.

I'm sure that each of you are aware that the 28th provincial general election will be under way in six weeks time, and that the election day is April the 4th. This will be the first general election in Saskatchewan to be held in April since 1982. The only April provincial election held before that was in 1964.

The pending election will span two fiscal years. Advance voting will occur in both years. Writs will be issued early in the last month of the fiscal year, as early as March the 1st and as late as March the 8th. Election day will occur early in the first month of the fiscal year 2016-2017. As you can no doubt imagine, fiscal year-end accounting procedures will definitely involve some additional challenges for our organization this year.

We have set eight priorities for the coming fiscal year. These priorities are aligned with meeting the goals and objectives that we set out in our strategic plan for 2014-2016. Our first priority is to successfully administer all aspects of the 28th general election. This includes the vote, the voting, and the vote counting processes that will culminate on April the 4th, along with coordination of all activities and human resources associated with an event that must simultaneously and consistently occur in all communities across our entire province.

Our second priority is to fully and properly meet all the legislative requirements that are associated with election closure, something that will require 11 months of sustained effort after the writs of the election are returned and the 61 returning officers close their offices.

At the same time, based on what we learn in the process of delivering the 28th provincial election, we want to appropriately update and adjust our event plans for the preparation and delivery of the 29th general election, which is legislatively scheduled to occur on November the 2nd, 2020.

Our third priority is to promptly and carefully review all financial disclosures submitted by political entities and provide the appropriate financial reimbursements to candidates and political parties that have received at least 15 per cent of voting support during the election.

A fourth priority will involve establishing a series of baseline measurements that will allow us to determine areas of administrative improvements during the coming electoral cycle while also engaging our stakeholders in a process of measuring levels of satisfaction with Elections Saskatchewan services while identifying any processes that urgently need reform and redesign.

Our fifth priority is to ensure that comprehensive reporting on the election is provided to the legislature, including detailed voting results and administrative review, an accounting of all election costs incurred by candidates and parties, recommendations for legislative change that would improve the legal framework of elections in the province.

Our sixth priority is to establish some foundations on which to develop a plan that will allow for innovation in the administration of future elections in Saskatchewan. Election management bodies across the country are finding the paper-based processes that legally define how elections currently work are becoming increasingly difficult to deliver. We have a voting population which is expecting increased convenience and adaptability but find ourselves recruiting and supervising a temporary workforce increasingly unfamiliar with non-digital processing procedures.

Our seventh priority is to establish the means to maintain the expected three-quarters of a million voters registrations that have been collected as a result of the enumeration and election processes and to make use of that data for various public institutions to automate this process to the maximum extent possible.

And then finally our eighth institutional priority for the coming fiscal year is to develop a new four-year strategic plan for Elections Saskatchewan that establishes a road map of where the organization needs to navigate during the 29th electoral cycle.

So you may already have noticed that five of eight of these priorities are tied to the successful delivery of the pending election and administrative processes associated with the post-election closure, and that the vast majority of our anticipated expenditures during the coming fiscal year are election related directly.

[12:45]

I'd like to turn things over to Jeff Kress so that he can provide you with a summary and description of the scope and diversity of work associated with the provincial general election that will happen specifically during the coming year. Jeff.

Mr. Kress: — Thank you, Michael. I just want to take a few minutes to give you a sense of some of the dimensions that we're going to be working ahead in the next few months and in fiscal year 2016-17.

In my previous career as a public sector auditor, I used to always be responsible for going into new organizations, quickly getting up to speed. And I can tell you that I didn't really expect the level of detail or complexity that you often see in election management. And so what we want to do as part of this presentation, give you a little bit of an understanding of some of those complexities as well as some of the things that we'll be doing in fiscal year 2016-17.

So in terms of the general election, there are many challenges involved when you're talking about setting up over 1,000 locations across the province. Assembling a temporary workforce of 10,000 people has some very real challenges. No one who's working out in the field — returning officers, election clerks, people that will be working on election day — have ongoing or full-time, permanent employment after the election. For these reasons, and perhaps because the financial remuneration isn't a lot, the challenges in recruiting are real. And we first found this in the constituency of Lloydminster, the by-election that we had in the fall. Recruiting staff was our single biggest challenge that we came through.

What we've found so far is that the change in election dates to April has made this a much bigger challenge. There has been a number of people that we've recruited, returning officers and election clerks, who haven't been with us now from the start and who won't be in that role for the April election.

So when you're dealing with 10,000 temporary workers, recruitment is obviously a challenge, but we're trying to find ways to effectively manage these recruitment challenges to

make sure that we're effectively prepared for the upcoming general election.

Now one thing that's mentioned in the budget, it talks a little bit about some of the post-closure activities. And again, before I started working I think I had a pretty public sector impression of, when the election's over, it's over; you know, as a voter you go in there and you vote and it's over. But the reality is that closure for a provincial election takes, for the most part, almost a full year. The first and biggest step that we're going to be prepping for after the general election is ensuring that the final count is done properly. That's going to occur 12 days after the election. Depending on how close the results are, some constituencies may have automatic judicial recounts, and in other constituencies, candidates may be requesting a recount.

We're also going to need to deal with the challenge of shutting down 61 returning offices, making sure that the thousands of temporary employees are appropriately paid, and dealing with the return of election materials to our single central warehouse. And pretty much everyone that had a problem during the election — whether it's a voter, temporary election worker, someone involved in a candidate or party's campaign — they're going to direct their concerns to one location, and that's going to be the head office of Elections Saskatchewan. Almost every one of these is going to require some form of management time and attention in order to resolve.

I'm going to briefly touch on party and candidate finance returns. As I'm sure you know, candidates that obtain 15 per cent voting support in their constituency can be reimbursed for 60 per cent of allowable election expenses. Parties that receive at least 15 per cent voting support province wide can be reimbursed for 50 per cent of their permitted election expenses. Reimbursement requires candidates and parties to submit audited financial returns to Elections Saskatchewan. And Jennifer and her team, they're going to be in charge of supervising a team of reviewers to ensure that the returns are complete, accurate, and ensure only allowable expenses before approving them for reimbursement.

And what was found in the past is that a number of the returns — as an auditor I can appreciate this — it's not just going to be looking at the audited returns, but in many cases there's going to be follow-up needed with chief official agents and business managers before that work is approved. Deadlines for reimbursement are statutorily scheduled as October 3rd for candidates and January 2nd for parties, 90 days after the respective deadlines for filing election expense returns.

In terms of evaluating performance, it's all about adjusting plans for next time. Elections Saskatchewan, along with other electoral management bodies across the country, are very interested in knowing how services we provide are received. And our stakeholders really are broad and diverse. They include everything from eligible voters, participating voters, candidates and their campaign offices, political parties and their administrative leadership, the media that report on the election process and voting results, even right down to the 10,000 election workers that we're going to hire, train, and supervise — really, everyone involved in the process.

The reality is that memories can fade fast after an election, so

it's going to be very important for us to make sure that we administer surveys and conduct debriefing sessions with stakeholder groups in a timely way after the election to make sure that we get an accurate reading on, you know, what's worked well, what needs attention, and what needs to be fixed. Going through some of this feedback, in some cases, can be quite uneven and even contradictory between different groups, I think even between different constituencies and people involved. And it's going to be a very important task that's going to need management attention. It's going to be used in a meaningful way to improve processes at the next election.

In terms of reporting on the next election, again it's very important that the election is reported on in a transparent manner and administratively reviewed in a professional and politically neutral manner. The official report of the Chief Electoral Officer is done in a standard way in Commonwealth jurisdictions around the world, and such reviews are made the same way here in Saskatchewan. The plans we have are to break up the report into four separate volumes and submit each for tabling in the legislature just as soon as it can be made available.

Another thing that will be key in the year after the election is modernization. And, you know, again as a past auditor — and I was responsible for information technology and looking at systems — one of the surprising things that you note when you dig into the details of an election is there really isn't anything that's fundamentally changed over the last, you know, my lifetime for sure. The whole process of appointing a returning officer for each constituency, setting up a local polling station, using an elaborate set of paper-based procedures to try to create some sort of audit trail — they were all designed a long time ago.

And the reality is this model is getting old, and it's getting close to the end of its life. From the people that I've talked to, there's widespread belief among those election administrators that it's not going to be sustainable for much longer. So the challenge that we're going to face, both in this upcoming year and on a go-forward basis, is that the challenge is to modernize the process in such a way that it doesn't introduce new risks and that it retains all the existing features of transparency, integrity, and secrecy of voting. And again it's not going to be something that'll just be done next year or even in a single electoral cycle; this is going to require extensive discussion agreement with electoral stakeholders and legislatures.

I hope that my very brief description over the past few minutes has helped to give you a sense of the scope and breadth of what Elections Saskatchewan needs to undertake during the coming fiscal year. It certainly has been an exceptionally busy last 18 months, and I think it's going to be another busy year for those of us who work at Elections Saskatchewan. So I'm now going to pass it over to Jennifer, and she's going to talk about some of the projected financial costs associated with the fiscal year that lies ahead.

Ms. Colin: — Thank you. So my intention is to just briefly highlight the cost breakdown of the budget request provided to you in our submission document. There's two major categories of costs incurred by any election management body. The first category is obviously the costs of administering the

organization on an ongoing basis regardless of any electoral events that may be under way or on the horizon.

The second category is event-related costs associated with preparing for, delivering, and closing out various types of electoral events. The budget breakdown for each of these categories is presented on page 6 in our submission. For the coming fiscal year, the ongoing administrative costs for Elections Saskatchewan are projected to be \$2.68 million, which is slightly lower than the administrative costs that are being incurred in the current fiscal year. This was achieved despite the addition of the final two remaining full-time staff halfway through the '16-17 fiscal year associated with the permanent register project.

Our projected cost associated with the electoral events for the '16-17 budget year is \$12.39 million, and almost all of this cost is directly associated with the 28th general election. These costs can be roughly split into three main categories. One-third of the expenditures are associated with the costs incurred by returning officers at the local constituency level in running their returning offices and administering the election at the constituency level. One-third of the costs are associated with reimbursing election expenses to eligible political parties and candidates. And the final third is for head office expenditures associated with supporting those returning officers, payroll processing, various close-out activities, and post-election reporting that are not related to any particular constituency.

And I'll now turn it back over to Michael for some final concluding remarks.

Mr. Boda: — Mr. Speaker, we are very aware that the province is facing difficult financial times and we have been very diligent in trying to reduce our expenditures where possible. For example, despite the fact that during the coming fiscal year we'll be hiring the last two, as Jennifer has mentioned, of four full-time personnel needed to run the permanent register that we're mandated to run, we've been able to reduce our ongoing administrative costs from '15-16 levels.

While being extremely mindful of costs, we are also keenly aware that the Canadian Charter of Rights and election law in Saskatchewan together guarantee a high level of accessibility to the electoral process for all citizens in our province. We are obliged to put the necessary administrative provisions in place to breathe life into these legal rights to ensure the process of electoral democracy is truly and equitably available to all eligible participants in the province. We also need to concern ourselves with the integrity of this process, something that has garnered a great deal of attention provincially, nationally, internationally since we last ran a process here in 2011.

In particular we are aware of the obligations Elections Saskatchewan has to ensure that electoral processes administered by the 10,000 temporary election workers we'll hire are implemented in accordance with election legislation and consistent with standards that are formally communicated in our manuals, in our guides, and training materials. Maintaining public trust in the legitimacy of this process used to elect those who govern demands ensuring the presence of electoral integrity in all aspects of voter registration, checking of voter qualifications prior to issuing ballots, maintaining

ballot secrecy, and the transparent counting and tabulating of election results.

Our budget request for the coming fiscal year reflects our commitment to high integrity and widely accessible democratic electoral processes at the most responsible and reasonable cost possible. We would appreciate if the board would recommend to the government the allocation of \$15,068,300 to Elections Saskatchewan for the '16-17 fiscal year. This budget allocation covers both expenditures associated with the 28th general election and ongoing administrative costs associated with performing the legislative mandate of Elections Saskatchewan.

So it's at this point, Mr. Speaker, that we would be happy to answer any questions from members of the Board of Internal Economy about our presentation and the budget document submitted 12 days ago.

The Chair: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Boda. Thank you, Jennifer. Thank you, Jeff. Are there any questions? Mr. Harrison.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes, sure, very much appreciate the presentation today. Clearly, significant work has gone into this, and clearly, significant work has gone into preparation during this fiscal year that we're in right now for the election event which we're going to be participating in on April the 4th. So we appreciate that. I want to note our understanding of efforts that Elections Saskatchewan has taken with respect to fiscal probity in your operations, administratively and otherwise. So I want to acknowledge that.

And also for, just in terms of kind of where we're moving into the future, I appreciate the presentation and did go through it in significant detail in terms of the new strategic plan and some of the mechanisms and measures that perhaps could be coming out of the review that we do after the election event of April the 4th.

You noted yourself in your presentation with respect to the challenging fiscal situation that the province is in. So I guess I would just add a bit of a note, with respect to that preparation into the next fiscal year, hopefully we're going to be seeing improved fiscal circumstances, but we don't know that for sure.

[13:00]

So I guess in terms of specific questions, I did have one. In terms of your event-related budget proposed for this year, the capital asset line item which is, you know, not an insignificant number, but there is an increase of \$85,000 over the '15-16 budget. I guess I just would like a bit of a breakdown in terms of what those capital assets would have been for in this fiscal and what they would be for in the next fiscal.

Ms. Colin: — The leasehold improvements associated with our relocation to our new facilities on Hillsdale were capitalized. As well, all of the costs up and to the point where it becomes operational, the costs associated with the permanent register are being capitalized.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — And in terms of your personal services for '16-17, obviously that very significant increase is almost entirely then for that 10,000-person temporary workforce that

you're going to be needing to deliver the election.

Ms. Colin: — For the event-related, yes, that's correct.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — That's all.

The Chair: — Any other members? Mr. Cheveldayoff.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. We had chatted, I think last time that Elections Saskatchewan appeared before the committee, about the voter registration process, the gathering of data. And just wondering if I could get an update. I understand you're working with Elections Canada, with SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance], and eHealth, and I'm just wondering how that work is coming along and where you're at.

Mr. Boda: — If I was to put it into one word I would say . . . I wouldn't say remarkable; I would say very well. We are very pleased with the progress that we've been able to make with respect to the development of the permanent register.

The first information-sharing agreement that was established was with Elections Canada. That was the beginning mechanism by which we were able to access data from Elections Canada, and they are very strong partners in that regard, having had a permanent register in place for many, many years.

With respect to provincial partners, we have also reached out to a number of ministries and Crowns, and I have to say how much I'm grateful for the willingness of Crowns and ministries to work together with us. Doug Moen, deputy minister to the Premier, has been very helpful in facilitating our access to the Crowns, and we have begun establishing information-sharing agreements with those organizations as well.

I will allow Jennifer to talk a little bit more about the progress that we're making on the permanent register, but I do just want to say that our goal has been . . . The legislation has led us to ensure that we are able to print the polling lists from the register for this general election. That said, there is still much more work to do, and we have articulated phase 3 and phase 4 and how we anticipate progressing with the permanent register.

The one thing I will also add is that a permanent register is cost effective for this province, and we had articulated that early on. It is cost effective. We're finding it to be cost effective already, and in the longer term there will be significant cost savings. Instead of doing a full enumeration as we have in the past, we will be able to maintain the data and update it for significant savings. Jennifer, do you have anything to add?

Ms. Colin: — I would also just reiterate Michael's comments that organizations that we've been engaging with have been very co-operative. The foundation for the permanent register did come from Elections Canada. However we made significant use of the eHealth data, which was very timely because they had just undergone a hospital card renewal project so had almost 100,000 addresses for people which were previously unknown to us. So that was very helpful. We will be, I think, in a position to have the most complete and accurate voters list that this province has ever seen.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — All right. Just one further question. I think from reading the information, my understanding was we were going to use Elections Canada, SGI, and eHealth, and then maybe not be able to use SaskPower, SaskEnergy, Advanced Education, and the Ministry of Education until after. I'm understanding you may be ahead of schedule on that. Have you been using SaskPower, SaskEnergy, the Ministry of Advanced Education, and Education?

Ms. Colin: — We have met with all of those organizations. One of the things that we're really looking for is a really good source for up-to-date and current addresses, and what we're finding is that that really doesn't exist in the province. SaskTel no longer has your home address associated with your land line because people just don't have land lines. If you have a cellphone, they often just have an email address for you.

So we've undergone a lot of due diligence with these organizations. I think what we've concluded is that there's a couple of those institutions that we would be very interested in following up with after the election because we simply don't have time to really evaluate the data and make use of it before the election. Two of the Crowns associated with energy are two of the ones that I think we'll have our best chance of getting address information from. But that's certainly on the agenda for after the election in the summer.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — All right, thank you. I see that SaskTel isn't really mentioned in the information. And certainly we know that there's becoming less and less land lines and more cellular lines that are being used. Can you comment on that?

Ms. Colin: — We did meet with SaskTel and, as I just mentioned, they are no longer as concerned with where you live as long as you're paying your bill. So they have a lot of clients who they don't have an address for; they just have an email address because they get their bills electronically.

We have concluded that SaskPower is likely the best source for addressing because when they install the utility, it is attached to a land location that is georeferenced. So we will likely be making good use of that data. But I think we've concluded that SaskTel probably isn't an organization that we would be negotiating with in the short term because there's other organizations that would give us better value for the investment.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — All right, thank you very much. One further question: in our last conversation we talked about establishing electoral offices, and there might be some difficulties with that and polling locations. Can you give us an update on those two areas?

Mr. Kress: — Absolutely. In terms of returning offices, the locations for all the returning offices are set . . . Excuse me. It's funny because anyone in the office would tell you that I very rarely lose my voice. You know, a friend of mine is in the back there, and he's smiling right now, knowing that this rarely, rarely happens.

Returning office locations are indeed set and they're in place. We have one that has a lease that's yet to be signed, we're waiting to get back from the realtor. In terms of polling

locations, the bulk of that work has been done as part of the pre-writ assignments, and it's nearing completion. That'll be confirmed after the writ is dropped in March.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Okay, thank you.

Mr. Boda: — I wonder if, Jennifer, if you could add to . . . We had discussed the last time we met as well with some of the pressures that we have been feeling in terms of rent levels, and we probably have some more testimonials to tell you about. We have been having a lot of difficulty when it comes to rented rates.

Ms. Colin: — We have. And I think Jeff made it sound a little bit easier than it was because he was coughing. We have been over the past three months, pretty much non-stop, have a full-time person focused on securing those returning office locations. We do have one lease that is still outstanding but there's problems every day. We had a returning office that we had a lease signed for, the other day was sold. So we're scrambling to renegotiate with the new landlord. Thankfully, they have agreed to honour the lease, but it's an ongoing issue for us.

We had budgeted an average monthly rental rate of 2,500. We will likely be somewhere in the neighbourhood of close to 4,000, if not slightly above that, across the whole province for our returning offices.

Polling locations is a little bit easier for us because those rates are legislated in a schedule of fees, so that takes a little bit of the pressure off us. But that hasn't stopped some of the organizations that we engage with from requesting additional fees for setting up, janitorial, those types of things, which we have historically never done. And as well we're seeing a significant pressure from the schools and school boards to have increased security on site on school grounds on polling day, which we've not historically done either. But of course that adds to the cost because we are sensitive to their concerns and want to protect the children.

Mr. Boda: — And on that note with respect to the schools, I have fielded a number of calls from school districts, school boards which were concerned about security, and we have indicated that we will provide security where it is requested. And in addition, I have made a commitment to strike a committee of educators early in the next cycle in order to have a conversation about this very issue.

We are quite concerned because we are of the view that schools are central to every community and that elections are an important part of that community and we want it to be in the schools where children can come and see the activity, the democratic activity that's unfolding. But at the same time, we want to make sure that it's done in a safe environment. So that will be a priority in the coming electoral cycle.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you. That completes my questions.

The Chair: — Mr. McCall.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I guess just

to join in, having gone through the presentation, you've got a significant job in front of you. And you've given us a pretty excellent presentation today in terms of the work that's been concluded, is ongoing. So thank you very much for that.

I guess the question I have is perhaps in the context of both the ongoing work with the permanent voter registry but also with the list that will be utilized in the electoral event to come. I guess I was looking to gather your confidence level on how historically difficult-to-enumerate populations are going to be represented in the coming electoral event. So rural and remote communities, northern communities, on-reserve First Nations, inner cities — historically these have been communities or populations that have posed some challenges in terms of enumeration, and then in terms of the resultant list and its accuracy, and then of course what challenges that poses for election day or when people actually try to get to the ballot box. So I was wondering if you could provide some thoughts on where things are at both in the context of the electoral event of April 4th and how that is bolstering work at the permanent registry.

Mr. Boda: — Well I will begin by talking about the methodology of a list. The methodology of conducting an enumeration within the writ period is a methodology of the past. It has demonstrated that your results are quite poor because you are generating a brand new list for each electoral event. And you know that; we've had that discussion and you've mandated me to move forward with a permanent register, which is proven to be a better methodology.

In terms of numbers, we have . . . During the 2011 election, we are aware that there was about a 70 per cent coverage of the province. After the election — you'll see the number in here — with the additional people who registered on election day, we had about an 8 per cent bump in that regard, so it got up to 78 per cent.

We are of the belief that we will get over 90 per cent coverage for election day, understanding of course the permanent register is in its infancy. We're having all sorts of fun challenges. These are things we like to do. We like to work with other organizations in order to improve the quality. And we are of the view that we will be able to serve our political parties in a much better way using the permanent register — all of our political parties — and not just for this election but going forward.

[13:15]

Now, Mr. McCall, there are challenges ongoing with groups that traditionally are not on the list. We believe that the permanent register will facilitate in achieving the end goal of getting everyone on the list. For this enumeration we did a confirmation enumeration process through the mail, and then there was a number of times in which we took steps to do targeted enumeration for groups that aren't traditionally on the list or don't get on the list or where there's been a lot of movement over the last four years. And you know from last year, we had discussions about how much change there's been in Saskatchewan in the last four years. We have areas like Harbour Landing in Regina where we didn't have a full sense, we couldn't have a full sense, of who was living there. And so we did targeted enumeration there.

I will say that for students we have had targeted enumeration going on at the University of Regina in the past couple of weeks where we've had teams at the University of Regina who were enumerating. We've had teams at the University of Saskatchewan as well, and we have reached out to Sask Polytech and to the regional colleges as well. So we are working very hard in that regard.

We have also been working with, both Elections Canada and Elections Saskatchewan have been working with the chiefs across the province. I think I gave you an update last time that we had been in touch with the 74 chiefs. We have been in touch with the 74 chiefs for the past year in terms of engaging with them to articulate that we are interested in having the most accurate list ever in Saskatchewan. And perhaps I'll let Jeff talk about some of what we have been doing in that regard.

Mr. Kress: — Absolutely. So the first step that we did starting last spring was to, as Michael said, write a letter to all the chiefs to articulate what we were trying to do. And our goal throughout has been to reduce barriers for all voters so it doesn't matter if you live on the east side of Regina, the central part of Regina, or off on a First Nation reserve.

So part of that responsibility has been involved, is having enumeration of all people. So for some people, as Michael mentioned, it was done via confirmation. That wasn't the case for First Nations. So there actually was enumeration work that was done on each and every reserve that allowed us to go ahead and do that. Right now we've completed that work for probably 80 per cent of First Nations. And just this week Michael sent out another letter to the outstanding ones, and we're trying to call to try to reach them all. That's our end goal for every voter, is to get every voter in the province on our permanent registry.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks very much.

The Chair: — Mr. Harrison.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Maybe if I could just follow up on the targeted enumeration. So are you actually going out and doing this, or how are you actually generating a list, say on a First Nation then, a remote First Nation or even a non-remote First Nation? Are you actually going out and doing door-to-door enumeration?

Mr. Boda: — You want to know on First Nations specifically or ... [inaudible interjection] ... We have done targeted enumeration where we have gone door to door in a number of locations across the province where there's been a lot of change.

In the context of First Nations, we have been working together with the First Nations to ensure that the list that they have ... So it is very difficult to do door-to-door in a First Nations context, so we have been mostly using the list that they provide. But unlike in past cycles, we have been going back and forth with them to ensure that the quality of the list is elevated, and so we're going back and forth with the bands in order to achieve that quality list.

We want to know who is living on the First Nations and making the distinction between ... They obviously have a list of band

members, and I think in the past that has been used quite often. We have been making sure that there is an accuracy so that the list that's provided meets the standard of our legislation; now understanding of course that just because, you know, if you're not on the list, it doesn't mean you can't vote on election day. And if you're on the list, it doesn't mean you can vote either. There is a requirement for identification of course, and we are doing our due diligence in that regard as well.

Our process is to of course reduce the barriers for every voter, but also to make sure that we maintain the integrity of the process.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — All right. Well that's encouraging that the accuracy of the list is what's important in this, and making sure that those who are on that list are able to vote but are also on the list in the correct constituency and all of that. Because, as you had alluded to, there had been occasions in the past where the band list was essentially taken as the list of all those resident on the First Nation, when we know that that's not generally the case.

One other question . . .

Mr. Boda: — Can I follow up on one thing, Mr. Harrison?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes.

Mr. Boda: — That is that we have been working very closely with Elections Canada as partners, and of course they have gone through this process recently as well. We began our process early with the approach that we would begin to work carefully and collaboratively with the chiefs throughout the entire process, but working over the year to develop that relationship.

We did have to, when Elections Canada began their process . . . Their process is different than ours. I respect my colleagues in Ottawa greatly. We work together a lot with them, and in fact they were relying on some of the data that we had collected.

However I'm of the view that there has to be an ongoing relationship with the chiefs in order to ensure that we're able to get the accurate lists we require. And I do see this as something that's not going to be perfected in the 28th electoral cycle, but I also see it's something that we can improve on in the 29th and the 30th and 31st. And so we are committed to ensuring that we have an accurate list going forward.

The Chair: — Okay. If there's no other questions, I have a few.

On page 14 of your presentation under 2.6, you mention in there electronic poll books that could be used in the association with the exercise of control to ensure that each voter is qualified, registered, shows appropriate identification, and only votes once. Are you proposing to use electronic poll books during this election, or is this something you hope to do in the future? And my concern is that not every location might be accessible electronically, that there may not be cell coverage or Internet accessibility.

Mr. Boda: — You raise a very good question in terms of modernization and the use of electronic poll books. This is something that we ... Let me back up. In terms of the 28th

electoral cycle, the goal that I established for the 28th electoral cycle in terms of administration had to do with the stabilization of the system with an eye towards modernization. However it's the 29th electoral cycle where we are really, will really be focusing on how we can take a system which began in 1905 and has pretty much stayed the same and begin to modernize it administratively.

So the answer to your question in terms of electronic poll books: I have observed electronic poll books recently in British Columbia. They have begun testing them. They are testing them across the country and of course in the United States. And our goal is to begin to look at electronic poll books as one example of modernization over the coming cycle.

Now are there ways to deal with this? Of course, we have over a thousand polling locations across the province. And are there places where there is not cell coverage? Absolutely there is. However we're not the only jurisdiction that has that problem. In fact I've been in Nova Scotia in the Garden of Eden. That's a little town in Nova Scotia where they definitely didn't have Internet access. I was surprised; in the Garden of Eden you would've thought they'd have Internet access.

An Hon. Member: — We're way past that.

Mr. Boda: — That's right. But the point is that they will have electronic access because you will have either an iPad or a laptop there that has all the information that's needed, and as the strike off occurs, once you later connect up to Internet back at the returning office, then that data then uploads.

So these are challenges that are there. But there are, and this is something that we can talk about later, but there are significant cost savings in the long run when you start to look at ways to introduce technology, given the fact that we have polling divisions of 300 voters apiece. And we have challenges with advanced voting, but voters are moving to advanced voting which means we shouldn't be using as many people to run the election. We should be using more technology. And of course there's a short-term cost for the technology but you can reduce the number. The number 10,000, if you think it's daunting, it is, but we can find ways to reduce those numbers in the long term.

The Chair: — Okay, real time access to that information would certainly be beneficial for Elections Saskatchewan. Hopefully that will occur.

Mr. Boda: — Hopefully SaskTel will agree with you on that.

The Chair: — Yes. A second item on page 15. Mr. Cheveldayoff already covered some of this, but in reaching data-sharing agreements with eHealth, how is that affected by the privacy concerns? We have the Information and Privacy Commissioner with us today. So are you involving him in this access, these access requests, because while it doesn't directly affect his office in the sense that he doesn't have the information but he is mandated to protect that information?

Mr. Boda: — I will say that we take very, very seriously the privacy of every elector and that we are working within best practice when it comes to privacy. Each and every organization which we engage with, beginning with Elections Canada but

eHealth, SGI, we establish an information-sharing agreement which is absolutely consistent with our legislation and also is consistent with privacy best practice. I have been working with the Privacy Commissioner on these matters. He is well aware of the challenges that we have, and it is my goal to continue to work with the Privacy Commissioner on these issues.

The Chair: — Okay, thank you. Last year in your presentation, I believe you came forward with a budget request initially of 21, \$22 million under the assumption that the election would take place on the regularly scheduled time of November of last year. The board reduced that budget by about \$6 million roughly, to 16.5. So that \$6 million additional that was not provided was presumably there to carry out the functions of the full election and wrapping it up, because it would have been another four months, five months from the end of the election to the end of the fiscal year.

You come forward this year with a request for 15-plus million. So if you take last year's 16.5, this year's 15, that's thirty-one and a half million, whereas you were asking last year for 21, 22 million to carry out the electoral event, plus your annual administration. So if we include that into that, there still seems to be a significant increase in the request, based on last year's numbers. What is the reason for that additional resource needed?

Mr. Boda: — Jennifer can add to this. What I would articulate is that there are many variables to keep in mind as to why. Part of the answer lies in the fact that the election was delayed from November the 2nd until April the 4th, and as a result there was much work that had to be redone. Voting places had to be re-established because many were not available on April the 4th. Returning offices had to be re-established because they were no longer available.

We had to go out and find those locations. We didn't rent those locations, but we had gone through an exercise of finding locations and then we had to come back and then we had to send our team out again. And keep in mind, everything I'm talking about, it's one thing for just a constituency but we multiply this by 61.

[13:30]

So in addition, we had temporary staff already in place. We had to expand those contracts in order to make sure our team didn't disappear over the course of the period.

So there were a number of elements that related to the delay but there were a lot of unexpected costs as well, and I've alluded to some of those — Jennifer has mentioned them — that as we . . . We talked about in our document last year some of the overarching reasons for cost increases. Well those cost increases haven't gone away from us and we weren't even aware of some of those. The unbelievable rates at which we are renting locations, we couldn't believe that they were as high as they were, and those things have unfolded over the past year.

Some of the unexpected costs as well were the costs of living as they relate to our political party reimbursements. We will be giving more money back to political parties than we had anticipated initially. The security issues in the schools . . . And

again, you're multiplying these things by 61.

Other costs related to schedule fees. Schedule fees went up during the year, and then as I mentioned last time to Mr. Cheveldayoff, we have increased our focus on accessibility over the past year to make sure that every polling site and every returning office is accessible.

And then I have to tell you, we went through an October 19th election and we learned a lot from a federal election. We took very seriously what went on during the federal election. We have engaged . . . I believe we have organized five debriefing sessions with Elections Canada, two-hour debriefing sessions via Skype, in order to get a better sense of what went wrong in that election. And we have a better sense of things in terms of advance polls and shortage of ballots. Because of the change to advance polls, it changes the way that we have traditionally run elections in the province. People are going to be moving to advance polls. We need to make sure that we're covered. We're trying to learn from what Elections Canada has experienced in October.

These are a number of the reasons why there was that differential. I'll leave it at that.

The Chair: — Well it's a \$7 million difference, roughly, and I'm just concerned that that is a pretty significant increase in what was budgeted last year for 21 million, is almost a one-third additional cost this year. So, you know, part of the explanation is certainly as you explained. But I'm not sure that if you didn't rent the locations then there was minimal cost that was certainly cost in finding them, but you would not have had them in possession so you wouldn't have had to pay a three-month cost, say, for the polling offices or the returning offices.

The one area you mentioned, problems with the federal campaign that I ran into was advance polls had to be within a region of the constituency, not just in the constituency. So I hope that's something you're not looking at doing because if you're in the constituency you should be able to vote the advance polls.

Mr. Boda: — Just to address a couple of issues. Did you want to talk about the numbers specifically?

Ms. Colin: — Yes, I could just maybe clarify that the 6.5 million that was reduced from our budget request last year related to the election day pay for workers on election day only, as well as candidate and party reimbursement only. So it wasn't related to any of the close-out costs or any of those.

I just also wanted to clarify, Michael made reference to the schedule of fees, and as you might recall from our budget submission last year, the budget submission was based on the schedule of fees that was in effect at the time the budget was created. Subsequent to that, there was an increase to the schedule of fees so that was an additional increase that was not reflected in our original budget last year.

The Chair: — How much of a difference would that schedule make? And I'm assuming that schedule is related to (a) rental costs, (b) salaries to staff.

Ms. Colin: — Yes, the schedule of fees covers reimbursement to returning officers, election clerks, many of the positions in the returning offices themselves, as well as poll clerks, deputy returning officers, etc., for anybody administering voting at the poll locations. It also covers rental rates for advance polls and poll locations as well. Total increase to those was in the neighbourhood of \$750,000.

The Chair: — Okay, thank you. I just want to note that your request includes an additional two full-time, permanent employees. I don't like the word permanent, as most of the LAS staff know. They are full-time employees; they are not there for life. That's just one of my normal rants.

Did you do any surveying throughout the year to determine the operations of the Chief Electoral office?

Mr. Boda: — Could you expand on that question?

The Chair: — Well I had a phone call where the individual indicated to me that they had been contacted as part of a survey from the Chief Electoral office, so I was just wondering what kind of surveys you were doing and what they were related to.

Mr. Boda: — I'm not aware that we've conducted any surveys. As part of our assessment activities we are working together with the University of Saskatchewan's social science research lab and will be doing surveys and work with our stakeholders in order to determine the impact or the approach . . . whether the approach to instituting or in implementing the election has met their needs. But I am not aware that we have done any surveys.

It is quite probable . . . We are often called Elections Canada — and increasingly Elections Canada is called Elections Saskatchewan — and so it may well be that that was a post-October 19th survey that was taking place.

The Chair: — I believe it was actually before that and the person indicated that the person telephoning said they were representing the Chief Electoral office. So somebody was using your name for some purpose.

Mr. Boda: — Well if you'd like to contact the person and have them contact me directly, I'd be happy to speak with him or her.

The Chair: — Okay, thank you. I think that was all of my questions. Yes, that was it. So if there are no other questions, we will hold the decision in abeyance for now and the board will consider it later today. So thank you very much.

Advocate for Children and Youth

The Chair: — Okay, decision item no. 7 is in your tabs: review of the 2016-2017 budget and motion to approve budgetary and statutory expenditure estimates for the Advocate for Children and Youth. I'd like to welcome Mr. Pringle to our Board of Internal Economy meeting and, Mr. Pringle, if you would introduce your staff and do your presentation, please.

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon to you and to board members. Thank you again for the opportunity. With me is Bernie Rodier, who has been with me each time, our director of administration, and Dan Harder,

seated there, is our human resource and admin consultant.

I'd also like to, since this is my last budget presentation, I would like to thank all of you for your support to our office in the last five years; and also to Mr. Putz and the staff at the Legislative Assembly; and to your staff, Mr. Speaker; and to our staff at the office for their hard work and passion about children's rights; and to the ministries who have been very co-operative, in addition to the agencies that are funded by government in terms of child and youth serving agencies; and to my independent officer colleagues who have been very supportive. And as I say, thanks again to the board for your support to our office and your commitment to ensure that our children are safe and protected.

So I'm pleased to present my sixth budget proposal on behalf of the office. If I could make just a few comments and then move to the budget. Thank you.

When I accepted the position in 2011, I committed to you that I would work as hard as I could to ensure that all children in the province had a voice, were safe and protected, and had the opportunity and the support to reach their potential as happy and healthy adults — obviously we're doing this together, but in terms of the oversight role.

These youngest citizens who access our office every day, every year are the province's most vulnerable, who are either in care of the government or accessing services through a government ministry or delegated agency. You hired me to work hard to uphold their basic rights and to ensure that our service systems do this as well.

The issues presented by children, youth, and their families to our office are not simple. In fact they are often substantially complex, involving a number of different service systems, and they require an intensive commitment of time and resources by our advocates and investigators to reach resolution. Our front-line staff travel the province supporting children, youth, and families and working with stakeholders. We approach our work, collaborating where appropriate, with a focus on outreach across the province and community capacity building. We do a lot of work and we're committed to bringing people and institutions and groups together to find solutions to issues that they identify.

I believe that our approach is effective. I believe that our office has a good public image of speaking on behalf of young people and promoting their rights but it's staff-intensive, adding significant pressure to existing resources as the cost of providing the same resources and service increases each year.

In addition to the growing cost to maintain service levels year over year, we're increasingly being relied upon by community partners and the public to resolve issues where children, youth, and youth who are at risk and their families are moving through crises in the absence of sufficient early intervention and prevention services. This isn't new since my term. This is historical in the province.

Evidenced by our individual, group, and systemic work, we repeatedly see children, youth, and families who do not receive the services until a crisis situation exists. I say again this is an

historical concern in the province — not just in Saskatchewan but every province, but certainly in Saskatchewan. So unless and until there is a fundamental shift in approach, the lack of earlier intervention supports for children, youth, and their families will continue to impact outcomes and place more pressure on our office.

While additional resources would better address public pressure for our services — our number of files are up significantly this year and our outreach public education work is up around 30 per cent in the past year — we respect the information provided in the Ministry of Finance's 2016-2017 call for estimates and guidelines for executive government. As a result, our request projects maintenance of the existing service delivery levels and assists us to deliver the best possible service within our mandate.

[13:45]

With limited resources — and, Mr. Speaker, board members, I've just been to a meeting of my counterparts, but I knew this before — we have the broadest mandate in the country in terms of our areas of responsibility, similarly with a couple of other provinces. And this creates a challenge for us, but obviously that's what you're paying us to do. But we will continue to be a strong voice for children and youth and do what is necessary to perform the delegated duties that you have assigned to us.

The province's goals — which are strongly supported by me; I've said that on a number of occasions — to give children a good start in life; to prepare our young people for their futures; and to provide appropriate and timely services to children, youth, and their families is a challenge and will be a challenge going forward. And I say this especially for vulnerable families and at-risk children and youth. This can only be done if we continue to develop a more comprehensive early childhood development program so that all children get a good start in life. We know what the outcomes are. We know the indicators. We've got good data. And we just need to take that next step, and that will make a big difference so that all children are school-ready when they get to kindergarten.

Also we're happy that there's a very good report with recommendations to address and reduce the level of poverty in the province, and that is poverty drives the child welfare system. Poverty drives the youth justice system. That doesn't mean to say if you're poor, you're going to be caught in the child welfare system, or you're going to be caught up in the justice system as a young person and family. But if you're in those systems, you're poor. Ninety-five per cent of youth in the correctional facilities are poor. Seventy-five per cent of them have mental health issues. Ninety-five per cent of families caught up in the child welfare system are poor. That is the reality.

So obviously, I've been urging the province to do what they can within the financial resources available at this particular time, obviously which includes good economic development, but to ensure that . . . The families who are the poorest are the most vulnerable, and of course their children are the ones at risk.

I think the third thing I want to say is — again this is historical, not just in Saskatchewan — based on the kind of child welfare

system that we have across the country which is a threshold system, which means that families do not get support, vulnerable families do not get support until they reach a certain level of threshold which is usually a crisis level. Then we intervene, and usually, typically we've intervened by taking the children.

So that is the nature of the system in Canada, but it's certainly the nature of the system in Saskatchewan. There are some promising developments, but we can't put the brakes on those in Saskatchewan. So we need to get, support the families sooner, to support the children sooner, provide enhanced prevention services at an earlier stage if we want to address the issue. I think we're positioned to with the tools, but the funding needs to be in place.

Fourthly, no surprise to anybody in this room, but we need to strengthen the addictions, mental health, family violence, and culturally appropriate parenting programs in the province. And the other thing that I've been urging in the last annual report — we'll continue to do that over the next few months, as long as I'm here — is that, let's follow the lead of a couple of the states, British Columbia, and New Brunswick, where they're actually setting targets, setting benchmarks, setting outcome goals for the health and well-being of our children and then finding ways to measure where we are in relation to that. And so that is something that I think is important if we're going to target our money in the best possible places. We should know where we're at in relation to where we want to go. That's just good planning.

So those are my comments. I appreciate the opportunity to make those. On page 3 in our proposal, our strategic plan is there — we just completed our plan, which was a full year process for us — and also some reports there with some of the systems issues we identified and our vision mandate. And so I'll just leave those because you've had our submission.

And I would say in developing the 2016-2017 budget, the following have been incorporated into the request: the 1.65 economic adjustment for personal services, a 1.7 CPI [consumer price index], and known increases to non-personal services which we're locked into. Budget request, a total of 2.608 million is being requested, which includes 2.378 million in budgetary and 230,000 in statutory funding. This request reflects an overall increase of 2.1 over the 2015-16 allocation.

Within the 2016-17 request, programming pressures are being requested totalling \$54,000 or 2.1 per cent, and there's a breakdown there as to what makes that up. The risk of not proceeding, well you know, we want to be able to maintain the level of service we have because we believe that's been compromised, based on a request last year. But we've tried to do the best we can. We don't want to have the office undermined, so we believe it's important that the office maintain the confidence of the public.

And I want to say that, as the board knows, Mr. Chairman, we have a dual child welfare system in the province — the First Nations child welfare system with 17 First Nations agencies of course, then the provincial system. And we believe that we've got strong confidence in both of those systems, which didn't happen by accident. We worked very hard, especially we've

worked really hard with the provincial ministries and the First Nations agencies to bring all the agencies up to a standard. And I'm really proud that we increasingly have more First Nations agencies getting accredited. I think that's only going to benefit children.

And at the end of the day, we have sorted out the jurisdictional questions. I seldom get challenged at all on whether or not I have jurisdiction in a First Nation community because we've worked hard with the chiefs and the elders to keep the focus on the children, in the best interests of all children. And again, that didn't happen by accident. I think our office enjoys a high degree of confidence in that system as well.

Third, a potential for not receiving the request. We do not want to not continue to support some of the communities we've been actively involved in. And you started out by talking about La Loche; that's been one of the communities we've been very highly involved in over the last about 20 years, but certainly have continued that under my tenure. And we want to continue to be effective.

So in conclusion, this request is zero-growth budget. I understand that it's not zero money, but it maintains the existing staff and service levels. I respectfully request that the Board of Internal Economy recommend to the Legislative Assembly an appropriation for the Advocate for Children and Youth, vote 076, 2.608 million for the year 2016-17, which reflects an overall increase of \$54,000 or 2.1 per cent over the 2015-2016 allocation.

In closing, thanks again for allowing me to hold this position for the past five years. I wish all board members and their families good health, success, and peace in the future, and thank you for supporting our office. I know that the good work there will continue with your support. Thank you.

The Chair: — Okay. Thank you, Mr. Pringle. Yes, your office has been doing good work, and you've done a good job in the presentation of this budget and coming in with a very frugal budget.

You also mentioned La Loche. I just want to mention that Friday evening, Saturday morning I actually got an email from the president of the Western Australian Council, so that would be like their senate. He had heard about the incident at La Loche and was sending his condolences as well. So this is unfortunately news around the world now.

Do the members have any questions related to the child advocate? Mr. Harrison.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Not any particular questions. I want to thank you very much for the presentation here today and for the submissions that you've made and the leadership you've shown at the office over the past number of years. It's something that this board appreciates and something that this board recognizes as well. And I want to commend you for your submission here today. It's on the call, Mr. Chair, and that's something that's very much appreciated by a member of treasury board.

Mr. Pringle: — I appreciate that.

The Chair: — Are there any other questions? If not, thank you very much for your presentation and thank you, Bernie, for being in attendance. The board will hold this in abeyance and make its decision later today. Thank you.

Mr. Pringle: — Thanks again.

Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner

The Chair: — Okay, decision item number 8, review of the 2016-2017 budget and motion to approve budgetary expenditure estimates for the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. So I'd like to welcome Mr. Kruzeniski and his staff here. Ron, if you would like to introduce your staff and make your presentation, please.

Mr. Kruzeniski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members of the board. Thank you for hearing from us today. I'd like to introduce today with me Ms. Diane Aldridge who is the director of compliance and who is responsible for reviews and investigations, and Pam Scott who is the director of operations and responsible for human resource matters and financial matters.

I've asked Pam to circulate two additional pages to you. One is an amended page based on announcements made by executive government in terms of salary increases and performance caps, and this is really a substitute page for page 9 in your binder. The second page is just some charts that I want to touch on briefly about performance in our office over the last year.

So before I present the budget request, I wanted to just review the last year and what has happened in the office and just a few highlights. And the first one — the page that has the charts on it, page 1 — just has a bar graph showing the number of files that we're dealing with. And in 2015 it was 236 files, compared to last year when it was 158. So in the last calendar year we've had about a 49 per cent increase in activity in requests of the office. That whole chart shows that if you look at 2011 with 112 files, that over that time period we've had 133 per cent increase in the files that are being opened in the office.

And you might ask why, and I think all of us ask why, and I think it's very, very much due to increased media exposure and discussion. I think the Edward Snowden case in the United States was kind of a trigger point, and certainly the amount of privacy discussion coming out of the United States and filtering into our Canadian media I think has certainly had an effect. And watching the news clippings, it seems to ... The media attention is still there. And I kind of expect that probably as people hear more about privacy and access, the phone calls we'll get and the files we'll open will probably increase.

[14:00]

On page 2 of that ... no, on page 1 there's a pie chart, and it shows you in effect the type of requests we're getting, and 64 per cent of the files deal with access for information. So people are applying to public bodies for information. They either get what they want or it doesn't exist or it's denied, and then they make a request to our office to review the decision of the public body.

When it comes to investigations, which are mainly breaches of privacy, they're about 23 per cent of what we do.

Now the last category I want to touch on is consultations, and about 12 per cent of our files we open are consultations. That's where someone is sending us a regulation, a bill that's coming to the House, a policy, a privacy impact assessment, a new program, and they're asking us to comment on it. My hope and my vision is that the consultations will increase, and hopefully if they increase and we sort of do our good job at that end, maybe the other reviews and investigations will go down. So I'm hoping the growth rate is around that consultations area.

On page 2 there's another pie chart, and it shows in effect what's happening to the various files. And I note first of all that there's ... well number one, ones that are being resolved. And it shows that about 27 per cent of the files that we open are being resolved without going to a full public report. Another 7 per cent are being withdrawn, and that could be for various reasons. Maybe people, after getting an explanation, don't want to continue or whatever. But we are still issuing reports on about 65 per cent of the files. Over time, my hope would be that the 27 per cent goes up and the 65 per cent goes down as others and our office does a better job of education and informing public bodies of their obligations and informing citizens of their rights and proper expectations.

Just after I was appointed, I attended in front of this board and provided you with a five-year plan. And I just wanted to touch on a couple of themes out of that five-year plan and just to let you know that we are pursuing the things that were presented to you then.

Under the heading of citizen service, we had a goal of providing better service to citizens. And last year, last fiscal year we set a goal of, on average, doing most reviews within 40 days 80 per cent of the time. We met that goal during the year. This fiscal year we set a goal of 35 days. On average, we will get our work done within 35 days 80 per cent of the time. Since August of this year, we've actually been hovering at about 31 or 32 days 80 per cent of the time, and as of yesterday it was 31.3.

I'm very grateful to the staff, to Diane and Pam here and the rest of the staff at the office, for making that happen, and I'm appreciative of the public bodies who helped us, because we have put some pressure on them to say please reply within seven days or please reply within 14 days. And they have been very gracious and accommodated us, and in fact their workload of access requests seems to be increasing also.

Since coming to the office, we've issued 158 different reports. We've made recommendations to release documents to a citizen, recommendations to not release documents to a citizen. I view it very much like an umpire and hopefully our batting average over the life of my term is about 500, that we call them right most of the time.

We've made recommendations to amend regulations. One example of that was making recommendations that the chief coroner be included under the legislation, and work is being done in that area. We made recommendations to amend *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, and my understanding is work is moving forward on that. We've made

a recommendation to amend the health services Act, which would include 3sHealth [Health Shared Services Saskatchewan] as a health care organization. And hopefully in due course that'll happen.

We issued a report, a significant report about snooping with a regional health authority, where one individual had snooped over 900 times. And snooping does continue to be a concern in our office, particularly in the health sector where it's very, very personal, personal health information.

We have made progress and developed a relationship with the Ministry of Justice that in most cases where there's a regulation amendment coming along, we get a chance to review and comment on it. And that has worked very well, and hopefully our comments help make better regulations or legislation.

Under the theme of updating the law, last June in our annual report we proposed amendments to the freedom of information Act and the local authority freedom of information Act. And just this January, about a week ago, we released a supplementary list of amendments. What we found over time, since we worked on the initial list of amendments, that legislation had changed. In Newfoundland, we had had a couple of reports that caught things where there wasn't clarity and the legislation could be clarified to better indicate what should be happening.

During the year we also made a submission to *The Workers' Compensation Act* review committee. And hopefully their work will be out, and we really were recommending there that the Workers' Compensation Board be subject to the freedom of information Act, but not subject to the health information and protection of privacy Act.

We've worked on our website to improve the information that's there. We view it as our primary education source. We've updated some resources and gotten good feedback, like an exemptions guide, and we're working on a trustee guide.

We have a few more plans coming up in the year coming ahead, which budget money will be expended to achieve this. We'll be proposing some amendments to the health information Act, probably in June, probably in our annual report. We'll of course be promoting and encouraging the government and the Legislative Assembly to do the amendments to the freedom of information Act. We've got a series of joint workshops going on. We're in joint partnership with one major law firm to put on a workshop on third parties. And these are the people that, when documents are released, a third party like a business or an enterprise may be concerned about their information being released.

We're working with another firm to put on a workshop in Regina and Saskatoon for physicians and their staff. We will be at the teachers' convention. We've got a workshop coming up very soon with members of the union. If you looked at our detailed goal, about half of them are joint projects with other people. So our education effort is there. Education needs to continue to increase, and I believe that education is one of the solutions for, number one, reducing the number of requests and reviews and hopefully reducing also the number of situations where snooping occurs. We hope to continue to improve our

website and, as I said earlier, it's our primary source of education work.

On the legal issues front, we find ourselves drawn into legal issues. We have a court case right now dealing with documents where an entity refused to provide documents because of solicitor-client privilege — probably be heard by the Court of Queen's Bench in February or March. We also have another situation where parties want to review matters in the Court of Queen's Bench in camera. I'm very much a believer that most things in court — there are exceptions — should really be open. And particularly if they're debating the recommendations in one of our reports, we go to great lengths to kind of anonymize our reports and that can be done in a court setting also.

So turning to the budget request itself, we are aware of a tighter year of oil prices and the impact on revenue, and hopefully we've tried in some ways to take that into account. Regarding salaries, in the amended page that Pam handed out, we really are following what executive government has announced of a 1.5 salary increase and a cap of 2 per cent on in-range performance changes.

Now of course the numbers vary a little bit from our original budget submission, but the page handed out today should reflect the actuals, as best as we can calculate them, as to the 1.65 per cent increase. We have looked at those staff that could be entitled to an in-range movement, and although both those salary increases and in-range add up to about 25,000, our salary budget or our request to you has only gone up by 11,000. And the reason for that is because of one staff person leaving and new staff people coming. There's been some savings in the salary budget, and the total effect of salary increases and in-range movements is about \$11,000.

I've asked for an increase in the item that deals with legal costs. This year before the board, on the Oliver Lodge case and we now have the solicitor-client case, and in both cases needing to get outside legal advice. I see that continuing in the next year. Both the solicitor-client case that I referred to and the in-camera case that is on the horizon, will require us to engage outside counsel.

I have in most cases first consulted Mr. Ring here at the legislature, and he has provided me with a number of legal opinions which I greatly appreciate. But there comes a point where it isn't appropriate for Mr. Ring to do combat in our local courts and it is necessary to engage the private bar. And even though it's sort of a small or, you know, not necessarily a big item, very easily these days your legal bill is 5 to \$10,000. So we had \$5,000 in the budget last year, but for the coming year we've asked for an additional \$20,000, which probably allows us to be involved in two or three cases. And I'm pretty sure those cases will be there.

When I appeared in front of you in August of 2014 and presented that five-year plan and the budget for it, I requested funding for an education coordinator. That was deferred to the regular budget process. So last year I requested an education coordinator and, based on the tightness of finances, that wasn't approved, and I understand that. I have included it this year because I still believe that the answer to making this system work better and better is more and more education done by our

office and more and more coordination and joint projects and workshops with other people. And that is why I've included it again this year for your consideration. The cost of that would be \$80,304.

[14:15]

The last two items that put some budgetary pressure on us are accommodations. Our lease expired this year and we have been working with and through Central Services, and they have renegotiated a five-year lease. At the same time, in the building that we're in, Farm Credit was moving out and moving across the street into Agriculture Place, and Harvard Developments and Central Services provided us with the opportunity to consolidate our service. So we now have ended up with a five-year lease for everything on the fifth floor. That's resulted in a \$27,000 increase in rent, which is the bill we get from Central Services.

The last pressure point on the budget was my compensation. Last year when the Legislative Assembly passed the officers' bill, there was a move to make compensation for officers consistent. I was a beneficiary of that particular piece of legislation and it has resulted in a pressure point and a non-statutory item being introduced into the budget.

So because of these pressure points such as accommodations and my compensation, we have not added any percentage like 1.7 to all the non-operational things. So mainly in terms of the increases, it's been the legal cost, the salary increases — COLA [cost-of-living adjustment] and in-range — accommodations, and my compensation.

So in summary, we're requesting the budget as submitted to you on the amended page 9 with the salary and accommodation increases there, including the education coordinator. And if you include the education coordinator, our budget request is for \$1.636 million.

I thank you for your attention today. Sorry my voice sounds a little raspy. I just came back from a jazz cruise, but it's not been caused by singing along with the band. Anyway I'm certainly open now for questions from you, Mr. Chair, or any members, and I'll ask Diane and Pam to help me with the difficult questions.

The Chair: — Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Kruzeniski. I didn't realize dancing affected your voice. Your comment about the Law Clerk, I hope his assistance was much more valuable than what it cost you. I'm sure it was.

Mr. Kruzeniski: — It was touch and go, Mr. Chair, but yes, it was.

The Chair: — Do any of the members have any questions related to Mr. Kruzeniski? Mr. Harrison.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes. I just wanted to say thank you for the presentation, again a well-done presentation, well delivered.

In terms of questions, the legal fee matter, I think you gave a fairly good explanation. So these are matters that you're pursuing, or you're a part of or have given advice on. I guess,

which one of those, firstly, and is this . . . So these are matters being considered, one of which you said was in the Court of Queen's Bench, a solicitor-client privilege issue, and one is an in camera matter. I'm not asking for specifics of the case. I guess I'd ask for a bit more clarification around it.

Mr. Kruzeniski: — Sure. We have an applicant who's requested a public body to provide documents, and since 1992 the bodies have provided the documents to us. And on some of them they would say, we're claiming that these shouldn't be released to the applicant because of solicitor-client privilege. We review the documents — mainly probably by Ms. Aldridge or her analysts — and we look at it and say, yes, this does involve solicitor-client privilege and no, you don't have to release them. That's what usually happens.

In this case the law firm representing the public institution said, we're not showing you the documents; we're claiming solicitor-client privilege and solicitor-client privilege is such a special privilege that you've just got to trust us and believe us that we shouldn't give the documents to you.

I found this sort of a complete contradiction or reversal from almost 25 years of practice in this province, and created an impossible situation. What you might think is solicitor-client privilege isn't what I think is solicitor-client privilege, and certainly the lawyer for the client might take much too generous a view of solicitor-client privilege. So it strikes me the system can only work if we take a look at the documents and say yes, there is privilege, or no, there isn't privilege.

Now our current practice is with these documents that have solicitor-client privilege, as soon as we're finished our review, they are destroyed in our office. They don't hang around. They can't escape, you know. They can't be stolen, that sort of thing. So we take all the efforts to protect them and make sure that they're never accidentally disclosed.

So it's kind of a twist, Mr. Harrison, on what 1,500 lawyers have been doing in this province, and one particular law firm and their client have opted to take a different approach. I feel I literally have no choice but to challenge it. Now if the Court of Queen's Bench says they're right and I'm wrong, I will probably accept that. I'm hoping we give them such good arguments that they agree with me.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — All right. No, I appreciate that answer. So you would anticipate though that you are increasing . . . But this would be a continuing trend, whether you've had cases that were not specific to what you're arguing in this case, but that you would anticipate spending more on legal counsel going forward by a not insubstantial amount, by \$20,000 each year. I guess I would ask, I mean this is probably before you took over as commissioner, but in cases in other years where legal costs were incurred that were more significant than the \$5,000, would those funds have come out of a different budget within the commissioner's office, or how would . . . [inaudible] . . . at that point?

Mr. Kruzeniski: — I'm not totally sure, and I might have to ask Diane or Pam to comment on this, but there were very few legal actions where the Privacy Commissioner showed up in court. What happens in many cases, if the citizen or the public

body doesn't like our report, they go to court, but our office doesn't go to court. And you know, they really sort of get a rehearing in front of the judge who probably looks at the same documents we did and looks at our report and then makes the decision.

So you can have a number of those going on, but I think in the past there always has been a budget line for legal expenses and some advice has been sought. But you know, I don't think in the past there was nothing ever as big as even the Oliver Lodge expenditure or even what we'll probably end up spending on the solicitor-client one.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — All right. I appreciate that explanation. One other specific question with regard to the office space matter. You know, in 2014 fiscal I think you'd asked for additional accommodation space, from just looking quickly for your . . . for boardroom and staff although it was on the 12th floor of your building. So was that 12th floor space secured at that point or was there a change in plans?

And I'm just trying to remember . . . The Speaker and I were just chatting whether the board had considered it kind of the specific request in the midst of the last fiscal year. We remembered vaguely having discussed accommodation issues, but I guess I just ask for an update on how that came to be in terms of the additional space.

Mr. Kruzeniski: — Well when I appeared in front of the board and the board approved additional staff, we sort of had an issue of, where do we put them? And sort of looking around our building, about the only space that was available was on the 12th floor. And it had a boardroom and it had two offices, and we needed two offices and we sort of used the boardroom so we made sort of minimal modifications to it, and made it a usable and comfortable space.

It certainly has come along with . . . And it was, you know, it was secure. You know, it was under a locked door. I don't know if that's what you meant by secure but, you know, it had a separate entrance and lock and key and security. It certainly came with a certain amount of inconvenience, and inconvenience up till today in terms of quickly communicating and having meetings and that sort of thing.

I did sort of think that we were probably faced with that on a longer term basis, but with Farm Credit moving out, the space right next door became available and it certainly ends up being worthwhile to consolidate. I didn't think the opportunity would be there but it did come along.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — So that 12th floor space, is that still space that you're paying for or is that space that Central Services will be managing or how does that work?

Mr. Kruzeniski: — Well in the long run we won't be paying for it. It's right next door to prosecutions office. We will vacate it. They or somebody else, you know, whoever is interested in it, will take over. They'll have to deal with Central Services in terms of work that out, but we'll be out of there. We would not be paying for it.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — No, I appreciate the explanation again.

I guess what I'm getting at is, the \$27,000 additional appropriation over last year, is that a one-time expense or is that going to be a continuing expense year over year?

Mr. Kruzeniski: — That would be a continuing expense for each year of the lease.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay, thanks.

The Chair: — That lease increase is an increase by Central Services, is it, plus the additional space?

Mr. Kruzeniski: — Yes. It was the renewal of the lease on the existing space plus the piece of space next door, minus the space on the 12th floor. So it's sort of a substitute for one or the other, but the net effect to us is increased rent.

The Chair: — Okay. Are there any other questions from the board members? If not, thank you, Mr. Kruzeniski, and thank you to your staff. We will make our decision later on today. Thank you very much.

At this time, with popular request, we will take a short recess. If we can reconvene at 20 to 3, please.

[The board recessed for a period of time.]

[14:45]

Office of the Ombudsman

The Chair: — Okay, I would like to call the meeting back to order. We have before us item 9. So under tab 9, (a) decision item, Office of the Ombudsman amendment to Estimates display mandate statement, and (b) decision item, review of the 2016-2017 budget and motion to approve budgetary and statutory expenditure estimates for the Office of the Ombudsman.

Ms. McFadyen: — Thank you very much. Andrea Smandych from my office is here with me today. I think you all know her. Thank you, Andrea, for all your work on this. I will talk a little bit about the type of work we do, and then I'll get into a little bit more detail when I talk about our future direction and the pressures that we're facing.

As you know, we are facing some additional pressures this year because of the passing of *The Municipal Conflict of Interest Amendment Act, 2015*. And what this Act did, among other things, it increased the Ombudsman's jurisdiction to include the responsibility to receive complaints about the 780 municipalities in the province and their 3,700 council members.

So as for the highlights of the year on the Ombudsman side, we continued to fulfil our role to help the Legislative Assembly ensure that the executive branch of government delivers services to its citizens fairly, in a timely manner. So in carrying out that role we receive complaints from citizens. We try to resolve those issues if we can before we start a full investigation. And if we do investigate we make recommendations that we hope will help the organization address the issues. And our goal is not only that we help the individual who brought the issue to our office but that we can

also help other citizens so they don't find themselves in the same situation. So as for our statistics for 2015, they increased substantially from 2014. We had 2,816 complaints last year, and this is an increase of 22 per cent compared to what we received in 2014.

I'm also very pleased to say that we completed a very complex investigation into long-term care this year. This investigation looked at the care being provided by Santa Maria Senior Citizens Home, and it was initiated at the request of the Minister of Health. We did the investigation in six months. We made 19 recommendations aimed at improving the quality of care at Santa Maria as well as improving the oversight and the leadership being provided by the regional health authority and the Ministry of Health to all long-term care facilities in the province. And this report was very well received, and we are currently reviewing each of the entities' progress on implementing the 19 recommendations.

So I believe that our work demonstrates how important it is for both the Legislative Assembly and to the public that there is a mechanism such as the Ombudsman's office to have citizens' complaints and concerns reviewed by an independent and impartial body.

As you know, since 2012 our office has also fulfilled the role of the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner. So what that Act does, it sets up a structure so that public servants can disclose allegations of wrongdoing that they see occurring in their workplace and they are protected from reprisal if they come forward. Public servants can use the process within their organizations, or they can come directly to the commissioner's office to disclose wrongdoings. And if they have a complaint of reprisal, those must be brought directly to the commissioner's office. For 2015 our statistics remain fairly steady as they have in the last couple of years. We received seven inquiries under the Act. We received five disclosures of wrongdoing and two complaints of reprisal.

In 2015 we also continued to reach out to all citizens in the province and look for ways to meet our public education role under our mandate. We took opportunities to provide services outside of Regina and Saskatoon. Last year we visited Meadow Lake, Lloydminster, Kindersley, and Yorkton. We provided information sessions to the public, and we also set up temporary offices for the day to meet directly with citizens.

We also continued to provide our fair practice training for many government organizations. We had 19 last year. They included organizations such as Sask Housing, Workers' Compensation Board, Social Services. And what this training does, it explains what the Ombudsman does, but it's also aimed at helping public servants who deal with the public understand what administrative fairness is, how they can better communicate with the public when they're carrying out their duties on behalf of the government. Now in the past, this training has been a two-day workshop. However in my meetings this year with deputy ministers and other officials, many commented to me that while they felt this training was very valuable, two days was a big time commitment for their staff, and quite frankly it was also a big time commitment for my staff. Therefore we've shortened our training to a one-day session, and it has been very well received.

So now going on to our future direction. As I mentioned earlier, the Legislative Assembly passed *The Municipal Conflict of Interest Amendment Act* on November 19th of last year. So although municipalities have a wide discretion as to how they exercise their statutory powers, it is still prudent for the Legislative Assembly to ensure that those municipalities exercise these powers fairly, reasonably, and in the public interest. So in that regard, the Act gave the Provincial Ombudsman the duty to receive and address complaints about the administrative actions and decisions of all 780 municipalities in the province and their 3,700 council members.

Now before this change, we had 209 provincial and provincially funded organizations under our jurisdiction. So when you add in municipalities, we now have 989 organizations under our jurisdiction, so that is quite an increase. Now with respect to how this change has been received by municipalities, I have already met with SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities]. I've met with SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association]. I've met with the City Mayors' Caucus, and I will be taking more opportunities to meet with municipal leaders and officials. I can say that every official that I've met with has been very accepting of the Ombudsman's role and we look forward to having a good working relationship. I think it's important that they understand our role but it's also important that we understand the challenges and realities that are facing local government.

Now since the law came into effect on November the 19th, we have hit the ground running. So as of January 22nd — so from November 19th to January 22nd — we have had 60 complaints about municipalities. Now my staff is very proud that the Legislative Assembly appreciates and trusts the office and its work enough to give us these additional responsibilities, and we do want to ensure that we do a good job. We also want to make sure that these new responsibilities do not diminish our ability to fulfill our other roles, that being to address complaints from citizens with respect to provincial government services and also to carry out our mandate under *The Public Interest Disclosure Act*. Now that said, I want to say I'm very aware of the fiscal restraints facing us today and I believe that our request has taken that into consideration.

For example, last year you may recall that several of the officers came forward with an initiative to relocate into the same Regina space. My office has been in the same location for over 20 years and we have simply outgrown it. While we are cramped in our space, even with Mr. Barclay leaving tomorrow I believe, we are not requesting any additional resources for space at this time. We'll review our Regina space requirements when our current lease expires, which is in 2017.

So as you can see from appendix A in our submission, we tried to work out as best we could how we could expect our caseload to grow in 2016 now that we have jurisdiction over the municipal sector. So we looked at other provincial ombudsmen's offices that have this jurisdiction — that's British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Ontario have the jurisdiction. However, quite frankly each province is unique and I don't think their experiences and statistics were a good reflection of what we can expect. Our populations and the number and types of municipal entities we have are just completely different.

So then we looked at the information that the Ministry of Government Relations was able to supply. So they've been handling municipal complaints and inquiries for many years. We looked at the types of issues and the types of callers that they had over a three-year period. So on average they handle about 4,272 inquiries a year. Now based on our discussions with these officials we concluded that most of the inquiries that come from ratepayers such as complaints about services, validities of bylaws, unfairness of administrative actions and decisions, complaints about council members — those would now be things under the Ombudsman's jurisdiction.

So this would mean that anywhere from 28 to 68 per cent of the inquiries that the ministry receives a year would be matters that would fall under the Ombudsman's jurisdiction. So in numbers, that's anywhere between 1,190 and 2,854 inquiries that they receive a year would be things that would fall under our jurisdiction.

However I don't think it's necessarily a given that all these calls would actually end up in being complaints or that they would contact the Ombudsman's office. So I thought it was better to look at the types of issues and the number of complaints we've received to date since November the 19th. So up to January . . . To date we've received 60 complaints. That number is quite high because this is actually with very little public awareness that we have the jurisdiction. But I feel based on this number, I feel that we can initially expect to receive closer to about 600 complaints a year.

Now I'd also like to note that the 60 complaints we've received to date, 24 of them are about council member conduct and we know from the inquiry investigation into the RM [rural municipality] of Sherwood that investigations into conduct of council members can be quite involved and very resource intense. So while it's hard for us to determine now how resource intense it will be for our office to handle such complicated matters, having the Ombudsman's office review these matters should be more efficient overall.

So our request takes into account that there's a strong desire for that municipal sector for information about administrative fairness to be available to them and the role of the Ombudsman. As I mentioned earlier, I've already met with SARM, SUMA, and the City Mayors' Caucus. I just had a call recently from the city clerk in Estevan. Estevan's hosting a meeting of all the city clerks in April and we will be attending these meetings to discuss our role.

So I have to say all officials are very welcoming of any public education or assistance that we're able to provide them. And these officials do want to make sure that they are properly providing services to the public in a fair and reasonable manner, and we can provide assistance and tools to help them fulfill that goal.

On our side I do think it's important that we know the real pressures and issues that municipalities are facing as well. Therefore we are requesting an additional \$384,000 for this fiscal year. This would address the staffing needs we require to handle this increase in workload, and it would also allow us to maintain our existing program and the level of services to citizens we currently provide in our other areas of jurisdiction

and ensure that we are able to provide that same level of service and programming to handle the new influx of complaints about municipalities and council members. Now expectations are high and I want to succeed and ensure that all the cases coming to the Ombudsman's office are dealt with appropriately, thoroughly, and efficiently.

So in conclusion for operating funding requests, there are a number of costs that are out of our control. These include salaries. We have three in-scope employees. The known and anticipated salary increases for these employees is on page 13 of our submission. That total cost is \$4,100. The remaining staff are all out of scope. The numbers for this staff is on page 14. We expect there is a 1.65 per cent economic adjustment as of April 1st. There's a flexible benefit plan increase and a performance pay increase to move out-of-scope staff within their pay range, so the total anticipated cost is \$80,000 for out-of-scope. Therefore the total anticipated increase for salaries for both in-scope and out-of-scope is \$84,100.

As for ongoing costs as for goods and services, we use an estimated 1.7 per cent for general inflation for the cost of doing business, which amounts to \$15,000.

And just in closing, and finally as for the additional resources we are requesting this year, I would just like to point out that we are in a very unique situation this year. We're requesting those funds to support our expanded mandate to meet our anticipated increase in workload brought about by the passing of *The Municipal Conflict of Interest Amendment Act*. We know we have to be fiscally responsible and we will continue to be so, but it would be hard for us to handle these cases and do a good job within our status quo funding.

Therefore we're requesting the board to recommend to the Legislative Assembly an appropriation for the Ombudsman's office for \$3.912 million for the fiscal year. This would ensure that we can address our known increases and meet our legislative responsibilities under both pieces of legislation.

And we're also asking the board to review and approve the wording used to describe our mandate and program activity in the Estimates document. That's at page 2 of our submission. We reviewed the wording this year, and we feel that the changes proposed better reflect the new expanded mandate of oversight in the municipal sector that was provided in that Act. So thank you very much and I'm happy to entertain any questions.

[15:00]

The Chair: — Thank you, Ms. McFadyen. That was a very good presentation. I think first we would like to deal with the amendments to the mandate statement. Are there any questions from the members related to that? If not, could I have someone move, and I'll read out the motion:

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

Ombudsman, vote 56: the Ombudsman, an Independent Officer of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan,

helps to ensure that provincial and municipal governments are accountable and fair when they provide services to the public. As Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner, the Ombudsman also helps to ensure the provincial government provides a workplace where wrongdoings can be safely raised and appropriately addressed.

Ombudsman (OM01): *The Ombudsman Act, 2012* gives the Ombudsman the authority to investigate or informally address complaints of unfairness in provincial and municipal 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 reprisal within their provincial government institutions.

Would someone move that, please?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — So moved.

The Chair: — Seconder? Any discussion? I have one piece of discussion on this. The statement under Ombudsman, vote 56, “The Ombudsman, an Independent Officer . . .”

Ms. McFadyen: — I have a good explanation for this.

The Chair: — If you would, please.

Ms. McFadyen: — Last year when we had our wording here, because we changed it to better reflect that we were also the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner’s office, it was one of the members of this committee who suggested that exact wording. Mr. Forbes suggested it. Do you remember that? Yes, that the independent officer be put in. And it was passed.

The Chair: — We can always . . . We are the legislators. We can always change our mind.

Ms. McFadyen: — Yes, so you could change it. Yes.

The Chair: — I would prefer the word statutory officer of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, because you’re not independent of the Legislative Assembly.

Ms. McFadyen: — I have no issues with that. No.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — I think we usually use statutory officer now.

The Chair: — Yes. So if someone would make that friendly amendment.

Mr. McCall: — Just one second. I appreciate the, you know, the value of precise semantics, but we also have to think about how these positions are perceived by the public at large, who after all this is what we’re endeavouring to serve.

So I think independent underlines the fact that there is that remove, that distance from the legislature, from the executive branch that is important in how people approach these institutions. So mark me down as in favour of independent and

standing by the decision that we’d made after consideration last year, and against any amendments coming.

The Chair: — Could I offer some additional wording then? An independent, or excuse me, a statutory officer of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, independent of executive government . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . But it does describe I think accurately what the officers are. They are statutory officers of the Legislative Assembly, appointed by the Legislative Assembly, but they are independent of executive government.

Mr. McCall: — I appreciate the effort, but my support for the initial nomenclature stands.

The Chair: — Okay. So is anyone interested in moving a subamendment to the motion? If not . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Okay, I think the consensus on the board is they wish to vote it as presented. We have a mover.

A Member: — There’s a motion on the floor.

The Chair: — We have a motion on the floor. We have a mover. We have a seconder. Is the motion approved?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

[Interjections]

The Chair: — No, this is independent . . .

Mr. McCall: — I was with you up until the subamendment to the amendment . . . [inaudible].

The Chair: — Okay, so on the original motion, carried. We will carry on then with the budgetary submission presented by the Ombudsman. Any questions related to that? Mr. Harrison.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes. I want to thank you very much for the submission, very detailed and very thoughtful and well done, particularly as it relates to the analysis that was done for the extension of your mandate with the municipal duties.

You know, I appreciate as well that you had very much, kind of, the fiscal probity in mind in looking at how this could be moved forward in the most efficient and appropriate way. And I’m not saying in any way I disagree. As a former minister of Municipal Affairs, I know that there are very frequently concerns and questions from ratepayers and also from those who are, you know, even on council and in other positions in administration.

So I guess, you know, I would offer the thought as well that we’re probably going to be seeing an increase in the number of inquiries, particularly as people become more aware that this is a service which they can avail themselves of. As you indicate though, at the moment right now we’ve had a fairly limited number of inquiries. They’ve been not unimportant by any stretch but a fairly limited number thus far. I do expect that number to grow as we move forward and people are more aware of this.

But I guess one question I would have, just as we kind of get the service or as you are able to move forward in implementing

the service and there becomes an increasing awareness of the service being provided, I guess I'm wondering in that initial period whether, you know, say, four would be enough in terms of the number of employees, at least for the initial year, or if you were to see an increase in the utilization that it would be possible to come back at mid-year and ask the board to consider additional appropriations in-year.

So I just kind of was doing a bit of calculation but, you know, kind of a two-thirds, four out of six employees, out of 384,000 budget would be a \$250,000 additional allocation. I guess I'm just asking. I'm not saying that that's the government's position by any stretch because the government hasn't taken a position. But I'm just asking whether that would be feasible from your perspective or whether there would be operational issues associated with the start-up of the office by not having that complement.

Ms. McFadyen: — Well we really tried to figure out as best we could how many complaints we will get within this coming year. And based on the fact that we know since January 20th of this year we've received 31 complaints already in a three-week period, I think we're pretty close to 600 is what we would get.

And we really tried to figure out, okay, all these calls are coming in to . . . They come in to our administrative assistant, so we feel we need one more of those. Then they would go to a complaint analyst, and we know that 66 per cent of our cases are usually resolved at that stage, so we figure we need two more of those people and then one more because we figure 20 per cent would go for investigation. So they would handle . . . We need one person to handle the influx of those cases.

We really tried to figure out how many caseloads we thought people would require. We also feel, because we're trying to get training out to the municipal . . . We've had lots of requests for people, for us to come out and talk to them. We're trying to develop a webinar so that we can reach everybody in the province as best we can. So we do feel we need a public education person to help us with all these things. So we do feel we need this amount now to get these positions up and running and so that we can . . . People are working very hard and their caseloads increase, but this would sort of help us throughout the . . . And it might be that 600 is a low number but I thought it was the best guess we could do for this year.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — No, I appreciate that. So I mean kind of the way the positions work and the management of the case intake would work, that this is kind of a bit of a package in terms of how these cases would flow then. Okay.

Ms. McFadyen: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay, appreciate that. Thank you.

The Chair: — Okay. Any other questions? If not, thank you very much for your presentation, and the board will give this consideration later today. Thank you very much.

We will forgo our item on the agenda that it says a refreshment break since we already did that.

Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and Registrar of Lobbyists

The Chair: — Okay. Item no. 10(a) decision item, review of the 2016-2017 budget and motion to approve budgetary expenditure estimates for the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner; and (b) decision item, review of the 2016-2017 budget and motion for the approval of expenditure estimates for the office of the lobbyist registrar. This will be one vote.

I'd like to welcome Mr. Barclay here today, the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. And, Mr. Barclay, if you could introduce your staff and proceed with your presentation, please.

Mr. Barclay: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I wish to acknowledge the presence of Sandra Arberry, my deputy lobbyist registrar, and I introduced her at some length at the last meeting. I'm sure you're all familiar with Sandra, and her assistance to me has always been invaluable. And I also wish to acknowledge the major assistance I received from Brad Gurash from LAS for his contributions in the preparation of my budget.

And in addition, because we're launching the lobbyist register, I would be amiss if I did not acknowledge the contribution of Darcy Hislop, also from the LAS, in providing IT [information technology] services and advice in respecting the launching of the registry. And that service also was deeply, deeply appreciated.

Just a few words, Mr. Chairman, members of the board, as to my mandate. I think it might be just a little different than some of the other independent officers. My mandate is to coordinate the 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 the Executive Council, or the Legislative Assembly.

In my view, the Conflict of Interest Commissioner is an officer of the Legislative Assembly and is therefore independent of government. In my view, the complete independence granted to the commissioner is essential in the carrying out of the statutory requirements detailed in *The Members' Conflict of Interest Act*. I think many of you will recall, just after I was appointed Conflict of Interest Commissioner, I was asked by the Legislative Assembly to do an inquiry in respect to one of its members. In my view, I have to be independent when I'm conducting that inquiry. And I also feel that it's the responsibility of the Commissioner to ensure that each member of the Legislative Assembly maintains a high standard of ethical conduct.

[15:15]

Now as to the registry of lobbyists . . . and this is a new mandate for my office, as under the legislation I also serve as the Registrar of Lobbyists which will oversee the lobbyist registry. Under the provisions of *The Lobbyists Act*, the registrar will promote and educate the general public, stakeholders, and the lobbyist community about *The Lobbyists Act* and ensure compliance and conformity of lobbyists to the legislation.

The purpose of the lobbyist legislation is to enhance the

integrity and accountability of government by fostering openness and transparency about who is influencing decisions made by the public and office-holders. But I think it's also critical to understand that as a natural corollary to the accountability of government, it is very critical that to lobby is also an integral part of our democratic process. There's nothing sinister about lobbying; it's just part of the democratic process.

Now let us examine our budget. And I'm going to deal with the Conflict of Interest Commissioner's budget first, and you will see that there's an increase of approximately 20 per cent from \$171,286 to \$263,059, but there is a very legitimate explanation for this increase.

When I was appointed by the Legislative Assembly as Conflict of Interest Commissioner in — it seems like it was yesterday — in 2010, by virtue of a very generous offer by the former ombudsman, Kevin Fenwick, and our Clerk, Greg Putz, was involved in this decision, I was provided space in their office at a very minimal rent. In addition, he generously permitted me to use his executive secretary at no cost.

That generosity has continued with the new Ombudsman, Mary McFadyen. We've had a very good relationship since she has been appointed in that position. And I was also very fortunate in having the Clerk, Greg Putz, permit me to use Ron Samways as legal assistant to assist me in performing my duties as Conflict of Interest Commissioner. Mr. Samways has always been an employee of the LAS, and by virtue of the legislation, I was permitted to use his service with the consent of the Speaker.

The Clerk now wishes to use Mr. Samways's services full time, and I therefore have made a commitment to Mr. Putz and the Speaker to relinquish his services as of June 30th of this year. This was done with deep regret, as Ron Samways has always been really the soul of my COIC [Conflict of Interest Commissioner] mandate. But because of that, it's therefore necessary to hire another person to assume his duties.

During the first few years after my appointment, my annual budget was very modest. In fact, the total amount was not much more than my annual salary. I recall with fondness the comments of the Hon. Don Morgan when he was a member of the board. He stated, Mr. Barclay, it doesn't get much better than this.

However, circumstances have changed. Once the lobbyist legislation was enacted it was placed under my umbrella. It was therefore necessary to establish and relocate an office for that purpose. This has now been done. However this move results in additional costs such as rent and additional personnel, including a replacement for Mr. Samways and a secretary.

As I said earlier, these additional expenses represent a 20 per cent increase in my budget and they are (1) expenses related to my relocation, in particular a substantial rental increase, (2) replacement of Ron Samways and the hiring of a secretary, and leasehold improvements of \$10,000.

Unfortunately when my mandate was expanded, there was no room for my new staff. We made temporary arrangements for space in Victoria Tower until the shared space project was completed. And I'm very sad that the . . . I know it was a dream

of the Speaker that we had this shared space project because in my situation it meant a very small expenditure compared to my budget today. But unfortunately, because of the economic times, the project was cancelled. Although the temporary space was unsatisfactory, we did some minor renovations to the floor and painted the premises, and therefore we are prepared to stay in that location. However we have one minor request which we have budgeted for in the amount of \$10,000. This would cover installing a sink and a counter. We're in the position now we don't even have any water, so I think that's rather a reasonable expense to have a tiny kitchenette.

My salary, which is calculated on the basis of 90 per cent of the salary paid to the other independent officers, and that's at my request, my salary is not established by statute because I do want to spend a little time in Palm Springs and hence the reason for the 90 per cent figure. And I would request — I'm sure this is not an issue — that the board again prescribe my salary at 90 per cent of the amount paid to the other officers. If I find in a couple of years that the workload decreases, then I will appear before the board and we'll revisit that matter. But we're really very, very busy right now.

I'm going to now turn to the lobbyist budget, and there is a minor increase of a little over \$27,000. The estimates for last year were 417,714 and for next year they are \$445,117. And this includes the cost of living increases to my salary and the salary of my deputy. That figure totals about 198,000. The other large item in the budget is the sum of \$117,000 for equipment, and I set that out at page 7 of my submission. And I'll just very briefly read it. It said the Office of the Registrar of Lobbyists has been established as fully operational.

In December of 2015, as you recall, I appeared before the board and the board approved an appropriation in the amount of 142,000 in order to create and implement the Saskatchewan lobbyist registry. With this appropriation, development of the registry and website has begun. And when I appeared before the board, I said the 142,000 would cover the first phase of registry development and the balance of a little over 50,000 would be required in April to complete the project. The board was well aware of that. And we advised the board at that time that this remaining amount would be included in this budget.

I want to again pay tribute to Darcy Hislop, the chief IT man for the Legislative Assembly, and he's been a significant resource for us with regards to IT matters. In discussion with Darcy, he advises that the existing infrastructure of an Internet connection and VPN [virtual private network] client access to LAS is less than ideal, especially once the registry has been implemented.

The Conflict of Interest Commissioner and the lobbyist registry should take steps to ensure the security and proper IT and government protocols associated with utilizing a database and use of government computers. It is his recommendation, and we agree, that the COIC and SRL [Saskatchewan's Registrar of Lobbyists] enter into a memorandum of understanding with his division for the provisions of IT services.

While there is no direct cost associated with leveraging the LAS service, there is a \$1,300 monthly expense associated with the wide area network connection, in addition to a WAN [wide area network] cost of \$1,000 to install the line. And together, the

balance of a little over 50,000, the registry development costs, and 15,600 for the WAN cost account totals \$66,852. And the final 50,000 in those figures under the equipment is the annual fees associated with the lobbyist registry. And this figure was provided by ECC [Engineered Code Consulting Inc.] in their RFP [request for proposal] submission, and it is the annual cost of operating the registry system.

Quite frankly, when you look at our budget, there's a lot of one-time costs. And I think in our next budget the figure will even be less than what we're asking for today. So I pose the question again: what does the 117,000 for equipment and assets cover? System development, 66,000; infrastructure expenses, 1,000; software and licences, 50,000, for a total of \$117,000.

And I would . . . This is again set out in page 11 of our submission, and it is related to the continued development and annual expenses associated with the registry. In other words, it's 50,000 of the 117,000 for completion of the registry. 15,600 is required to cover the WAN expenses — 1,000 for initial installation of the line and 50,000 for the ongoing expenses associated with the registry. And this covers yearly licensing agreements and up to 200 hours of maintenance.

Contractual services, we have some good news. We were using consultants to set up the registry, and as I said we have significantly reduced the amount being requested under contractual services in this budget from 137,000 to 67,000, the majority of expenses in the previous budget for retaining expert assistance for developing of the lobbyist registry. Once the registry is fully operational, we do not expect to require any further funding. And personally I don't like using consultants if I don't have to. I figure the Conflict of Interest Commissioner's office, it's my duty to make those decisions. I don't need consultants to help me.

So I really now take pride — and there's been an awful lot of work that's been done, particularly with my deputy sitting to my right — that the cost of establishing our registry, and we have costs right across Canada, is the lowest of any Canadian province. And again this was primarily due to Sandra's contribution. Therefore the budget request for the lobbyist registrar is in the amount of \$445,117. I feel it's reasonable, and a large amount of that is salaries, equipment, which is in the amount of 315,000.

Therefore the total request for the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and the Office of the Registrar of Lobbyists is \$708,176. I feel that the estimate is fair, reasonable, and prudent, and I respectfully request that the board approve the amount in its entirety. Mr. Chairman, any questions?

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Barclay. Do the members have any questions? Mr. Harrison.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thanks very much, Mr. Commissioner, for your presentation. And thank you for the work that you and Sandra have done in terms of the lobbying component of this, which was a challenging task, and we appreciated you taking on the task and nearly being at the finish line with that.

Mr. Barclay: — We hope to be ready before June.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay. Well that was going to be one of my questions, but you anticipated it already so thank you for . . .

Mr. Barclay: — We won't launch it in the middle of the election. I'll give you my undertaking.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well thank you for that and for the presentation. I guess just in terms of specific questions, I guess I would only have a couple, and just more of a clarification than anything. In terms of the equipment and assets, so we'll be contributing another \$50,000 or thereabouts to the completion of the development of the registry . . . or sorry, \$66,000 for the completion of the registry itself. Would it be fair to say then that that money wouldn't be necessary in budgets going forward after this year?

Mr. Barclay: — Yes, in that figure, Mr. Harrison, there is 50,000, which is the figure I referred to when I was before the board in June for the special warrant. And then the rest is that agreement with . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . That's what I thought; it's the establishment of the network, the 16,000. But the 50,000 is a one-time expense.

[15:30]

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay. Sorry, I might have misread that. I just thought the 50,000 covered the annual fees associated and the 200 hours of maintenance . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . That's right, okay.

Okay, and the other question I had was with regard to the contractual services for this year. Is all of that 67,000 related to the registry being brought live online, and then going forward we won't have . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Okay. So the 67,000 won't be there for next year. Okay.

Mr. Barclay: — Yes, there's a gentleman by the name of Paul Borchardt, and I made reference to him in my submission before the board in December, and we're very pleased we had a RFP to choose him. He's had a lot of experience, and he helped us choose the company that is building the registry system. And we still need him for a little while until it's set up, but once we're up and running then I don't think we'll need any consultants at all. That would be my dream anyway.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay, great. Thanks very much, and that's all I had for questions.

The Chair: — Are there any other questions from board members? Sandra.

Ms. Arberry: — Thank you. I just want to clarify just quickly, in that 67,000, Ron made reference to the fact that now he has to hire secretarial services because he doesn't have the benefit of the one that Mary uses. So part of that 67,000 — because we don't know what the workload is going to be, and he doesn't think it's prudent to hire someone to sit there full time if there's no need for it — so part of that 67,000, about 15,000 of that is for a contract secretary until we figure out what the workload will be and what a requirement for that position will be.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay. Well that actually raises a bit of an additional question. And so for the administrative support

that is being requested for the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, then those positions would be separated. Is that . . . Like there wouldn't be the same person doing those two jobs?

Ms. Arberry: — Mr. Barclay has — correct me if I'm wrong, please — Mr. Barclay has indicated that he would like to hire a replacement for Mr. Samways. And that person will replace both Mr. Samways and assist any of the lobbyist registrations, any type of lobbyist requirements that would be necessary.

Mr. Barclay: — I think practically if you get the right person they may help in the . . . both of the commissioners.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay.

The Chair: — Okay. Thank you. If there are no other questions, thank you very much, Mr. Barclay. And we will make our deliberation and determination later today.

Legislative Assembly

The Chair: — Okay. Thank you very much. We will now proceed with item no. 11, decision item, review of the 2016-2017 budget of the Legislative Assembly: (a) decision item, motion to approve expenditure for the Refurbishment and Asset Replacement Fund for projects; (b) decision item, motion to approve budgetary and statutory expenditure estimates; (c) decision item, motion to approve revenue estimates. And we will follow this up with item 12, discussion item, security update.

So, Mr. Putz, if you would like to introduce the staff you have with you this afternoon and proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Putz: — Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll introduce who's here presently, and I'll let you know who's on the way. I'm not sure all our folks will be necessary to help answer questions, but I always like to involve our program managers if there are questions, since that's their area of expertise, to have them here to assist the board.

So in no particular order, just the way I wrote these down, I have Ken Ring, our Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel, with us. To my right is Lynn Jacobson, our executive director of member and corporate services; Brad Gurash, director of financial services, to my left. We have his assistant, Cindy Hingley. She's a senior financial analyst in Brad's branch. Janis Patrick, manager of member payments and allowances. We have Darcy Hislop, our chief technology officer. And we have Kathy Buriannyk, our Senior Committee Clerk. And I think that on the way is Melissa Bennett . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well I've got a special introduction for him. Melissa, our Legislative Librarian, and her assistant, Pat, they're on their way down. Sorry, we're just a little ahead of schedule and they were expecting to start this at 3:45. Ginette Michaluk, our manager of member and payment services, and Lenni Frohman, our Hansard director.

So maybe I'll just begin then, and as I alluded to I want to make a special note of two relatively recent additions to our management team, and one of them is Mike, Mike Halayka — and I even practised this, Mike — director of member services.

This is Mike's first budget presentation to the board. Mike, as I mentioned at the meeting in December, joined us in September, and he's come to us from executive government to the Ministry of the Economy.

Joining us will be Maurice Riou. Maurice has signed on to be our Acting Sergeant-at-Arms. And all of you of course know Moe because he's been with us for many years as special constable. Moe has graciously accepted the challenge of bridging the gap between Pat Shaw's retirement and recruitment of a new sergeant, which we expect to happen in about six months or so. So what Moe does for us is he provides continuity to work through our security review, which is one of the subject areas that we'll address with you at the end of our main budget presentation.

And I also want to point out that this is Brad's first budget as director of financial services. Brad got a lateral promotion last August, going over from the position Mike now has, taking over from Dawn Court as our director of financial services. And so he has assumed the responsibility of leading the Legislative Assembly Service through our budget development process and putting together the numbers that we're presenting to you here today. And of course he was assisted in that endeavour with Cindy who worked with him through this whole process in the fall.

So now getting to the task at hand, my intention is to give you a few broad introductory remarks regarding the budget and then turn it over to Brad to take you through the details. And as I mentioned earlier, we like to have our project managers in attendance to address any of the specific service and support questions that you might have.

So I'd like to begin by noting that the development of this budget followed the method that we began in 2012 which is based on an analysis of spending trends, and Brad was one of our leaders in this regard.

[15:45]

As always, we strive to be effective and efficient with the funding provided to us by the Assembly, and we also like to anticipate future delivery needs. And of course this budget continues that approach. So within that framework, our funding request will ensure that we're able to maintain our core services delivery to members and the public. And as in previous years, I want to bring your attention that, and remind the board, that we provide approximately 80 specific core services and we support 400-plus individuals, including MLAs, your CAs [constituency assistant], caucuses, officers of the Assembly, the Speaker and his office, as well as the Legislative Assembly Service itself.

And all of our service commitments to you as members are catalogued in this document, I like to point that out every year. This is our *Guide to Members Services* which contains a description of the service and names and contact information for the key services provided by the staff of the Legislative Assembly Service.

The services for members of course is a significant portion of what we do each and every year with the funding provided by you, through you by the Assembly, in the support of the

directives that you approve through this board. So that combined with our annual action plan, which accounts for our regular operational budget, is what we have before you.

But I think, as you are well aware, that fiscal year 2016-17 will not be an ordinary year for you nor for us. At the beginning of the new fiscal year, we also have a general election and, consequently to follow, a new legislature. That will have a significant impact on the Assembly. I believe we've been prudent in our budget development process and absorbed certain election-related costs within our base-level funding where practicable and possible to do so. As well, we've budgeted based on election expenses only on what we know for sure, such as the fact that 12 MLAs, including one of you in the room today, have decided not to run again and to retire. But Brad will take you through the main centres of our election year costs.

So our budget proposal represents an overall increase of 2.624 million, or 9.85 per cent, over last year. This is comprised of an increase of 116,000 or 1.21 per cent in our non-statutory funding, and I remind you that the non-statutory funding is for the Assembly operations. In statutory funding there's an increase of 2.508 million, or 14.75 per cent. And for the most part, the statutory funding comprises payments and allowances for members, but it also includes the bulk of our election-related costs.

The board will also recall that the original 2015-16 budget numbers were revised downwards to reflect a freeze on LAS staffing costs, on MLAs and their offices. And in this budget we've assumed and applied the regular economic adjustments for LAS staff for 2016 and reinstated the consumer price index factor that is normally applied to MLAs and their offices.

So this accounts for some of the increases in our budget proposal, and as I noted, the election does have a significant impact on the budget. If we were to exclude direct election-related costs and the costs associated with three new members, our budget would be reduced by 2.2 million. This would have meant an overall increase of only \$420,000 or 1.5 per cent, which is less than the consumer price index for this year of 1.7 per cent.

I make this point only to illustrate that I think we've worked hard to keep our regular operating costs down and to illustrate the reality that there are costs associated with elections and the maintenance of this democratic institution.

So with that, as you'll hear shortly in Brad's presentation, you'll hear the areas where we've worked hard to be fiscally responsible and to minimize the non-statutory funding requests by refining our expenditures and redirecting one-time funding to help offset our status quo increases and the election-related costs and any new initiative requests.

With that, Brad, I'll turn it over to you, and at the end of it we look forward to addressing any questions you have. And also at the end of this then we'll go into the security piece which we propose to deal with separately. So, Brad.

Mr. Gurash: — Okay. Thank you, Greg. Good afternoon, Mr. Chair, and members of the Board of Internal Economy. I'd like

to begin our presentation by highlighting that the foundation of our budget submission is the LAS strategic plan and its three overarching goals of sustained and enhanced institution of parliament, purposeful services with accountable governance, and effective, responsive work environment.

For 2016-17, in your document in front of you we've identified approximately 20 key actions to guide us in achieving those goals for the coming year. Those can be found on pages 4 and 5 of the document. A primary overall focus for the coming year obviously will be the launch of a new Legislative Assembly and ensuring operational continuity throughout. Page 7 of our submission also includes examples of our regular service delivery and outcomes that Greg alluded to as well.

At this time I'd also like to provide you a brief overview of the principles and assumptions that were used in the development of this budget submission. These details can be found on page 8 and they include developing a budget that is fiscally responsible and mindful of the direction provided to executive government ministries in the call to estimates; incorporating the unique financial pressures that arise when a provincial election is to occur in the upcoming fiscal year; the reallocation of one-time funding in order to lessen financial increases required to maintain our current level of services; an anticipated 1.7 per cent growth in the consumer price index which primarily impacts the estimated payments and allowances to individual members and caucus offices. And base funding has been adjusted to provide for a 1.65 per cent cost of living salary adjustment for all LAS employees in addition to in-range progression adjustments for eligible employees.

Specifically our 2016-17 budget submission provides for an increase in statutory funding from 2015-16 of 2.508 million or 14.75 per cent, which is primarily driven by election-related costs. Our election cost estimates are based only on known amounts, that is, known members who are not seeking re-election. It doesn't include and is not reflective of any historical trends that we may be anticipating. Excluding those election-related costs within the statutory budget, the statutory increase would only be 2.31 per cent. The increase to statutory funding is driven primarily from the increase in CPI as mandated by the Board of Internal Economy directives, additional funding requirements for three additional members, normal election costs, as well as the redesignation of the Clerk's salary as statutory due to the adoption of Bill 180 in the spring.

Within the non-statutory portion of our budget, 183,000 savings has been identified for reallocation to offset our core business pressures. These pressures include funding for previously approved economic and in-range salary adjustments for eligible employees, election-specific expenditures within the non-statutory budget, contractual obligations in the Sergeant-at-Arms office, and overall the impact of foreign currency fluctuations that we experience in our communications and technology services — that's Darcy's area — and the Legislative Library operations. Our 2016-17 non-statutory funding request provides for an overall increase of 116,000 or 1.21 per cent.

Now if I can ask you to turn to page 12 of your budget document, I'll now focus on more specific details of what's giving rise to increases in each specific area. On page 12 you

will find the statutory funding recommendations which at a high level include identified savings due to our experience drawdowns — this would be from the ongoing trending analysis that we identify for all member expense provisions based upon that trend analysis; an increase of 215,000 which is attributable to the consumer price index. Now the one aspect of that, we've also got another \$10,000 in the next item that's been grouped in, of CPI, that's in the 891,000 due to electoral boundary redistribution, we called it, which is the three new members. And then we have 101.225 million related to direct election costs. The redirection of the Clerk's salary, 237,000. And then 54,000 is related to cost of living salary adjustments for constituency assistants as identified in directive 6 of the Board of Internal Economy directives. That's linked to the out-of-scope increase that's provided to executive government.

If you'll turn to page 13, you'll find our non-statutory funding recommendations which again at a high level we've identified \$183,000 worth of savings. That's in the offset sections there, up above. And we've used that to offset the status quo pressures we note just below that, which more specifically are 135,000 for cost of living and in-range salary progression adjustments, net of internal savings, and the redesignation of Greg's salary. Forty thousand is related to non-statutory provincial election costs that we incur, such as the members' photographs for websites and composites, the replacement of aging infrastructure, basically network switches, with all the caucus offices. We tend to do that around an election time too because they just reach end of life. And \$9,000 for an extra opening . . . anticipated opening day tea costs, depending on how many opening days we have in the coming year.

Thirty-six thousand is, as I alluded to, the foreign currency exchange pressures within the library and communications and technology services; \$30,000 pressure for supporting the board in its upcoming recruitment process for the Advocate for Children and Youth; \$30,000 for contractual service pressures, of which 20,000 is for the commissionaires' contract which is currently being renegotiated right now, and we anticipate that being done and in place by the end of March of this year. And then 10,000 for anticipated legal counsel backfill in the Law Clerk's area as well as 20,000 for the implementation of a new library catalogue system and 8,000 for the continuation of our participation in the History Alive! vignettes for visitors.

And then a new addition to our budget which you haven't seen in prior years is found on page 14 there, and that's to do with our revenue estimates. Our revenue estimates for 2016 and '17 are estimated at \$4,200, which is basically the same amount it has been in the past five years. This total is derived from amounts received by the Legislative Library and from personal reimbursements made by members and LAS employees for such things as personal use of telephone and other expenditures.

And then the last component of our budget is the Refurbishment and Asset Replacement Fund which is located on page 15, otherwise known as RARF, which was established in 2007 to fund improvements to the LAS and Legislative Assembly facilities, replacements of furnishings, non-capital equipment, and major capital acquisitions. This fund is incorporated within the LAS base budget allocation and this fund will be up for renewal in the next fiscal year, in the 2017-18 fiscal year. Within RARF, the LAS has identified one major project, the

renewal and enhancement of security for the Legislative Building and precinct which will be spoken to in greater detail in a few minutes.

At this time I'd like to thank the Board of Internal Economy for their time and consideration of our 2016-17 budget request and invite any questions the board members may have. Thank you.

The Chair: — Okay. Thank you, Mr. Putz, and Brad. Do the members have any questions related to the LAS budget? Mr. Harrison.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes, I just kind of by way of general comment again want to extend our appreciation for the work that's been done in putting the budget together. In terms of kind of specific items, this is a kind of very detailed question, but the Advocate for Children and Youth replacement process, have we budgeted that amount in the previous processes that we have used? We have? And that would be for advertising and . . .

Mr. Putz: — And some travel.

Mr. Gurash: — Last year I believe we included 35,000 for the recruitment of the Provincial Auditor, was it? And this year we're just anticipating 30,000 as we relook at expenditures.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Okay. No, that one just kind of jumped out going through here but I think I'll leave it there for now. Thanks very much.

The Chair: — Any other questions? If not, thank you for your presentations and we will give due consideration later today.

Mr. Putz: — Mr. Speaker, as Brad mentioned, we do want to discuss the security piece with the board, but we would request that we do that in camera because there are a lot of variables here and some decisions have to be made. And we prefer that those decisions be made or discussed in camera. Thank you.

The Chair: — Okay. We have item no. 12, discussion item, security update. We will do that in camera. If someone would move that we now move in camera with our security officials and Mr. Putz present. Mr. Cheveldayoff. Second? Mr. Harrison. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. This committee now moves in camera at 4 p.m.

[The board continued in camera from 16:00 until 19:00.]

The Chair: — I would like to reconvene this committee at 7 p.m., committee of the Board of Internal Economy. We are now prepared to continue with the agenda items. We will revert or carry on with the agenda as presented. On the third page, item no. 6, approval of the 2016-17 budget for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer.

The proposed motion before you is:

That the 2016-17 expenditure estimates for vote 034, Chief Electoral Officer be approved in the amount of 15,068,000

as follows: statutory, 15,068,000; and further, that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Would somebody move that motion, please.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — So moved.

The Chair: — Mr. Harrison. Second? Mr. McCall. Any discussion? If not, all in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Okay. Item no. 7, approval of the 2016-17 budget for the Office of the Advocate for Children and Youth. The proposed motion is:

That the 2016-17 expenditure estimates for vote 076, Office of the Advocate for Children and Youth be approved in the amount of \$2,060,000 as follows: budgetary to be voted . . .

[Inaudible interjections] . . . Okay. There, zero in the wrong spot.

2,606,000 as follows: budgetary to be voted, 2,378,000; statutory, 228,000; and further, that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Moved by Mr. Cheveldayoff, seconded by Mr. Forbes. Any discussion? If not, all in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Okay, item no. 8, approval of the 2016-17 budget for the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. The proposed motion reads:

That the 2016-17 expenditure estimates for vote 055, Information and Privacy Commissioner be approved in the amount of 1,561,000 as follows: budgetary to be voted, 1,333,000; statutory, 228,000; and further, that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Ms. Eagles. Second? Mr. McCall. Any discussion? All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Okay, item no. 9. We have already voted and approved 9(a), approval of the amendment to Estimates display mandate statement, Office of the Ombudsman. This motion will be in regards to 9(b), approval of the 2016-17 budget for the Office of the Ombudsman.

The proposed motion is:

That the 2016-17 expenditure estimates for vote 056, Ombudsman be approved in the amount of 3,914,000 as follows: budgetary to be voted, 3,686,000; statutory, 228,000; and further, that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Motion, please? Mr. Forbes. Second? Mr. Harrison. Any discussion? If not, all in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Okay, item no. 10, approval of the 2016-17 budget for the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, and (b) approval of the 2016-17 budget for the office of the lobbyists registrar. This is one motion for both officers. The proposed motion is:

That the 2016-17 expenditure estimates for vote 057, Conflict of Interest Commissioner and Registrar of Lobbyists be approved in the amount of 702,000 as follows: budgetary to be voted, 702,000; and further, that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

A mover, please?

Mr. McCall: — So moved.

The Chair: — Mr. McCall. Second? Mr. Cheveldayoff. Any discussion? If not, all in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Okay. Item no. 11, approval of the 2016-17 budget for the Legislative Assembly: (a) approval of the refurbishment assessment replacement fund projects. Proposed motion:

That for the 2016-17 fiscal year the following Refurbishment and Asset Replacement Fund project be approved: Legislative Assembly security renewal, 250,000, for a total amount of 250,000.

A mover, please? Mr. Harrison. Second? Mr. McCall. Any discussion? All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Item 11(b), approval of the Assembly budgetary and statutory estimates; (c) approval of the revenue estimates for the Legislative Assembly. It is one motion. The proposed motion is:

That the 2016-17 expenditure estimates for vote 021, Legislative Assembly be approved in the amount of 9,755,000 as follows: budgetary to be voted, 9,755,000.

That the 2016-17 revenue estimates for vote 021, Legislative Assembly be approved in the amount 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.

Can we have a mover, please? Mr. Cheveldayoff. Second? Mr. Forbes. Is there any discussion? If not, all in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. That is all the motions that we have to pass the budget. There is one outstanding item, the statutory portion of vote 021, which we will reconvene at the call of the Chair when I get an indication from the members that this should be brought forward. So thank you for being in attendance. Can I have a motion of adjournment, please? Ms. Eagles. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. This committee stands adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

[The board adjourned at 19:10.]