



Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

MINUTES AND VERBATIM REPORT



NO. 4 — DECEMBER 9 & 10, 1998

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

Hon. Glenn Hagel, Chair
Moose Jaw North

Hon. Joanne Crofford
Regina Centre

Ben Heppner
Rosthern

Myron Kowalsky
Prince Albert Carlton

Hon. Eldon Lautermilch
Prince Albert Northcote

Harvey McLane
Arm River

Grant Whitmore
Saskatoon Northwest

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

Room 10 Legislative Building

1:12 p.m. Wednesday, December 9, 1998

Present: Members of the Board of Internal Economy

Hon. Glenn Hagel, Chair
 Hon. Joanne Crofford
 Mr. Ben Heppner
 Mr. Myron Kowalsky
 Hon. Eldon Lautermilch
 Mr. Harvey McLane
 Mr. Grant Whitmore

Staff to the Board

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

Officials in Attendance

Office of the Chief Electoral Officer
 Jan Baker, Chief Electoral Officer

Office of the Provincial Auditor
 Wayne Strelieff, Provincial Auditor
 Fred Wendel, Assistant Provincial Auditor

Office of the Provincial Ombudsman
 Barbara Tomkins, Provincial Ombudsman
 Murray Knoll, Assistant Ombudsman

Office of the Children's Advocate
 Deborah Parker-Loewen, Children's Advocate
 Bernie Rodier, Office Administrator

AGENDA Moved by Ms. Crofford, seconded by Mr. McLane, that the proposed agenda be adopted. Agreed.

MINUTES Moved by Mr. Kowalsky, seconded by Mr. Whitmore, ordered, that the Minutes of Meeting #3/98 be adopted. Agreed.

ITEM 1 Table Item – Audited Financial Statements and Schedule of Assets of the Government, Opposition and Third Party Caucuses for the Fiscal Year ended March 31, 1998

The Chair tabled the statements and schedules of assets.

ITEM 2 Table Item – Members Accountability and Disclosure Reports for the Fiscal Year ended March 31, 1998

The Chair tabled the reports.

ITEM 3 Table Item – Office of the Provincial Auditor: Annual Report on Operations for the year ended March 31, 1998

The Chair tabled the report.

ITEM 4 Decision Item – Request for Board of Internal Economy to Review Budgets of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and Freedom of Information and Privacy Commissioner

Moved by Mr. Lautermilch, seconded by Mr. Whitmore:

That the Board of Internal Economy accept the request of the Minister of Finance to assume responsibility for the review of the budgets of the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, effective the 1999-2000 budget.

The question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1461

ITEM 5 Decision Item – Appointment of Acting Law Clerk

Moved by Mr. Lautermilch, seconded by Mr. Heppner:

That Garnet Clarence Holtzmann, Q.C. be appointed Acting Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk in the Office of the Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk and further, that the appointment shall be on the terms and conditions of the agreement dated the 28th day of October, 1998, entered into by the Honourable Glenn Hagel, Speaker, and the said Garnet Clarence Holtzmann, which agreement is hereby ratified and confirmed and may be amended from time to time to extend the term of the appointment for a period in the aggregate not to exceed six months.

The question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1462

ITEM 6 Decision Item – Review of the 1999-2000 Budget for the Offices of the Provincial Ombudsman and Children's Advocate

Moved by Ms. Crofford, seconded by Mr. Whitmore:

That the 1999-2000 Estimates of the Provincial Ombudsman be approved, as submitted, in the amount of \$1,327,880;

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

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

Minute #1463

Moved by Mr. Lautermilch, seconded by Mr. McLane:

That the 1999-2000 Estimates of the Children's Advocate be approved in the amount of \$950,600;

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

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

Minute #1464

The Board recessed for a short time.

ITEM 7 Decision Item – Review of the 1999-2000 Budget for the Office of the Provincial Auditor

Moved by Mr. Lautermilch, seconded by Mr. Whitmore:

That the 1999-2000 Estimates of the Office of the Provincial Auditor be approved as submitted, in the amount of \$4,442,000;

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

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

Minute #1465

ITEM 8 Decision Item – Review of the 1999-2000 Budget for the Chief Electoral Officer

Moved by Mr. Kowalsky, seconded by Mr. Heppner:

That the 1999-2000 Estimates for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, in the amount of \$580,233 (Statutory) be transmitted to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

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

Minute #1466

ITEM 9 Decision Item – Authorization of Payment to Chief Electoral Officer

Moved by Mr. Kowalsky, seconded by Mr. Whitmore:

That in order to honour the offer made to Ms. Baker by the all-party selection committee, a salary payment in the amount of \$285 (6503 - \$6228 = \$285) be made in compensation for the September salary loss.

The question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1467

ITEM 10 Decision Item – Review of the 1999-2000 Budget of the Information and Privacy Commissioner

Moved by Mr. Whitmore, seconded by Mr. Kowalsky:

That the 1999-2000 Estimates for the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner be approved as submitted in the amount of \$63,000,

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

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

Minute #1468

ITEM 11 Decision Item – Review of the 1999-2000 Budget for the Conflict of Interest Commissioner

Moved by Mr. Whitmore, seconded by Mr. Kowalsky:

That the 1999-2000 Estimates for the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner be approved as submitted in the amount of \$91,000,

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

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

Minute #1469

Decision Item – Other Business Items as Raised by Members of the Board

Mr. Lautermilch noted an item raised by a Member regarding an allowance issue.

With respect to the interpretation of Directive #4.1 Constituency Service Expenses regarding calendars, the Board advised that the interpretation of “calendars” to not include pocket calendars was overly restrictive. The Chair undertook to revise the interpretation.

At 5:03 p.m., the Board adjourned until 8:30 a.m. December 10, 1998.

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

Room 10 Legislative Building

8:39 a.m. Thursday, December 10, 1998

Present: Members of the Board of Internal Economy

Hon. Glenn Hagel, Chair
Mr. Ben Heppner
Mr. Myron Kowalsky
Hon. Eldon Lautermilch
Mr. Harvey McLane
Mr. Grant Whitmore

Staff to the Board

Marilyn Borowski, Director, Financial Services
Gwenn Ronyk, Clerk
Greg Putz, Deputy Clerk
Margaret Kleisinger, Secretary

Officials in Attendance

Office of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan
Linda Kaminski, Director of Personnel and Administrative Services
Marian Powell, Legislative Librarian
Mr. Pat Shaw, Sergeant at Arms

ITEM 12 Decision Item – Review of the 1999-2000 Budget for the Office of the Legislative Assembly

ITEM 12(a) Review Budget Document

The Board reviewed the Budget submission in the amount of \$15,541,410.

Budgetary Estimates

The Board agreed to meet “in camera” at 9:23 a.m. for Security matters

The Board resumed public meetings at 9:35 a.m.

The Board recessed for a short time.

The Chair committed to bring back information to the Board regarding a comparison of tour activity and budgetary commitments for Visitor Services in other jurisdictions.

The Board agreed to meet “in camera” at 10:55 a.m. for Security matters.

The Board resumed public meetings at 11:00 a.m.

ITEM 12(b) Decision Item – Implementation of the New In-scope Classification Plan and Pay Equity

Moved by Mr. Lautermilch, seconded by Mr. Whitmore:

That Legislative Assembly non-management positions be re-aligned from the old SGEU Class Plan to the new SGEU Classification Plan effective October 1, 1998, and

that the Legislative Assembly work with classification consultants to determine the classification level of each applicable position, and

that the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly approve the classification level of each position and its alignment to the new In Scope Class Plan.

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

ITEM 12(c) Decision Item – Amendment to Directive #6 Constituency Assistant Expenses

Moved by Mr. Whitmore, seconded by Mr. Kowalsky:

That Directive #6 Constituency Assistant Expenses, be amended to delete “a Clerk Stenographer III” in the fourth line of subclause (1) and substitute “the Program Support Level 4 position” therefor.

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

Minute #1471

ITEM 12(d) Decision Item – Amendment to Directive #9 Caucus Grant – Research Services

The Chair committed to bring this item forward at the next Board meeting.

ITEM 12(e) Decision Item – Consideration of B Budget Request

Moved by Mr. Lautermilch, seconded by Mr. Heppner:

That B Budget items be approved as follows:

The security system, \$39,230; and the kids’ corner, \$2,000; for a total of \$41,230.

The question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1472

Gift Shop

The Chair undertook to present a business plan with the request to take over the Legislative Building Gift Shop, for consideration for the 2000-2001 fiscal year.

ITEM 12(f) Motion to approve Revenue Estimates

Moved by Mr. Whitmore, seconded by Mr. Heppner:

That the Legislative Assembly Revenue Estimates in the amount of \$9000 be approved for the 1999-2000 fiscal year;

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

Minute #1473

ITEM 12(g) Motion to approve Budgetary and Statutory Estimates

Moved by Mr. Lautermilch, seconded by Mr. Whitmore:

That code 641 Computer Hardware in Legislative Assembly Administration be reduced by \$60,000.

The question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1474

Moved by Mr. Lautermilch, seconded by Mr. Whitmore:

That the Legislative Assembly Expenditure Estimates in the amount of \$15,455,410 be approved for the 1999-2000 fiscal year as follows:

Budget to be voted -- \$5,308,070

Statutory budget -- \$10,147,340

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

The question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1475

Decision Item – Other Business as Raised by Members of the Board

Moved by Mr. McLane, seconded by Mr. Whitmore:

That the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly undertake a review of computer requirements in the Legislative Assembly Office, [Chamber], constituency and caucus offices,

and that she bring forward, for Board consideration, options regarding computer development to assist Members to perform their duties.

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

Minute #1476

ITEM 13**Decision Item – Special Warrant Request for the 1998-99 Fiscal Year for the Legislative Assembly Office and Office of the Children's Advocate**

The Board agreed to meet "in camera" at 11:33 a.m. on a personnel item.

The Board resumed public meetings at 11:40 a.m.

Moved by Mr. Lautermilch, seconded by Mr. Whitmore:

That the special warrant request for the 1998-99 fiscal year for Vote 021 Legislation and Children's Advocate in the amount of \$341,500 be approved and forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

The question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1477

ITEM 14**Decision Item – Approval of new Estimates Book format**

Moved by Mr. Whitmore, seconded by Mr. Heppner:

That the Board of Internal Economy approve the proposed format for the Estimates book which collects the Legislative Branch Estimates in a separate section and that this approval be communicated to Treasury Board by the Chair.

The question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1478

ITEM 15**Decision Item – Provincial Auditor's Audit Memorandum on the Board of Internal Economy for the Fiscal Year ended March 31, 1998**

Moved by Mr. Whitmore, seconded by Mr. Lautermilch:

That the draft response to the Provincial Auditor's Memorandum of Audit Observations on the Board of Internal Economy for the year ended March 31, 1998 be approved and forwarded to the Provincial Auditor on behalf of the Board by the Chair.

The question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1479

ITEM 16**Decision Item – Implementation of Directive #23 Caucus Accountability and Disclosure**

Moved by Mr. Lautermilch, seconded by Mr. Whitmore:

That Directive #23 Caucus Accountability and Disclosure be amended by adding a new clause (3) after clause (2) as follows:

"(3) Within 6 months following the polling date subsequent to the dissolution of each Legislature, all surplus funds determined pursuant to subclause 2(a) shall revert to the Crown.",

and that clause (3) be renumbered as clause (4), and further,

that clause (4) be amended by deleting “subclauses (2)(b) and (3)(d)” where it appears in the last line and substituting the following therefor:

“subclauses (2)(b) and (4)(d).”

The question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1480

Moved by Mr. Whitmore, seconded by Mr. Kowalsky:

That Directive #23 Caucus Accountability and Disclosure be amended by deleting the words “within 3 months” where they appear in clauses (2) and (4) and substituting the words “within 6 months” therefor.

The question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1481

Moved by Mr. Kowalsky, seconded by Mr. Whitmore:

That Directive #23 Caucus Accountability and Disclosure be amended by adding the words “and existing lease payments” after the words “including employee benefits” in subclauses (2)(a) and (4)(d).

The Chair committed to bring forward a recommendation on the standard format for the financial statements and a recommendation on whether and how Directive #23 should address contractual arrangements, for the next Board meeting.

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

Minute #1482

The Board adjourned at 12:05 p.m. to the call of the Chair.

The Chair: — Members of the board, let me call the meeting to order. And first of all, let me say welcome to Ben Heppner who has joined the board as the board member from the official opposition. Welcome. Good to have you here, Ben.

You have before you a lengthy agenda and I thank all members for setting aside the time if necessary for this afternoon, tomorrow morning, and then the full day on Friday in order to work through this agenda. But how long it will take will be of course totally dependent on your actions and decisions and it will be in your hands.

You have before you the 16-item agenda which I recommend to you and it would be in order to have a motion to adopt the agenda. Ms. Crofford. Is there a seconder? Mr. McLane. Is there any discussion on the agenda?

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Chairman, just a question on the time frame that we've set aside. I notice today we're sitting until 5, tomorrow 8:30 to 12, and then of course on Friday. I'm wondering, are we bound by those times, Mr. Speaker? Are there people that have other appointments, say after 5 today or afternoon tomorrow, that we couldn't extend the times of the meetings?

A couple of things have come up in my constituency that are out of my hands and weren't on my calendar when we booked these meeting times in for Friday. And if there's any possible way that we can work through this today and tomorrow, I'd like to know that. I don't know what the time frames of the other members are but maybe we could find that out.

The Chair: — Why don't we just pause on that for a moment before we proceed.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well just to say we have set aside a goodly portion of time here I think in terms of what we have to deal with. These are all important budgets that we will be reviewing and there are some decision items as well. But I think in spite of the amount of work on the agenda, it would be my hope that we could conclude, if that's possible, tomorrow.

In terms of extending the hours, I'm not sure about tomorrow from my perspective, but I know tonight I do have a commitment at 5, so that would sort of preclude me from involvement of an extended time frame today.

But just looking at this, I'd be very surprised if we couldn't conclude by Friday morning. I mean even if an hour or so Friday morning, but hopefully we could get it done prior to noon. Harvey, I don't know if that will fit in with your commitments or if you would require all day Friday. But I mean, we should still shoot to try and adjourn tomorrow night if we can.

The Chair: — I think tomorrow afternoon for me . . . it would be difficult to go into the afternoon. But the evening itself . . . I'm sensing that members are willing to move as quickly as responsibly possible in that there may be some flexibility. Mr. McLane, on Friday are you wishing to . . . Is the morning also difficult for you?

Mr. McLane: — It's the morning that's the problem.

The Chair: — It's the morning that's the problem. Okay. Well can I suggest that we come back and just when we adjourn today at 5 or thereabouts, that we revisit this and see where we're at and then review and see what we think is possible.

Because we'll know we've got three and a half hours Thursday morning and we'll know where we're at on the agenda and maybe be able to better decide. And perhaps by extending an hour or two somehow in the next two days we can avoid needing to meet on Friday.

Is that acceptable? Okay. Then I think we . . . We haven't yet voted on the motion to adopt the agenda? No. We have before us then the motion to adopt the agenda. Those in favour . . . Or is there any further debate or discussion? Those in favour? Opposed? And that's carried unanimously. Thank you.

Next item then is the minutes, and the last meeting we had is in your records as minutes of meeting no. 3/98 held on September 28. The secretary of the committee and I have both reviewed these and believe them to be an accurate record of the meeting.

Are there any errors or omissions or corrections anyone would like to recommend? If not, then it would be in order to have a motion to adopt those minutes. Mr. Kowalsky. Is there a seconder? Mr. Whitmore. Is there discussion? In favour? Opposed? And that's carried. The minutes are adopted.

Item no. 1 is a tabling item. And the item to be tabled is the audited financial statements and schedules of assets of the government, the opposition, and the third party caucuses for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1998. These were previously distributed to you in October, and so for the record I will formally table them at this time.

Item no. 2, also a tabling item. These are the individual member's accountability and disclosure reports for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1998. These were all previously distributed to you in October of this year, and are available in the Clerk's office for observation. And I will formally and officially table them at this time.

And item no. 3, also a tabling item. From the office of the Provincial Auditor, the annual report on the operations of the auditor's office for the year ended March 31, 1998. And this I will also table at this time. It is an item that you may wish to make reference to. It has been previously distributed to you about a week ago. And rather than consider discussion on it, I think it more appropriate that it may be something if you choose to refer to it would be during the consideration of the auditor's budget at that time and together with that item.

Item no. 4 is a decision item. And I refer you then to the background matter that you have which is entitled, request for Board of Internal Economy to review the budget of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and the budget of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Members will be aware and you will have in your materials, a copy of the letter from the Minister of Finance dated December 8 requesting that the Board from this point forward assume responsibility for review and approval of

the budgets of those two offices. And you will have that in your hands. I recommend to you:

That the Board of Internal Economy accept the request of the Minister of Finance to assume responsibility for the review of the budgets of the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner effective the 1999-2000 budget.

And that is a recommendation I make to you. Is there . . . Does someone wish to move that matter. Mr. Lautermilch. Is there a seconder? Mr. Whitmore. Then that is moved and that motion will be circulated to you then for your signature. Is there discussion on that motion? If not then those in favour of the motion please indicate. Down. And opposed? And that is carried.

And that then brings under the review of the Board of Internal Economy now at this point all of the officers of the Assembly.

Item no. 5 is a decision item regarding the appointment of the Acting Law Clerk. And I refer you to no. 5 in your materials previously provided. As members will be aware our Law Clerk is currently on leave. And according to The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, the matter of appointment of a Law Clerk is the responsibility of the Board. I refer you to section 68.32(1):

The Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk is to be appointed by the board on the recommendation of the Speaker.

It is my judgment that that should apply as well to the matter of the Acting Law Clerk when it's an interim position as we await the final determination of the Law Clerk's status. And members will be aware then that in that regard that I have signed an agreement with Mr. Garnet Holtzmann to serve in that acting capacity on an interim basis, and it would therefore be in order to have a motion to ratify the appointment of the Acting Law Clerk. And the motion that I recommend to you is the one that's in your notes:

That Garnet Clarence Holtzmann, Q.C. be appointed Acting Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk in the Office of the Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk.

And further:

That the appointment shall be on the terms and conditions of the agreement dated October 28, 1998 entered into by the Hon. Glenn Hagel, Speaker, and the said Garnet Clarence Holtzmann, which agreement is hereby ratified and confirmed; and may be amended from time to time to extend the term of the appointment for a period in the aggregate not to exceed six months.

And a copy of that contract is attached. It would be in order to have a motion . . . it would be in order for someone to move that motion. Mr. Lautermilch. Is there a seconder? Mr. Heppner. Discussion? If not, those in favour please indicate. Down. Opposed? And that's carried unanimously. Thank you.

Moving to item number 6 which is a decision item. And it

involves the review of the 1999-2000 budget for the Office of the Provincial Ombudsman and the Children's Advocate. Now as we have done, it comes to us as one item but in fact it's two. In your consideration for the board, the offices legislatively are connected, but for your consideration we will separate them. And I think we will ask the Provincial Ombudsman to come forward for preparation . . . or sorry, for presentation of her budget to you.

And I'll introduce officials to you as they're coming into play over the course of the meeting. And joining us today are the Ombudsman, Barb Tomkins, and she's joined today by the deputy Ombudsman, Murray Knoll. And I will refer members to the Ombudsman's budget proposal which was provided to you earlier.

And with those brief words of introduction, this will be the third time that the board is now receiving the proposal for the budget for the Office of the Provincial Ombudsman. And Ms. Tomkins, I turn the floor to you.

Ms. Tomkins: — Thank you. You all have I believe a copy of our budget proposal and I don't plan to basically reread it back to you. I would appreciate however if you would ask me questions about anything that doesn't appear to be clear in there or anything that's not mentioned there that you think is relevant.

I've set up the proposal this way on purpose. I think that too often my office is perceived as essentially doing one thing when in fact we are mandated by legislation to do four things. We tend to concentrate all of our resources on the one, which is the first on the list of four on the first page of the submission.

But I think it's important that we, in my office, and also those of you on the board and the public understand that we have other obligations within our mandate. And I've therefore set out those four obligations. And I have set out the budget submission as relating specifically to . . . I identified the parts of the submission as being related directly to one of those four.

Starting with the first of the four main aspects of my mandate which is the best known: to receive, review, investigate, and where appropriate recommend corrective action to address complaints from members of the public. We have a number of pressures but also, you'll be pleased to hear, some reductions in our needs.

The first relates to the temporary ombudsman assistants which the Board kindly provided funding for last year. At the time those positions were requested I did not commit to not requesting that they be extended, however, at this time I am prepared to surrender them somewhat reluctantly. It's been wonderful having them. We've made tremendous progress.

We're not yet where we'd like to be but we're a lot further along than we were, and the mere fact that your backlog is not so large enables you to deal with what you do have more quickly than you would have otherwise. And we're hoping that that coupled with additional effort by the remaining staff will enable us to maintain the progress we've made and make it the rest of the way.

So given that, I've submitted that our total budget using last

year's numbers can be reduced by \$103,120 which is the total of funds allocated for salaries and consequent expenses for those positions.

The bad news which I alluded to last year, is the increasing demand on the office which has increased surprisingly over the last year. We have a 20 per cent increase in complaints to the office over what we had last year; and of more concern, all of that increase and more relates to in-jurisdiction complaints. As we discussed last year, our office deals with complaints which are within the jurisdiction of the office and those which are outside of our jurisdiction. We provide service respecting both, but the work of the office is obviously greater and more focused on those that are within jurisdiction.

So when that split between, against government and not against government complaints changes, that has an impact — even if the numbers were the same — has an impact on the workload from my staff. So that what we have is a 20 per cent increase and I didn't go back and check, but I suspect that might be unprecedented in one year. And not only that but if you look at only against government complaints, the entire 20 per cent relates to against government.

That, coupled with another difficulty I alluded to last year, which is the disproportionate number of complaints coming out of the northern region and handled by our Saskatoon office has us at a point where in this year, the complaints analyst in Saskatoon, who is the person who receives for the northern region all of the complaints for and against government coming into that region, received so far in 1998 or based on projected '98 calendar year numbers, 40 per cent more complaints than our counterpart in Regina. And our counterpart in Regina's workload is not small either.

I think if you roughly split it, and these aren't the right numbers, Murray will have them if you want them, if you take the total of 4,500 complaints, roughly 2,000 going through Regina and 2,500 through Saskatoon, that wouldn't be quite right. It would be higher than that in Saskatoon.

I think we discussed last year my belief that these complaints analysts are stretched to their limit. I used the analogy to staffing your constituency offices. I think it's a fair analogy. I don't know what your numbers look like but I would hope you'd agree that these are phenomenal numbers for two women to handle. I'm therefore reluctantly requesting funding to hire a half-time person in Saskatoon to supplement the resources there. We estimate the costs of doing so at \$22,000.

I have no reason to believe, given the pattern that the complaints have taken, that that will not be a permanent request and I make it as a request for permanent funding. However if you are more comfortable with funding it as a temporary measure to be reviewed next year, I would also be willing to consider that.

I would indicate that among the various submissions, I will make that as one that we consider a very high priority if our office is to maintain the level of service anywhere near what we have provided in the past.

Those are all of our submissions regarding the first aspect of my

mandate which I've titled public complaints.

The next aspect of my mandate is to, in addition to investigating and reviewing complaints I've received from the public, to identify on my own motion issues which I believe require investigation. These might be narrow issues; they might be very broad issues; they might be systemic; they might be a review of a whole part of a department in its workings; they might involve a look at the approach of a department and the consequences of its policies on numbers of people.

This kind of work has been done. Some of those investigations — not in my term and that's a whole other philosophical discussion — but in the past some of the investigations of that nature have been made public and you'll be familiar with those.

We have not now and have never at any point had resources dedicated to that purpose. Until recent years we were able to absorb those kind of major investigations within our existing resources although even at the time it was difficult and that was part of how the backlog built in past years.

Given the increased numbers of public complaints coming, given that we're now in a much more comfortable position in regard to level of service, it puts me in a real dilemma to undertake that kind of work with the existing resources because it will inevitably mean that we will in very short order be back where we were last year in terms of public complaints.

I'm therefore proposing that we be allowed funding to hire an additional ombudsman assistant. These are the positions you probably know as investigators who can be dedicated to that purpose. I've also, in the submission, explained what I see as a philosophical sort of discussion about the difficulty I have with publicly stating what I will and won't do with that person in terms of the specific investigations. I won't go into that again. But that, I think, is important and I think it's important that we understand . . . that you understand where I'm coming from and I understand how you react to that. So if that's not clear or if that's not acceptable, I would appreciate it if you would ask questions or indicate to me where you differ with my view of the problem that that whole issue presents for me. The request in that regard then is for an additional funding amount of \$60,000 total annualized.

As to our mandate to mediate, negotiate, use conciliation and other non-adversarial means to resolve complaints, we were provided last year funding to hire two positions which we have titled ombudsman assistant intervention. Those positions are on staff. We're really encouraged by what they're doing. I think that they're going to be far more valuable than even I had realized when I asked for them.

Those were not temporary positions and I appreciate that. I'm not asking for further funding for those positions. I am able to surrender the sum of \$8,000 which was an allocation in order to acquire computers for those positions.

Last of the four mandated obligations of my office is public education and communications. This, I expect, is becoming an old record to you folks from me but in any event we're gradually getting there. Two years ago, I had and the office had never had any allocation of staff resources and a very tiny

amount of money allocated for anything that might be considered public education and communications.

I was fortunate and pleased when this board funded a half-time person and subsequently an increase in the amount of funds available for resources. I'm asking that that position . . . that consideration be given to that position being extended from half-time to three-quarter time. The need is . . . has always been great and is greater I think than we realize.

I think that some of you may have seen some of our new materials. Our public materials just became available in the last month or so and I think copies were provided to your offices. We have what we consider very basic needs in regards to public education, communication, and a number of other initiatives which we think would be wonderful.

In terms of this request, I think we're talking about expediting. We're working at least within a reasonable time frame. The basic needs of the office, I don't see this as being dedicated to luxury.

I know the Children's Advocate last year had her equivalent position increased to three-quarter time and I think she will advise you that that relatively small expenditure of money has substantial results. And in that regard we're requesting an additional sum of \$12,000.

Lastly come those lovely things that were not . . . are not within our control. Salary increases coming from five different initiatives will total over the 1999-2000 year an increase in \$38,000 for salaries for staff in my office.

I have effectively no meaningful way to absorb that amount of money. Although the budget looks like it could absorb it, when you eliminate from the budget salaries, rent, telephone service, things that are fundamental to operating the office, the amount of money left to absorb unanticipated expenses is somewhat over a hundred thousand dollars. It's not a large amount. And some of that money is necessary for what is now allocated to as well. I'm not certain that I could absorb \$38,000 without affecting programming and affecting the work we do in a visible way.

A consequence of staff obtaining . . . completing longer service with the office is that holiday eligibility increases from time to time. We don't generally replace, by way of casual cover-off, staff who are away on holidays, sick leave, unless we're a very long term, and so on. However, we have no alternative but to provide replacement coverage when the complaints analysts are away, and any absence of any duration of our receptionist/secretary in the Saskatoon office. The Regina office secretaries cover each other off.

All three of the positions which we normally provide cover-off for have increased their holidays, or in the third case have moved out of scope, which gives an ability to bank time off, which means there's an ability now to take time in blocks, larger blocks than there was previously. Where short absences we manage without; longer absences we can't. And for that reason I'm asking the board to consider an increase of \$3,000 to be attributed to casual relief for those staff.

However, I would indicate that if the board is willing to approve funding for the half-time complaints analyst in Saskatoon, the fact of having one and a half people there may affect the needs for relief there and this becomes less critical to me. So I think you can sort of tie those two together.

The request for the vehicle has to do with the uncertainty regarding the incumbent. My position expires in July of this year . . . no, July of next year. If my position is renewed — here's an enticement — this won't be an issue. But if it isn't, the incumbent in this office is entitled by virtue of the vehicle policy and tradition to a vehicle allowance or an assigned CVA (Central Vehicle Agency) vehicle.

I have not had either since 1995. I had an assigned vehicle prior to that. I think the office has to be in a position to provide that because it is one of the perks that goes with the position. If the new incumbent wishes to take advantage of that perk, I think the office needs the ability to provide it. And it's only for that reason that the vehicle allowance is requested.

Canadian Ombudsman Association is a new obligation, which after yesterday I may be starting to regret. It's turning out to be much more work than I thought it would be. But in any event I think that for now — over 25 years — there have been ombudsmen offices in almost all the provinces in Canada and in the territories. And we have been loosely affiliated. As of June of this year, we are now formally affiliated, the Canadian Ombudsmen Association exists.

I think it's important that all provincial ombudsmen, or all legislated ombudsmen, participate and promote this association, and it's for that reason I agreed to be on the executive. I think if I'm going to do that I should be able to do it in a meaningful way. I think the sum requested to assist me in doing that is not a large amount, and I leave to your discretion whether you think that's appropriate or necessary. But in that regard we have requested the sum of \$5,000.

The file server in the Saskatoon office, I think that the Children's Advocate will go into this in more detail because this comes as part of something which is larger for her, but it's an example of the kind of benefits which come from the affiliation between the offices — the ability to share resources and share space — and one of the things we share is the computer, hardware and software. The file server in Regina had virtually the same problem, perhaps for different reasons. It crashed last year just before the end of the fiscal year and required replacement. This one is apparently in a very similar circumstance; having had one crash, we realize we have no choice but to accommodate that.

And we've each requested half of the cost to enable us to make that replacement.

In terms of accommodations, as of yesterday I got what is my best present so far this year — SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) was able to renegotiate an extension to our lease so you need not refer to the alternative pressure of \$180,000, which is specified there. The provision of the renewal is quite unusual, but in any event we have a renewal for two years — correct me if I wrong — two years but we can leave after one year if certain things don't happen to our liking.

Is that a fair way to put it?

Mr. Knoll: — We're guaranteed for one year, for sure. And we have the right to increase space if needed over the next two, so there is potential for us to stay up to two years but we're guaranteed for one for certain. So that's kind of a relief.

Ms. Tomkins: — And there's no reason now to — we obviously can't predict — but there's no reason to assume that even after that year or two years that we will be required to move. The difficulty which we were having that led to the concern, and in fact for awhile there the likelihood that we would have to move within a matter of months, the circumstances that led to that have been removed. So we're now in a position no different than anyone else. Our lease expires in a year or two and we have no reason to think it won't be renewed in the normal course at that time.

And if it isn't we'll be unfortunately back asking about that, but for right now we're looking at a \$19,000 increase in rent for the next fiscal year and we would ask funding to cover that.

The problems in Saskatoon are not a problem for the 1999-2000 fiscal year. I've mentioned it in my submission and I believe the Children's Advocate has mentioned it in hers. Only I think — to use a colloquial expression — to give you fair warning, we don't see any alternative . . . but in the next budget submission I don't think there is any possibility that we will not be requesting to move the Saskatoon office entirely.

So we've provided that information only for your advance warning of what the circumstances are in that office.

In total then, our budget allocation for 1998-99 was \$1,262,000. Were this board to accept the reductions we've provided — and I assume that you will — and provide the funding we've requested, our total allocation for 1999-2000 would \$1,327,880, a 50 — I should know this number . . .

A Member: — 65

Ms. Tomkins: — About \$65,000 more than it was last year.

The Chair: — Thanks very much, Ms. Tomkins. Members of the board, you have before you then the request in the amount of \$1,327,880 related to the Provincial Ombudsman's office. We'll deal with that in its entirety before we move on to the second part of the budget proposal which is from the Children's Advocate office. And the floor is now open for questions or comments to the Ombudsman related to the budget proposal.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank . . . first of all I want to begin by thanking the Ombudsman for the presentation. The explanations were really quite straightforward and for someone who doesn't always find as much time as I'd like to find to spend on analyzing these kinds of things, it was very helpful for me in terms of the way you presented your pressures and areas where you see that you can decrease expenditures.

But in spite of the way you've simplified it, I'm going to ask for a little bit of clarification. In terms of the pressure that you indicate with respect to special major investigations that you

may want to pursue, I want to first of all begin by suggesting to you that the independence in your ability to work on those kinds of initiatives we feel is very important. So let me begin by that.

But I guess what I'm asking is in terms of the request, it's an amount of \$60,000 and you're requesting an Ombudsman assistant, clerical support, etc. Tell me what the process would be. Would you be envisioning hiring the assistant, the clerical support, installing the office equipment, and then utilizing that person when in fact a special initiative would be required. How do you see this component functioning under the \$60,000 expenditure or do you plan on not using it unless there is an issue that arises?

Ms. Tomkins: — I think based on past experience with adequate resources there would always be an issue arising. We make those decisions probably once a week. You know, should we do this? Well if we did, where will we get the people? What will we compromise the other way?

As to how we do it, you'll notice I think the way it's worded is I've asked for the equivalent of, because what I'm not certain of is whether I would at the outset fill that as a permanent position. I have, and this may not surprise you, something particular in mind that I would first dedicate these monies to and in doing that I think there is a possibility I would contract for some of the work. There is a possibility that I would assign existing staff and then backfill their position with the funding.

However I suspect that once that major project, which I anticipate would take at least a year in any event, was completed that I would likely end up filling it as a permanent position and I am quite confident we'd utilize it full-time or virtually full-time in doing major and special investigations.

It may be that . . . maybe I should say I would utilize the time or the position. It may not always be that person. If someone on my staff, my existing staff, has special expertise, has done you know a great number of complaints involving a certain issue, involving a certain agency, it might be logical to assign the special or own-motion investigation to that person and then use this person to backfill theirs.

But I do see those resources being dedicated on a full-time basis to special investigations, major investigations, and own-motion investigations. And maybe you could trust me to tell you and refund some of it to you next year if it doesn't work out.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I think what I'd be interested in knowing, in the past, how if you had an issue that's facing you as you suggest you do now, how would you fund that? Would you look to your internal operations to see if you could find some flexibility in some areas?

Ms. Tomkins: — We do that now. But what happens is because we have 2,500 complaints coming in the door every year there are . . . I'm not suggesting there are no own-motion investigations being done in my office, there are. They're what I would call special or big investigations. It's the really major stuff that we simply don't have the resources to do.

But even though smaller ones, which are still more time consuming and more resource bearing than an ordinary

investigation, those are done using existing staff. But the consequence of that is of course they're not doing something else. And that's part of how we got in the position that I was in last year when I asked for the 10 . . . (inaudible) . . . people.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — You're backlogged and . . .

Ms. Tomkins: — If they're doing the systemic and the own-motion investigations, they're not doing the public complaints that are in their file cabinet drawer. It's that simple. There's only so many people, so much time, and there's this much work. And fortunately there's this much work and this much people.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes, which brings me I think to another question that I wanted to ask of you. In terms of the backlog you indicate that you've greatly reduced and I understand it's to a manageable level now . . .

Ms. Tomkins: — I think so.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — In your opinion. Can you give us some idea in terms of the numbers, what you were looking at a year ago and what you're looking at now?

Mr. Knoll: — I guess about a year ago September we were looking at investigations that were ongoing but not completed. So many of those would be in process but many of them would also be waiting their turn in the queue to get started. So they were assigned to an investigator and ready to get going, but there may be a little bit of work done or there may be very little.

At September of '97 we were looking at just over 200 of those investigations that were what we call incomplete. As of December 1 we reduced that number to 134. And right now we still see ourselves having those four months with the two extra temporary people on staff that I guess we're hoping by the end of March we might be down to a hundred or fewer.

Now that represents a lot of work in progress as well. So it's not as if there's a hundred files where there's nothing done on. I'm sure each investigator is working on 10 to 15 files at any given time. So if we get our total down to a hundred or less, we're probably looking at most of those files having some work done and being actively worked on. So it's a substantial improvement.

Ms. Tomkins: — It's an improvement. When I started with this office there were not uncommonly files that sat for a year before they got started. So to us this is extremely positive. Thanks Murray.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I note in your budget comparison on page 10 you're requesting a budget allocation for 1999-2000, 1.327880 million, slightly over the allocation of 1.262 million '98-99. I look at your annualized comparison between '98-99: '98-99 being 1.150880 and 1999-2000 annualized to 1.317880. I think one of the concerns that I have, if we look at the different arms of government throughout the piece whether it be your branch or others, there are always very, very good reasons for requests for annualized increases and sometimes just one, you know, one-time expenditures. It's a trend that continues to put pressure on the government overall

in terms of the amount that we're spending delivering services.

So I'm sure you can understand that it's very much a concern for us, and I know in the scheme of five and a half billion dollars of revenue, 150,000 or 160,000 is not a large amount. But when you add that together with all of the other arms, it becomes somewhat problematic in terms of trying to maintain a zero growth government expenditure if that's possible. Or if anyone can do that on a sustained basis.

I guess what I would ask you if we were, if the board were to ask you to . . . what in all of your requests — and this is maybe an unfair question, but I think in terms of your priorities it's important for us to understand — if we were to ask just on the budget allocation . . . if we were to ask you the differential between '98-99 and '99-2000 of the \$65,880 in increased request, what areas do you think you would be able to reduce your expenditures in the least — how do I word this — that wouldn't impact on the operations of your . . .

Ms. Tomkins: — A decrease within existing allocations or which of these requests would I forego first?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I think which of those requests would be least harmful to the operations of your branch?

Ms. Tomkins: — I don't think that's a difficult question but I'm not sure you'll like the approach I'll take to answering it.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — No I'm . . .

Ms. Tomkins: — The easiest ones to forfeit are the smaller ones, in terms of dollar amounts. I'm not suggesting I could not find \$3,000 of my existing budget for an expense; that wouldn't be true. So the easiest things to forfeit would be the vehicle, the Ombudsman association money, the casual relief — Deb, cover your ears — the file server. I would say those are things that we would do without or find some way to cover or some way to compromise.

The others, although they've even been stated in the submission as enhancing service and they are as compared to what we do now, they're services that at the end of the day I am legislatively mandated to provide and I don't think we're providing. And so . . . it's an enhancement in this sense of the word but it's not an enhancement in a mandated or an ordinary sense or a legislative sense of the word.

So that would be my answer, is I can absorb small amounts easier than I can absorb big amounts. Some of those things, if they're not funded, simply will not happen. I don't think we will . . . I don't know. We have to look at it after we receive your decision. I think it's unlikely we would hire a half-time complaints analyst without funding to do that. We wouldn't undertake the major and systemic on the basis that I'm proposing without funding to do that.

We would obviously find a way to cover salary increases and rent increases. Those are so substantial, I suspect there would be an impact on programming — visible and major. I can't be more specific than that.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — No, that's fine. So the impact then,

you're saying, would be basically programming and the deliverability to programming. And would it then . . . Would we be looking at an increase in the backlog?

Ms. Tomkins: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — So we'd be then facing a similar situation to what we did last year when you were asking for two people to deal with that?

Ms. Tomkins: — Or I can choose not to do major and systemic investigations which I think is an improper thing for me to do. You might be quite happy if I did.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — When I look at this, I think one of the areas that sort of jumped out at me was whether or not we could look at the 60,000 that you had looked at, that you had identified for major and systemic investigations, assuming that there may not be a role for and which might not have an application for that immediately, but I see by your comments today that you feel there is an area where you would require that.

Just tell me about . . . in terms of the history of your operations, would you find that it would be a one-time investigation of that nature that you would require sort of on an annual basis or do you get sometimes two, sometimes none?

Ms. Tomkins: — More the latter. Although it's a most interesting part of my work. This kind of work is generally in my discretion. I could notice something in the newspaper yesterday and say now that's something that someone should look into. I could notice that I've had numbers of complaints about a same area of an agency or a same program although they're not all identical, but that start to lead you to say maybe we should look at that program.

I'd don't see as likely we're going to run out of things that we think require a review. The difficulty for us now is deciding what to do and more importantly what to forego and we have those opportunities. I also could say this. I view this submission — and I don't think you're going to agree with me about this — as a Chevrolet budget as opposed to the Volkswagen or the Cadillac. If we want to look at a Volkswagen on this major systemic investigation's issue, if we had the funding for the assistant and a little bit extra for allocation depending on the nature of the major investigation, on a very major investigation I see there being public reports and perhaps public consultation. That's where the \$6,000 for advertising reports comes in. On some of them there won't be.

On something very major I can see wanting to bring in on a short-term basis, clerical support. On others we won't need that, so I would say that that's the Chevrolet. We can make that a Volkswagen, but the Volkswagen still needs the driver and that's the Ombudsman assistant; and the Ombudsman assistant's salary plus a little extra . . . we'll find a way.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Not wanting to profile these kinds of investigations, but I guess the reason I'm questioning this area is because I guess if it's allocated, I'm sure there are many, many things that you could look at, and there may be . . . if this number was increased to 180,000 it would certainly expand you

know, the depth and the breadth and the kinds of issues that you'd be looking at.

And I guess what I saw was if there was a need and a very dramatic need for this kind of activity that we would be available for a request for a special warrant, but then again on the other hand understanding that you don't want to be profiling any specific . . .

Ms. Tomkins: — And another difficulty is if I were to come and say I'd like to do a major investigation of X, and this board says no money. So what you have in effect said to me is I can take it to mean you're telling me that I ought not to investigate X. Or if I'm going to do it, you're not going to help me and that's exactly what I think — this is the philosophical thing — I think that it's not proper for any of us to be put in that situation.

There are cases where for example, the legislature can refer matters to our office and that has happened, and in fact the Children's Advocate foster care review comes about through that mechanism as well.

Right now there have been times when within our office we've gotten . . . wonder if they're thinking of that. But at the same time, we think that there's almost a sense of, gee I hope not. Because we don't have the ability to do it, or do it quickly, or do it thoroughly without compromising other stuff.

I think really what I'm saying at the end of the day is trust me. You decide, you have to decide obviously what this government can afford to fund, but I think as to what I'd do with it in that sense, I'm asking you to trust me and I hope that you're prepared to do that.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And I think we concur with your . . .

Ms. Tomkins: — Okay, thank you.

The Chair: — Thanks, Mr. Lautermilch.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Ombudsman, it's almost a misnomer there, should it maybe be Madam Ombudsperson, in that term but we'll leave it at Ombudsman. I appreciate the format . . .

Ms. Tomkins: — I won't tell you what I'm called at home.

Mr. McLane: — We won't tell either. I appreciate the format you presented your proposal in, quite easy to understand and the numbers kind of speak for themselves.

The one thing that does stick out at me — jumps out and is kind of terrifying — is the number of complaints against government, the increases to that. And certainly in my mind that's a symptom of a big, uncaring government.

I guess in order for me to try and decide if the money's being well spent within your department by you and what you're asking for, there's one area that I'm a little bit concerned with and that is to do with the complaints against government.

In my short experience as a MLA (Member of the Legislative

Assembly) I've had a few complaints that have gone through your office. And the latest one that I've had is certainly one that gave me some cause for concern. That was a complaint within the Labour Department by a gentleman in my constituency in which the Ombudsman, yourself, sided with that constituent of mine in that he was right in his claim. However the Department of Justice and the Minister of Justice decided that that didn't seem to matter.

I guess what I'm getting at is, of the number of these complaints that you deal with against government and rule one way or the other, and specifically when you rule with the complainant, how many of those complaints are resolved then that the government then does come back and say okay, yes we are wrong we will change our mind. Do you have statistics on that? Do you have some sort of a percentage that that happens?

And I'm hoping that you're going to tell me that my instances that I've had with my constituents are unique in that they are not resolved in the end to the satisfaction to the people that are complaining. But because government is big and all powerful that they say well, you maybe have the agreement of the Ombudsman's Office but we're government and we're not going to consider that as, I guess as a rule for us to follow. Is there a certain number that go that way that you know of?

Ms. Tomkins: — I'm not going to get involved in the other part of your question okay? As to complaints where we make a recommendation, where we believe that there was an unfairness and we make a recommendation to government, I haven't run the numbers recently but when I do they're always within a certain range and it's about 75 to 80 per cent of the time the recommendations are accepted.

Mr. McLane: — Are accepted?

Ms. Tomkins: — Accepted and implemented. Now to be honest or to be fair there's a little fudging. We say we think you should do these three things and government says, oh we'll do these two but we can't do the third or we won't do the third. I have to make a call whether to accept it or not, I'll call that accepted. But we get substantial implementation of our recommendations 75 to 80 per cent of the time.

Mr. McLane: — Are there any mechanisms that should be in place possibly to ensure that that number becomes higher, that it gets up to 100 per cent? Have you any thoughts on that and is there a cost attached to something like that?

Ms. Tomkins: — You are that mechanism. The whole premise of the Ombudsman's office is that I'm not an elected person. I am not a judge. I am put in place by the legislature which has said — I'm starting to sound preachy here — which has said, when it passed The Ombudsman Act, as it then was: we as the legislature, we as government, want to ensure that people are treated not just lawfully but fairly. And there is an implicit recognition that those are different things, and it's actually explicit.

What my role is, is to identify for members of the legislature situations where in the view of myself and my office, government has not acted fairly. It then falls for the legislature to do something about that. The legislature and its members can

decide that they simply disagree with me and they don't think what happened was unfairness at all. Or the legislature can decide that there was unfairness but it's not going to be rectified for whatever reason and then the members of the legislature defend their position to the members of the public.

And in that way the accountability for the decisions and the accountability for the treatment that people receive remains where I think it belongs which is with the members of the legislature. If I were a judge, it falls to me. But that's not my accountability. My accountability is to you and then the big accountability is the members, accountability to the members of the public. And that's the whole premise of how Ombudsman works and that's why I don't make decisions; I only make recommendations because if I make decisions, I remove that accountability from you.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you. On page 6 in your ... Ombudsman assistant. Under the items that total up to \$60,000 there, you have the third line is advertising and reports. Could you tell me what that might entail?

Ms. Tomkins: — What that ... What I'm thinking of there is in some investigations of a very major nature, we might do public consultation for example. And so there would be advertising ... however that's done. It might be done by written submissions; we might prepare some kind of an issue paper that's then distributed and responses obtained and advertising of that. That would be a really major investigation. In some major investigations — in any kind of investigation — we have the option and will occasionally do a public report. When we do that, we produce a thousand, two thousand copies of something. There's a cost associated with that. But that would not occur in every case.

My experience has been that this office works more effectively when it works in confidence and therefore with the confidence of the people we need to co-operate with us. But there are issues of sufficient importance that they deserve public attention and public discussion and those will be disclosed through public reports, through annual reports, through reports to the legislature. And that's what I was thinking of in putting that portion of that submission together.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you.

Ms. Tomkins: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you very much, Mr. McLane.

Mr. Heppner: — Good afternoon. I appreciate this opportunity to ask a few questions. On page 3 of your report, I just want to underline what Mr. McLane said. There's five years of statistics given for and against government where the complaints lie, and '98 is the first year in which government takes over half of the complaints. And I think that's a bit of a frightening commentary especially if it's underlined by what you said that eventually it comes back to the legislators to make sure this doesn't continue happening. So I think there's a major responsibility for all of us legislators to look at what's happening that that has increased to that extent.

Over on page 4, there's a comparison there of Saskatoon office

and Regina office and the Saskatoon office — this is on the top paragraph — has handled almost 40 per cent more complaints than the Regina office. Is this a traditional thing? Is this unique and new to this year or what . . .

Ms. Tomkins: — It's not new to this year. We first noticed it starting last year and unfortunately — or maybe fortunately — you weren't a member of the board then. But we discussed it last year at this discussion as well.

We started to see it last year and I mentioned last year that if this continued I was going to have a problem because these women were stretched to their limits as it was. It's continued this year.

One of the things we're considering looking at — this is the kind of thing I might be talking about when I talk about a major and systemic investigation, although it would be for our own purposes in one sense but for public purpose is another — one of the things we might want to do is try to sort out why that is. Are there certain parts of certain departments where more of those complaints are coming from, that maybe we find there's a problem with a particular regional office of a particular department. Or maybe it's just the way the numbers fall. But yes, it's increased.

Last year we had more in Saskatoon than Regina — enough that it concerned us and enough that it was mentioned here, but nowhere near the numbers we have now or the disproportionality that we have now. We're up to 40 per cent difference.

Mr. Heppner: — And the Saskatoon office covers everything basically north of Saskatoon?

Ms. Tomkins: — About Davidson.

Mr. Heppner: — If someone phones your office and the complaint ends up being with the federal government, how do you handle that?

Ms. Tomkins: — The general rule is that we try very hard not to say to anybody, sorry, we don't do that. What we try to do, and I think do 99.9 per cent of the time . . . the complaints analysts are there to receive all complaints at their initial approach to the office, whether in person or by phone or whatever. And these women have a phenomenal knowledge of resources as a result of that.

So that where someone comes or complains against the federal government, generally they will find out through their own making contact with officials in the agency, the federal agency involved, find out where recourse is for this person if they don't already know, and then be able to refer the member of the public and say, we can't help but who you might want to call is so and so and here is their number or there is this agency that hears appeals or whatever.

So we're always, almost always, I think always able to give a referral, and preferably by contact name and phone number and so on. So we'll do some exploration on those to find out what the appropriate referral is.

Mr. Heppner: — Just a minute ago, when it was talking about the 40 per cent that's there, that has increased fairly fast and fairly recently, do you have a view as to when you'll sort of be able to identify why, you know, it has that kind of an increase — like is it geographical, is it offices, is it whatever — to sort of say we've identified what it is?

Ms. Tomkins: — I would hope that by the end of this, of '99, we will have looked at it. I don't know if we will find an answer. The answer may be more people are phoning us from that part of the province and there is no answer.

But in terms of looking at things to try and identify if there is an identifiable problem or a concentration of those complaints from certain areas, from certain departments, from certain parts of certain departments, we're hoping to look at that over the course of the next year. But I can't predict we'll have an answer at the end because it's quite possible there is no answer. We're hoping there is.

The Chair: — I have no one further to speak on this.

Mr. Kowalsky: — I just want to ask you about what your goals might be with respect to a public . . . publicity and what it is that you would like members of the public to know, if they don't already know, or members . . . Or is it targeted to specific audiences or would you be targeting government workers? What's a kind of a thing you would like to accomplish in that budget portion?

Ms. Tomkins: — We have sort of three main things, messages, that I think . . . certainly two of them we've always been trying to get out, and three for the last number of years in any event. And they go to all of the people that you mentioned.

One of the things obviously, is we want people to know that we're here and what we do, how we do it, what an ombudsman is, and that sort of thing. And that goes to the general public but also is a message that I believe we need to deliver to government employees and, with due respect, to members of the legislature.

I think there's very little understanding because legislative officers . . . There's only five now I think. We have an unusual status, unusual employment situations, but which are very important to the work we do. And understanding what a legislative officer is and then what an ombudsman is, is necessary to understand what we do and why it's effective and why it's reliable. And why it's not just for the public but also for government. So that's one message.

The other message that we've put particular focus on in recent years is the issue or information about what is fairness. What is fairness when my office talks about fairness which isn't the same thing when our kids say, you know, you're not being fair. There are defined concepts as to what constitutes fairness. And that's a message we want to deliver to the general public, but primarily to government employees. And we see that as preventative. If government employees come to better understand what fairness is from our perspective, then presumably we'll be able to develop policies, administer policies, and deal with people in a way that meets those criteria.

For example, we have now for two years taught . . . I think it's a full day at each semester at the correctional workers program at Parkland — is it Parkland, I always get them mixed up — the Prince Albert community college, which is really valuable to us because you'll notice, if you look at annual report statistics, that a huge proportion of complaints we receive come from inmates at the correctional centre. And the numbers of those complaints, like in any other department, the numbers of those complaints are substantiated. But a lot of it has to do with once people understand what it is we're looking for and why we're looking at it, then government can change the way it administers its programs. So that's our second message.

And our third message that we're just now embarking on and it's not something we've focused a lot of attention on in the past, is public education to members of the public about how to deal with problems; about how to deal with complaints. Simple stuff like don't be rude and yell at the person you've phoned, which a lot of people don't understand that you don't get anywhere doing that. Take your documents with you when you go down to meet with the person. If you're going to ask to speak to their supervisor, the kinds of approaches you might make, who you might make them to. And maybe a little bit of self-help so that people aren't coming to my office to do things that really they're well able to do themselves.

Some people are coming to my office because they can't get a hold of someone in government and so we make a phone call and get them to phone them back. That's a very bad use of our time. Valuable to the person who phoned us who can't get their phone call returned but it's not a valuable use of our resources — or not the best. So we'd like to do some work with vulnerable groups who have been identified to help them to take a stab at solving their own problems before they come to us. If all of this works, we will be unnecessary some day.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you. It sounds to me that so many of your cases could be handled elsewhere as well. And so through public relations and through a sort of an education campaign you might be able to be free to do the work that you really have to do that's important for you to do.

Ms. Tomkins: — Frankly I think it's a long-term . . . being fair, it's a long-term project but ultimately if those efforts are successful, there should be less work coming in our door and more time to dedicate to the work that does come, and having the more serious stuff — or I shouldn't say serious, that's the wrong word — but the more complicated work in the office, the more straight forward things having people dealing with them themselves or people not doing them in the first place.

Mr. Kowalsky: — I have one more question. First of all I believe that this is a very important office.

Ms. Tomkins: — We agree on that.

Mr. Kowalsky: — That members of the general public have to have . . . feel that there's somebody is willing to go to bat for them against a monolith government no matter what government it is that is in power or when.

And so I too think that when I see a statistical increase I want to know what the reasons are behind the statistical increase so that

if there is something that government can do, that government is in a position to take corrective action. Would it be under your jurisdiction to provide an analysis of why there's an increase so that it may be looked at, and say, hey, here's something that maybe can be corrected and to decrease. Would that be within your jurisdiction?

Ms. Tomkins: — Well I think I could do that as something that interests me as well. Why I hesitate is because I don't off the top of my head have any idea how one would determine that.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Well for example . . .

Ms. Tomkins: — Other than in the sense as I alluded to earlier if we notice that we get recurring complaints from the same area about the same thing then there's a problem. If we can fix that problem those complaints stop.

I think part of the increase has to do with the fact that people I think are generally more aware now not necessarily about us, although I hope that too, but they're more aware . . . you've all heard too, people far more commonly talking about their rights and what they're entitled to. People I think are more willing now to seek recourse than to accept things certainly than 20 years ago when the prevailing belief was you can't fight city hall. I don't think that you hear that anymore and I don't think people think that. I think people think there're supposed to now . . .

Part of it has to do I expect with the world changing and more government; and I don't mean that critically or not critically, it's just a reality. There is more government now than there was 20 years ago or 50 years ago for good and for bad probably. So that affects our caseload.

It could have to do with our public education efforts so far. But I'm not clear when you ask if I would or could find out why; I'm not sure how I would find that out.

Mr. Kowalsky: — You see in our own office I know that a lot of the concerns that come in are the result of some kind of change. You know a new program is introduced or a program is altered or changed or cancelled. And I was wondering whether, you know, you were able to assess it maybe as a result of program changes?

Ms. Tomkins: — We could assess parts of it against that. We've had situations as you allude to where new programs come in that will affect numbers of people and we anticipate increased complaints. We plan for it and they don't come. And we'll never know why.

Mr. Kowalsky: — It's not an exact science.

Ms. Tomkins: — It's not at all. You've have seen more of this on a day-to-day basis . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Oh yes. I'm sorry, Murray is just saying that we can certainly identify where the increases are coming from because we break our stats down by departments and divisions within departments. So we can tell that we've got X per cent more complaints from Social Services or Justice or Highways. But as to why more people are phoning, unless there's a clear pattern I don't know if we can identify that.

The Chair: — Having no one else on the speaker's list here I refer you to page 11 where the Ombudsman's request for 1999-2000 budget is in the amount of \$1,327,880. If a member of the board would like to advise me of the motion you wish to recommend I can recommend to you the motion.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'll move:

That in consideration of the thoughtful and frank presentation and the willingness to continue being economical as time rolls on, that I would recommend approval of this budget.

The Chair: — If I may recommend to you words for that motion then, Ms. Crofford:

That the 1999-2000 estimates of the Provincial Ombudsman be approved as submitted in the amount \$1,327,880 and that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Is that moved by Ms. Crofford? Is there a seconder? Mr. Whitmore.

Is there further discussion? Those in favour? Opposed? And that's carried unanimously.

And Ms. Tomkins and Mr. Knoll on behalf of the board would you please accept our appreciation for the services that you do for the people of Saskatchewan and for the members of the full Legislative Assembly. And as well our best wishes for the Christmas season and the new year. Thank you very much.

Ms. Tomkins: — I certainly will accept those and extend our best wishes and our appreciation for your listening to us today and for your, perhaps, generosity and trust in providing the funding requested. Thank you all.

The Chair: — Thank you. Members of the board while the Children's Advocate comes forward, I will refer you then to the second half of the report you have before you and we'll proceed to part number two.

Now if members have the document in front of you, I want to introduce to you, again, officials who are back for the third time since the board has begun reviewing the budget of the Children's Advocate — the Saskatchewan Children's Advocate, Dr. Deborah Parker-Loewen. And also from the office, the administrator from the Children's Advocate office, Bernie Rodier. My goodness! My pronunciation impresses me. I don't know if it impresses anybody else.

These are familiar faces to all members of course, except for Mr. Heppner who's joining us for the first time in the review of this budget. And I will now turn the floor over to the Children's Advocate for a presentation.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and members of the board. I appreciate once again the opportunity to present my budget request to you.

Nineteen ninety-eight has been another year of significant change in the Children's Advocate office and we continue to

learn a lot from Saskatchewan people. I am daily humbled by the trust and confidence that so many people have in the advocacy work of our office. It really is a humbling experience.

The growth in our office, the new challenges that we've experienced, and the new responsibilities that we've undertaken in the past year have continued to emphasize that with increased public awareness and understanding of the importance of our children for our future, the pressures on our office have certainly increased as well. I continued to feel honoured to have the opportunity to represent children in this role as Children's Advocate.

The budget document you have reflects the changing nature and the continued expanding role of the work of our office. You'll see on page 13 that the number of individual concerns raised in the office continues to increase. The child advocate assistant that we hired in 1998 has been able to assist most callers quite promptly at the front end. Actually, similarly to the complaints analyst that the Ombudsman just discussed with you.

However, we are experiencing significant pressure in terms of the general administration of our office. We've undertaken several major initiatives in this last year. All of them require administrative support in a rather unorthodox, in some ways, and certainly complex, nature.

The Child Death Advisory Committee that I chair is functioning well now and is working on some specific goals. At this time we're examining the processes used in Saskatchewan to review child deaths. We've identified some areas of inconsistency and lack of clarity and we've been able to now look at some options for improvement in that area. Individual child deaths are being independently reviewed in my office and we're in various stages of concluding several of those reviews and will make appropriate information public as it becomes available.

The provincial youth delegation which was funded last year, helped through the \$8,000 allocated, has now been established. We have 23 young people from La Loche to Estevan and several points in between who are working together to identify opportunities for young people so that they can have a more positive and active role in decision making.

These are very dynamic, very passionate, interested young people who are working hard on this youth delegation and they're looking at ways to have more inclusiveness with regards to young people from various Saskatchewan experiences. These 23 young people are from farming communities, from the North, from foster care, some of them have lived on the street, some of them are from inner city, some have been incarcerated, and some are concerned about sexual identity so that we have a real mix of young people with a lot of common concerns.

The review of the needs of children living in foster care that was funded again in this fiscal year has now begun. A review team has been contracted and a multi-sectoral panel of about 25 stakeholders has been formed and we've also initiated the research in that area. We're increasing our presence in the North, in fact one of my staff attended a youth camp at Ile-a-la-Crosse this summer. It was a very exciting opportunity to connect with a number of young people who are from northern Saskatchewan.

We continue to advocate for practice, policy, and legislative change to ensure that children are treated with dignity and respect. This is the systemic part of our work. Several systemic issues such as concerns we have about services and programs for youth in conflict with the law, school discipline policies, or children and youth having access to administrative appeals continue to be the focus of our systemic advocacy work, and all of this activity is conducted in the legislation, legislative responsibilities as defined in the Act.

Given all of this I have prepared a budget which I believe reflects the continued change in my office and I'll just highlight the pressures for you and then welcome your questions. On page 15, in terms of the annualized budget from last year and the project and one-time funding, we are also going to have a reduction of \$98,000 in our funding this year as a result of the decrease to the project and one-time funding allocated last year.

The increased costs that we're requesting for this year are again the salary costs that have been required as a result of applying the staffing requirements that are really out of our control. The request we are making for increased office support arises from a number of changes that have occurred between my office and that of the Ombudsman. Up until this past year the Ombudsman's office has carried a significant amount of the administrative work of the office including the human resources management, the financial management.

But as we continue to add more complexity to the administrative pressures of our office, we have now consolidated those administrative activities which actually were previously done primarily by Mr. Knoll in the Children's Advocate office and we now are requesting some additional program support assistance in order to manage the administrative work at the office which would account for an annualized increase for '99-2000 of \$27,500.

As the Provincial Ombudsman mentioned, we're not requesting accommodation increases for this year, however, just wanting to note for your information that we are in a very tight situation in terms of accommodation in our Saskatoon office. We share space, as you know, with the Provincial Ombudsman, and between our two offices we have shifted a number of things to try to accommodate mostly I would say the pressures from the Children's Advocate's side.

We've now converted our only meeting room to accommodate the four members of the child and foster care review which has resulted in a whole series of other crowding. Our goal is to attempt to manage in the space that we have until our lease expires. And we are just wanting to raise that for your awareness.

We're requesting an increase for telephone and travel costs of 5,700 for telephones and 7,000 for travel costs. These are linked to providing a service throughout the province which requires us to travel extensively out to see children in their communities, within their families or in the institutions or other residential programs within which they reside. And we've been required to maintain our vehicles at a rate that increases the costs.

I also have noted that there are now six Children's Advocates in Canada, and we've formed a Canadian Council of Provincial

Children's Advocates, an association. Right now this association meets once a year, just the provincial advocates, and a second time a year when some of our staff also attend the meetings. We have used those national opportunities to raise concerns impacting on children of a national or a federal nature, and requesting some . . . an annualized increase for that portion of our work of \$7,300.

The computer needs is an interesting question, and I guess I just want to have some discussion with you about that. In last year's budget we were allocated one-time funds of \$20,000 for the purpose of developing a tracking system which would more effectively meet the information needs in our office. We based that \$20,000 request on a preliminary estimate which we had received from the computer companies. And then this spring when we began to work on that, we had a requirement study completed which gave us more detailed information.

Well it appears that the hardware base from which we operate wouldn't actually support the technological change required to increase the tracking system requirements. And so we've had a number of discussions and dilemmas in our office with regards to this tracking system and where we can go with that or how we should develop our computer needs in the office.

As the Provincial Ombudsman noted, in addition, the existing hardware we have is aging, which is requiring us to look at an upgrade or actually a replacement to the file server which we currently use, share with the Ombudsman, and that is a \$20,000 expense which the Ombudsman and our office would be pleased to share.

The tracking system requirement study has indicated that we're looking at around \$40,000 to actually do the tracking system change and some of the hardware change that's required.

So what we're proposing is that we would utilize the remaining \$20,000 from the '98-99 allocation to do the hardware upgrade that's required. And then we're requesting a one-time expenditure for '99-2000 of \$52,000 which would be used for purchasing our half of the file server, if you want to put it that way, and do the actual conversion to the information tracking system plus do the Year 2000 changes which are required. So there's sort of a variety of pieces to that computer part but I hope I've explained that to you and I certainly welcome your questions.

Just to move along. The child death work that we're involved with, last year we were allocated, annualized \$40,000. We continue to receive notifications of specific child deaths and we've undertaken to review those deaths. I think we knew last year that the \$40,000 request would be an initial one and we're just feeling our way through that because this is kind of a new process in our office.

And we now think that we have actually utilized the \$40,000 to convert some part of our existing staff and to backfill but it's not working real well. So what we proposing is that we would employ one full-time person who's job it would be to coordinate the work with regards to those deaths and where required, to coordinate a multidisciplinary team which would do more extensive investigations as required.

So the request that I'm making is for a full-time position which would result in an increase of \$57,800. And the \$40,000 that we currently have in our budget would be then used to cover the remaining costs which our experience now, a year later, is that those other costs can be fairly substantial because if a multidisciplinary review is required such as legal counsel, such as a pediatric pathologist consultation, these things require us to pay fees. And then if a public report is produced, we're required also to print and distribute those. So there are travel costs, other administrative costs, consultation fees and printing costs, which we believe we can manage from the current \$40,000.

The other area that we're currently involved in and requires another explanation is the review of the needs of children living in foster care. This is a review that was requested in September 1997 by the Minister of Social Services. We received the funds and in July of 1998 we began the review.

After doing consultations with key stakeholders it would appear that attempting to complete this review by March would limit the inclusion of a number of people who feel that they have a strong investment in how the recommendations would be formulated.

And so what I'm proposing is that we would do this review in two phases. And I've given you a fair amount of detail in the budget submission with regards to the terms of reference and how that proposed review would operate. And I don't think I'll take the time to go into that right now but if you have some specific questions I'd be certainly pleased to answer those.

In essence we're requesting an additional \$24,000 over last year's \$75,000 to complete this second phase which would give us a broader-based community input into the review of the needs of children living in foster care.

The final request is for additional funds to be allocated to the youth facilitation, youth participation activities of our office. I hear repeatedly, not just from young people but from community organizations that I meet with and speak to regularly, that young people want to have more of a voice in decision making, planning, policy development.

And our office is very interested in taking a proactive role in that and assisting young people to have a forum through which that kind of work can be coordinated, networked, and through that I think promoting an increased understanding of young people and some of the issues that face young people today.

I think there's young people — particularly young people involved in high-risk activities — have a number of struggles and challenges, including an image issue. And the youth delegation are quite interested in assisting members of the public to understand some of the complexities facing youth today.

I've given some indication of the stresses and pressures on our office. And just in summary we're requesting . . . There would be a \$98,000 reduction from the overall funding allocated last year, and we're requesting a total annualized increase of \$154,400 and one-time expenditures of \$151,200 for a total increase of \$305,600 for the fiscal year 1999-2000, which would mean the total budget request for the Children's

Advocate's office in 1999-2000 would be \$990,600.

So with that I'd welcome your questions.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'm going to have to bustle through mine because I'm going to have to go at 3. Thank you for your presentation.

I want to maybe start a little bit . . . And it's maybe not the best place to start but because I'm on Treasury Board as well, I feel like I must say this. When we look at the chart on page 13, I think it's kind of illustrative of the problems that exist in a number of areas from the point of view that good ideas just seem to grow legs. And last year when we looked at these budgets — I think with a generous view to doing the work that needed to be done — kind of hoping that that line might not move in such a steady march upwards.

I'm not in any way diminishing the importance of the things you're bringing forward today but just cautioning that one of the places that we're coming to now in our current budget process is you start to do the trade-offs between the direct service departments and the oversight departments and say, how much of the problem could we prevent with direct service and how much will we prevent by reviewing how well the service that you can't afford is provided. So I mean you do get into that bit of a trade-off, and I know that you're conscientious about that in that you wouldn't ask if you didn't think it was important.

I want to commend you on the children's council recommendation . . . that youth be more involved in implementing the intent of the children's council recommendation, that youth be more involved in decision making. That was certainly a strong message that we got from them. And I think there's other areas where we'll see this happening and I think that's a good thing. We spend too much time talking about the bad kids and not enough time letting the kids help to find some of the solutions.

On the child death review, I want to ask a little bit about that. Now I may have been thinking wrongly about this thing when it began, but it was my understanding that one of the purposes of doing the review would be not necessarily to create a new system but to improve the way child deaths were reviewed — whether it be by the various people that are involved in the multidisciplinary team . . .

With your experience now, is what you're really determining is that improvement of the existing components of the system aren't quite adequate to address this question and a more continuing standing committee is needed.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — We're doing two things with regards to child deaths and it may be a little confusing because they're two separate responsibilities. One is chairing this provincial Child Death Advisory Committee which is multi-sectoral and the coroner and I, although I chaired, he and I really co-chaired. And that is the committee that's looking at the processes and how child deaths are looked at and what can we do.

A Member: — How are they reporting.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — How are they reporting. We're not looking at any individual deaths at that committee. We're strictly looking at process within Saskatchewan and that includes police, that includes college of physician and surgeons, that includes independent Indian child and family services agencies. And there are some specific gaps within how those deaths are reviewed that the . . . that that advisory committee has identified and we're working on that.

The other piece that our office is doing and which is what I've requested the funds for is, we receive notifications from the Department of Social Services on individual child deaths under certain categories in relation to their policy. And we have now, I believe, an obligation to independently review those. For the most part, the Department of Social Services does an internal review of the death and provides us with that report. What we're experiencing is that their internal reports are excellent, that they've done a thorough review and they have made themselves some recommendations for change. And our job to, for the most part, is to provide an independent look at that. And what we believe our responsibility is is to verify the information and do our job as an independent officer.

In some situations where there are questions or concerns, a small percentage of them, we would then be going forward with a more complex review of the child's death such as we have done and have publicly released. We don't see that happening very often but the work that I'm requesting a person to do is coordinating the information that we have. To date we have over 60 deaths that we have information on and it requires someone to review those files, look at the internal reports, and determine if there is something further that would be needed in terms of this independent eye looking at it.

That is something new that our province has now added and I think commendably, in terms of how child deaths are looked at. That the Department of Social Services has requested this of my office I think is a sincere effort to be increasingly accountable with regards to those deaths and to look at things that could prevent future deaths from occurring. Does that answer your question?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — You know the point I'm getting at is just whether we're duplicating work or whether we're doing, in fact, work that adds to the benefit of what it is we're doing. And I guess it would not be unlike a discussion with the auditor when he's auditing the audited reports of other companies. So it's really not intended to question the value of the work, just to ensure that we're not heading down a road of duplicating an effort.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — It is a form of audit and we have decided, and we've had a great deal of discussion in our office about this, that it would be irresponsible for me to sign off a file and say it's closed without doing some external review. That to me is the audit function. It would be like the auditor not looking at the counts, you know. We feel a need to do that. There may well be some duplication. It is another check and that's what we're offering from our office.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Okay. I'll move along from there. The foster review — I mean that's a process that's on the go and it's just become a little more detailed than it was and involving a

few more stakeholders. That's fairly straightforward I think.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Yes.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The computer thing concerns me a little bit. It strikes one as a bit large in proportion to the size of the office and the volume. But when you're tracking, you're tracking the progress of files through the system?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Well it's really an information tracking system. So the close to a thousand files that we would open in our office this year, we would enter them into that system and that we need to cross-reference them because there's a child, there's often parents, there's often two or three government departments or agencies involved. There's more than one issue for each of those files most frequently. And so we're keeping information on the individual advocacy files in our office.

And I agree. We struggle with this whole computer information piece in our office. However the best advice that we've now received is that we need to convert to an access system and it would require some specialized change to that access system; and then we should be able to proceed for several years and expand as our information needs change.

The current system we have is an adaptation of the Ombudsman's system and doesn't really permit us to do any changes or expansion to the information that we're currently gathering. We can't for example get the age of the child off of the file because that was not information the Ombudsman tracked, that's not information they require.

And so I struggle with this one too; and I'm presenting to you the best estimate that we've received from the requirement study that we . . .

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Let me ask the question a different way. If you didn't do this, what's the worst thing that would happen? You'd not be able to do a statistical analysis or you would not be able to find a file you were looking for or what's the downside of not proceeding with that?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — I think the downside is that we wouldn't get some detailed information that we're often asked, like what is the average age of the children served in your office? We'd have to hand count to get that information. But no, we would still be able to find the file and we would still have most of the information that we require. We may not be able to identify the system issues readily that we would like to but there's . . . I see the computer piece in two parts — one is the hardware which I think the downside is that if we don't make the changes we'll experience a crash and we just have to stay current.

The tracking system change, which is the \$40,000 piece of this, we ultimately wouldn't have some information but we would be able to continue. We have managed with that system for four years. We would have to do the Year 2000 conversion though.

But, you know this has been a debate for us too. The worst that would happen is we wouldn't have a breadth of information that maybe would be interesting and useful. But I don't think it's

critical to our service delivery if that's your question.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — That's all of my questions.

The Chair: — Thanks, Ms. Crofford.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you and welcome here. Now there are a couple of specific questions and then one general or a comment or question on the budgetary request as such.

What kind of partnerships are there between what you are doing and the federal government? Are there any carry-overs, sharing of responsibility, making sure you don't duplicate, or are you both going down different roads at the same time?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — That's a very interesting question actually because there's a number . . . What I've realized is there's lots of complications between federal and provincial jurisdictions with regards to children's services. And I'm not sure that's really clearly defined.

In terms of the advocacy part, there's an interest in Canada to create a national children's commissioner. There's now a draft proposal and some draft legislation being circulated for stakeholder input, and I'd certainly be prepared to share that if anyone's interested.

The proposal for the national children's commissioner is that they would function like a national Children's Advocate in many ways and look at federal issues on concerns related to on-reserve children, immigrant children, issues related to those children, some concerns regarding children involved where the Divorce Act applies. So there's action being considered in that regard, and it's certainly out in the public forum for discussion. And there's probably other aspects to that too. There's just lots of overlap because . . .

I'll give you an example of our day-to-day work. Many of the concerns we have come from young people who are in a young offender facility under the Young Offenders Act, which is federal legislation, but they're held under The Young Offenders' Services Act, which is provincial. And so there are lots of areas that are not always clear.

Mr. Heppner: — From what you said are you then . . . do you now at this point then assume responsibility for immigrant children and children on reserve?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — No. Those would be outside of the formal jurisdiction of the office. And yes, in the sense that if we get a call probably like the Ombudsman we try very hard not to say we can't help you, but to assist the person in understanding where they could be helped or giving them some advice about where they might next go.

Mr. Heppner: — There was a fairly high profile case that took place just close to my jurisdiction, the St. Louis situation. Do you have a cost figure on what that cost your department?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — How we managed that situation was to reassign two of the staff in my office. And we did not backfill their positions until just recently. And so we've actually tried to estimate the cost of that whole activity including the

consultation fees and the staffing fees should we have employed someone. And we think it would have been close to \$20,000.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — That's not an exact figure but it's an estimate.

Mr. Heppner: — Okay moving then to some specific budgetary items. You mentioned near the beginning of your introductory statement that administration costs were going up, and they seem to do that everywhere. But because you sort of identified that as being a key thing that's going up does that then mean that essentially some of the front-line service is losing out to administration?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — No, I'd say that our administrators are working twice as hard. What's happened is we've shifted, as I said, the management of the administration to our office so the human resources and the financial forecasting and planning and budget maintenance to our office . . . actually Bernie is doing that work.

The complexity for us is that we have a lot of small things that we deal with. For example to bring 23 youths from all over the province is a lot of paperwork — hard to believe with small amounts of work, a \$4 taxi here, \$8 dinner there, but it all requires paperwork. So if we want to have an office that works with the public and does a lot of inclusive activity, we need to work that way and we need to provide accommodation and travel costs for these young people to come. However, it takes time to include a lot of people in a process. It's much easier to do it yourself.

However, that's not our vision for the Children's Advocate office is to be . . . Our vision is to be more inclusive which adds to the number of steps involved.

Mr. Heppner: — Okay. From page 15 you have a chart there of what's happened with budget allocations from '96 on up. This year I believe you're at about 990,000 so it's just under a million. And I guess my concern is somewhat similar to the previous person that asked a question somewhat like that, is exactly where is this going? It seems to have sort of picked up a life of its own. And I have no doubt that if we allocated \$10,000 you could spend it, and you could probably say all of the money was spent for some good purposes. I mean that's just the way your kind of organizations are — there's no limit to how much good can be done out there.

But if we look at '96-97 — 340,000, and now four years later we're getting close to a million. I'm wondering, it seems to be jumping pretty dramatically. We realize there's some costs that you can't do much about because they just happen to escalate with inflation. But these are some large, large jumps, and I think they're probably larger than the budget can really handle. Because if these sorts of jumps took place in all departments it would create a real problem for government to fund that. And I think all departments would probably have some justification for it. And I guess we could do it in a long discussion whose justifications are more valid or more important. But I find that somewhat frightening the way those numbers are moving up that rapidly from year to year.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Maybe I'll just comment on . . .

Mr. Heppner: — And I guess the last question — I'll put it together with that one because it fits that — is do you see something plateauing here shortly?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Well I just want to put our office in a historical context. The office was established four years ago, and at that time the budget was estimated to be \$350,000, and the expectation was that we would grow. I think that has certainly occurred. And so that as the responsibilities and the mandate of the office were more clearly defined that there would be an increase in the work. So I think we're still on that growing phase.

Do I see a plateau? I think that the individual concerns, advocacy issues raised in our office . . . It's hard for me to judge. I guess I need to be straight-up with you — I don't know. What has happened is that as people understand the Children's Advocate office I think that they see that we may be helpful to them. The hope I have in the long haul is that as government and as communities understand advocacy that that role becomes something that they own, and that our office becomes less visible in terms of the individual advocacy work. And that for example an appeal process built in to family services matters would cut the calls to our office substantially.

So I think there are some system changes that would reduce the numbers of calls that come into our office. So not a very clear answer but . . .

Mr. McLane: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess when we're talking about kids it's real tough to criticize spending in anything that might help our children out there, the next generation, the people that are going to run our country in 20 years' time or so.

But I think I've heard the government members opposite talk about it, and Mr. Heppner just now talking about the significant increases in the budget that you're requesting certainly for this coming budget year.

And I guess I'll go back to a question that was alluded to a little earlier in the discussion. By us allowing you to go forward increasing your mandate, so to speak, and do more things, are we saying to other arms of government — whether it's the line departments or others — that, you know, fine continue doing things the way you are because an organization like yours will come along and clean it up for you, pick up on it.

How do we get to the point, to that plateau that we've talked about, of saying okay, we're going to kind of level out and this is where we're going to kind of sit, and there are expenditures that you can't control year after year probably. How are we going to get to that plateau where we say to — whether it's Social Services or whoever, I don't want to single out any one particular department — but where do we get to the point where we say to them look, there's a problem here with what you're doing. There's a problem within your department. And it's causing us grief and it's causing us a problem where we'd have to come back and do more work which means more money which means doing this process year after year and thus trying to decide whether this is in the best interest of the kids. Not

unlike the computer system.

Will that benefit some children some place directly or what happened, as the question was asked, if we don't have that increase? You know can we get by without it? And that's a hard one for us to . . . or at least it's a hard one for me to try and understand and relate to that.

So do you have some sense of that or will there be some recommendations coming from your department, from your office, to government and saying — and to us legislators — and saying look, if Social Services, for example, did this differently then we wouldn't have to be doing this.

I see the requests from, you know, Social Services regarding deaths and those types of things. Is that something that's going to continue? Are there going to just be more and more of that? Or how are we going to stop this so that we don't have to have all the problem with our young people that we're seeing?

I think there's a lot of questions thrown into one there. Maybe you can give us some kind of an answer that might help us determine whether this is a fair budget or not.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — I think that the activity such as the review we're doing of the needs of children in foster care will result in recommendations which I think will improve conditions or services or programs for children living in foster care. It will improve the well-being of those children and lead to policy or practice change, possibly even legislative recommendations that you would consider to be in that vein.

So I think that the larger . . . Those kinds of reviews that we're engaged in do make those kinds of broad system recommendations, as do some of the other individual cases we advocate around or other matters that we've say, for example, raised in our annual report.

The child death work — I think that the numbers of child deaths are relatively stable and that it needs to be your decision as a government, as the members of the legislature, as to how those deaths will have that independent look. If that's going to be housed with the Children's Advocate office, I see that work continuing. I don't see it increasing particularly because those numbers of deaths are relatively stable from one year to the other. And in fact, if we're able to identify patterns or areas for preventing some deaths, hopefully we'll see a decrease. Does that answer your question?

Mr. McLane: — Well yes I guess, and no.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Is it a fair budget is part of your question. I've tried to represent to you what I believe to be a practical budget request. I agree with you that the computer piece is one that is probably optional and something that we think is going to need to be done at some point. And it's clearly your decision with regards to how you would proceed with that.

Mr. McLane: — Just on the computer issue — some of the information that you talked about earlier being part of that package. Is any of that information or all of it or part of it in different places within the government somewhere else? Is it within Social Services perhaps? You talked about ages and

numbers and things like that.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — It wouldn't be easily retrievable in any one form because it's in a number of different information systems and those systems aren't all compatible. So we actually probably have most of the information by hand in our records somewhere; it's just not retrievable on the computers.

Mr. McLane: — A question on your youth facilitation; that's one of the smaller price tags of \$15,000. I'm just wondering, that particular group that you're referring to there involving the young people, what will that do for Davidson, Saskatchewan, or Imperial, Saskatchewan, or rural Saskatchewan?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Well right now that group is looking at two . . . They've identified two goals. One is to find ways to improve the image of young people in Saskatchewan. And I hope that that would improve the image of children or young people in Imperial and Davidson as well as in La Loche and Estevan.

So what they're wanting I think is to develop a way of promoting positive things that young people are contributing to our province rather than a message that tends to be — at least the perception is — that young people have a bit of a bad rap. And they want to turn that around.

Their second goal that they've identified at least to date is to make recommendations to government through the Children's Advocate office in some way regarding policy changes or changes to how they get treated by government. And again I think that would impact on young people across the province.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Thanks, Mr. McLane.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to commend you as well for the work that your office has been doing over the past year on behalf of the children of Saskatchewan.

And I think I would want to echo some of the concerns that were raised by my colleagues on the board with respect to the development of the office and as it develops and as it finds its way into the areas that it can best serve. Along with that comes financial commitments as well. And I recognize the . . . I mean it looks like a big increase when you look at the start-up of '96-97 of \$350,000 roughly. And I think we all recognize that that certainly was a start-up cost. The office has been functioning now four years, and so I think it's had some growth and some better understanding of its role as it relates to interaction with the Department of Social Services as an example, Justice, and the departments that impact on young children's lives.

So I think some of that has really been established. This is particularly a difficult year for us, as Ms. Crofford indicated — she sits on Treasury Board — to put a budget together. I look at the pressures from rural Saskatchewan, the agricultural community, the hog industry. I don't want to give you all our tales of woe but certainly we've got some difficult times in terms of managing government expenditure.

And as it relates to your comments regarding the computer system, I'm wondering whether it's not something that we could defer perhaps for next year's deliberations. And I know it's only \$57,000 or 52,000 I guess that you're suggesting this initiative would cost, but I'm wondering if it might not make sense for us to attempt to defer that for next year and have another look at it next year.

I assume that there will be some costs to the Y2K (Year 2000) issue in terms of the existing operation. Do you have any idea how much that would be? To prepare for the new millennium, the Year 2000, to have your existing computer system in place.

I understand that the tracking system is in the neighbourhood of 40,000; hardware, 12,000 would be then the remaining amount. Other than . . . I'm not sure what you might have left over from last year's allocation, if anything. Do you know how much . . . if we just took a bare bone's minimum to prepare this thing for the millennium, to prepare this computer system for that, do you know how much roughly that would be?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Well we have a breakdown. The actual access database system, the estimate for that was \$40,000.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Right.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — The \$12,000, the additional \$12,000 is for the file server replacement, half of which you've now provided to the Ombudsman.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes, I recognize that. I was expecting frankly about half of what we provided to the Ombudsman. The other one that surprised me . . . Here too, I must tell you, is that we absorbed . . . You're asking for an increase — and a small amount again, 20-some thousand dollars — for program support, secretarial position in the amount of twenty-seven five because part of that duty was covered by the Ombudsman's office. And I frankly wasn't aware of this. Ms. Crofford had looked at this component of the budget and I had looked at the other component and so I was a little remiss in not reading both of these together.

But as I recognize now that there must be then some decrease in the amount that's expected from the Ombudsman's office if it's going to be picked up here in the secretarial position.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — I think to be fair to the Ombudsman's office . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Or perhaps . . .

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — . . . they've had other pressures and increases in their office which they've then . . . I don't want to speak for Barb but we've absorbed our piece and they've picked up the slack in terms of their work. We work together very closely.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay. Right.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — And we do share a lot of administrative functions.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And I don't want to be unfair by raising these issues with the Ombudsman.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Yes. But in terms of sort of you're asking for the bottom line on the computer piece, I think we would respectfully request the funding for the file server and an additional \$2,000 which would I think that would provide us with the funding for the Year 2000 conversion.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — So you would need then, in total, how much?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — \$12,000.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — \$12,000 from . . .

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Sorry, \$12,200 is what we've got as a breakdown.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — So then if we were to agree to the one-time expenditure for this being twelve thousand two, as opposed to 52,000 and have another look at that next year that we could perhaps . . . We could make things work and sort of limp through.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay. The other part that I would like to ask you about is the request for I guess it's a PL (professional level) 6 position to deal with the analysis I guess of the notifications from the Department of Social Services. Would it be appropriate . . . would it be possible, I guess, to look at this as being perhaps a part-time position, not knowing I guess the magnitude of the investigation required on these particular referrals from Social Services. Is it possible to pare that down a little? And I think there's some concern in that regard as well, certainly not the analysis and the protection that you will need. And I do recognize that. I guess what we're asking . . .

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — I'll just . . . we have 25 files still open from 1997.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Right.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — And we have 34 new files in 1998 and we haven't been able to deal with those. So to go to half-time means that we do it at half the rate and these are already, some of them over a year old.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — How many do you feel you'd be looking at on an annual basis? How many files, once this levels off?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Well it looks . . . Once we catch up it appears to me that we're getting around 30 new child death referrals a year from Social Services.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And would 32 on an annual basis require a full-time position? Because what I worry about — if we look at a temporary position, even part-time, you know, like, on a temporary full-time position as opposed to appointing a full-time position because that doesn't go away; and I mean I

think we all understand that once you've appointed a permanent position, it stays.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And I also understand that it's difficult for people to be in the workforce on a temporary basis, and it's tough to find people for a temporary . . . even if it's full-time, part-time . . . you know, like . . . but a temporary position. It's tough to staff those jobs.

But I worry about approving the position and then perhaps a workload that, at some point in time, wouldn't require full-time — and then the support staff that goes with it because I think probably a PL 6 position will require some support staff, some secretarial staff as well. So instead of a \$60,000 job, we're probably looking at a \$90,000 scenario.

And I think that is sort of the concern here in terms of what we're building.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — I respect that. I haven't asked for in this year's budget — and this certainly could be a future discussion — an additional advocate in our office even though the number of individual files continues to rise in our office. And so our hope would be that if the child death work did reduce, that this person would be able to pick up some of the other advocacy work in the office, which continues to rise. We are trying to manage that with our existing resources now. And it is a pressure to us.

The person we've assigned to do the child death work is continuing to do some individual advocacy work as well; although it's creating difficulties because there's also a training issue here. The work involved in reviewing these child death files requires some specialized understanding of what to look for. And so we've put some effort into training an individual — actually one of our current permanent employees — in this whole area and we've temporarily filled his position.

So we're trying to manage the whole work of the office in that context. And I know I've asked for a significant increase and so I did not request another full-time position to do the advocacy work of the office hoping that we could maybe bounce those things off in some way.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, just a wrap-up comment. I think we could support the budget with the exception, I think, that we would like to see . . . have another look at the computer needs next year. Perhaps include in the budget what your requirements will be to get you through till the next fiscal year. And then based on that we could support the budget.

The Chair: — Mr. Lautermilch are you wishing to move that figure?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I would move that.

The Chair: — And just for the clarification of the Chair, if I can then recommend the motion to accomplish that which would be:

That the 1999-2000 estimates of the Children's Advocate be approved in the amount of \$950,600 and that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Do you wish to move that? Is there a seconder? Mr. McLane. Is there further discussion?

Mr. Heppner: — If I could just underline where I think we've all been going is that these increases are very large and I think that they're out of line with any of the increases that we'll probably see throughout government. And I mean if it's just that this happens to be that this is a very difficult topic to go ahead and start saying, here's where we want to cut, but then again we can't say just because it's a difficult topic we've opened the door wide.

I'd like to see something in the area of take care of the cost of salary increases plus that computer part that's already been sort of halfway agreed to and leave it at that. And so even though this is a move in the right direction, I don't feel it's far enough.

The Chair: — Further discussion?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Just an observation. I mean Mr. Heppner raises just a very good point. And I think we're all concerned in the terms of the health of our children and their safety and the work that you do really is . . . well it's important. And this government would recognize that otherwise we wouldn't have introduced the legislation which you work . . . but it's a sensitive topic.

And it's difficult for all of us to deal with these budgets. And I might say, in particular, in a public forum because there's always interpretations to comments that members might make in the meeting might be misconstrued at times. And so for us, I just want you to know it's very much an important role that you play in your office place and we try and deal with it sensitively knowing that we have many, many pressures within government for funding.

And I think I said that other day in a forum in my role as the Minister of Energy and Mines, I would have thought that I should spend a vast majority of my time working with industry and discussing ways to increase revenue. But that doesn't seem to be the case. I think I spend more time looking at ways and ideas to spend money than I do thoughts of how we might generate money. So it becomes a little frustrating at times. But it is an important role and we recognize that.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — I want to say that I respect your concerns about that and it's of grave concern to me too. And I think that as our society is increasingly stressed, vulnerable people seek remedies from offices such as ours in increased rates. And so it's part of a whole process that you're struggling with and we struggle with too. And I certainly understand that.

The Chair: — If there is no further discussion then the question before the members of the board is:

That the 1999-2000 estimates of the Children's Advocate be approved in the amount of \$950,600 and that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the

Chair.

Those in favour of the motion please indicate. Down, opposed. And that is carried. And with that, to the Children's Advocate if as Chair I may repeat what has already been said to you, and that's to thank you and your office for the important service to the citizens of Saskatchewan, particularly to children at risk, and of course to all of the members of the Assembly. And to thank you for your responsible presentation here. And to wish you as well the best wishes of the season and a very happy and healthy new year.

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

The Chair: — As well as Ms. Rodier, thank you.

Ms. Rodier: — Thank you very much.

The Chair: — Members of the board, we have now completed the review of two of the members of the officers of the Assembly. The next one before us is the Provincial Auditor. And I think I'm seeing a desire to take a very brief break before we begin that. So perhaps while the Provincial Auditor and his team would come forward and get themselves set up to make a presentation, can I declare a maximum 10 minute — a maximum 10 minute — and so if we can begin at 3:35 sharp, the review of the Office of the Provincial Auditor. The meeting stands recessed.

The meeting recessed for a period of time.

The Chair: — If I can call the board back to order. I want to first of all introduce to you, I think everyone will know the Provincial Auditor, Wayne Strelloff, who is joined with me at the front of the table by the assistant provincial auditor, Fred Wendel. And also then seated in order from left to right, is the assistant manager for administration, Heather Tomlin. Then, let's see here, the principal of support services, is it Angela . . . Angele. Boy, my French is really taking a beating here today, I'm afraid. Angele . . . is it Borys? Okay, and then beside Angele is Sandra Walker, the manager of administration, who have all joined the Provincial Auditor here today for item number 7, which is a decision item, reviewing the 1999-2000 budget for the Office of the Provincial Auditor.

Now I do bring to attention of the board members, three items that you will have that you may consider to be relevant in this. First of all there was the memorandum of suggested process for the Board of Internal Economy which had been provided at the request of the board by the Provincial Auditor back in May of 1998 and previously distributed to you on May 19. You will have of course then the Business And Financial Plan, the blue jacketed document, which is the budget proposal. And then, as was tabled earlier in this meeting, the annual report on operations for the year ended March 31, 1998 of the Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan.

So these will be . . . if there's anyone who needs the copy of the memorandum of suggested processes, you may have that in your board binder if you've kept it in order. If you don't have it, just let Margaret know and she'll give you a copy of that for you to have in front of you. But the document of focus of course will be the Business and Financial Plan for the year

ended March 31, 2000.

So having said that, I'll turn the floor over to the Provincial Auditor, Mr. Strelloff.

Mr. Strelloff: — Thank you, Chair, and members; thank you for the opportunity to meet with you this afternoon. We do have extra copies. The memorandum on the process is an appendix within the business plan that we provided you as well. As you know, each year we try to improve the contents of our plans and reports as of course we expect others to do the same.

Our business and financial plan has four main components. The first component begins on page 5 in which we describe what we do and why, as well as our financial proposal for this year and next year and the three previous years.

The second component of our plan begins on page 37 in which we provide more detailed financial information. We include a five-year summary of spending as well as more detailed information about our work plans.

The third component begins on page 55 in which we provide answers to questions that were previously posed by this committee — or this board — as well as the Standing Committee on Estimates.

And the fourth component begins on page 79 which is the suggestions that you asked for last year on how you could obtain advice of an independent nature to help you assess our request for resources.

In summary, on page 5 we state that we request an appropriation of \$4.442 million. This request is about 128,000 or about 3 per cent more than last year. We proposed the 3 per cent increase in the context of cost pressures of nearly 7 per cent or \$300,000 primarily as a result of the series of economic adjustments to salaries that have been provided throughout the system as well as new government agencies that we will be auditing this year which are itemized in this report, and also extra work that we plan to do at SaskPower.

So in that context we do plan to absorb the increase in costs related to salary increases and we also plan to reduce the number of our staff by one person. But we do request additional resources for the extra government agencies that are created as well as for additional work that we plan at SaskPower.

This afternoon I plan to provide you an overview, a brief overview of our business and financial plan in terms of two topics — what we do in our plans and how we assess our performance, and also our more specific financial plan.

If you turn to page 9, page 9 provides an overview, a schematic overview, of what we do and the impact of our work in terms of inputs and outputs and outcomes. We've provided this exhibit to you in the past just to give you an idea or a visual display of the type of work and the purpose of the work that we do.

The exhibit shows our inputs are the knowledge skills and abilities of our employees and so that one of our key issues is that we need to manage carefully to ensure that we have the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities in doing our work.

We have recruiting, training, and performance development strategies to help us ensure we do this.

By the way, Angele Borys is one of our lead persons in terms of our human resource management, our recruiting and training.

The exhibit also shows that we have three key outputs or products. The first one is all the assurances that we provide to legislators, government officials, and the public on the reliability of financial information; compliance with the key legislative authorities that you have set in place; and the adequacy of management systems and practices. So that's the key outputs or products of our office.

We also provide advice, mainly through our recommendations to legislators and government officials; and the third product or output is that we develop trained professionals for public service. One of the key issues that we've had to manage this past year, about this past year and a half is that we . . . about 13 or 14 of our staff left us for work elsewhere. They all got opportunities to work — and a lot of them within the public service — and since that is part of what we do in terms of developing trained professionals for public service, it signalled that we're doing a good job on that but on the other hand that was a high turnover. We usually plan for a turnover of about six people a year.

And the exhibit also shows that our ultimate goal is to ensure that there's better program performance, better parliamentary control over resources, and thus improve confidence in our institutions of government.

On page 10, we explain what we do in terms of the nature of our examinations, our reports to government and to the Assembly; and the impacts of our work and reports, as well as the knowledge and abilities we bring to the table.

On page 14, shows our organization. We have a staff of about 60, organized into five groups. At any time, we have about 15 to 20 articling students who are university grads who are working towards their professional accountancy program and about 35 mainly professional accountants; about half women, half men; and our average age is about 35.

As I said, this year we did have significant turnover, but we also as part of the work that we do and also part of our outputs, and we're also able to recruit new university grads to train with us.

On page 15, we set out what we plan to do in terms of our goals, objectives, strategies, and performance indicators. As you know, I am often talking about the importance of this kind of information to help people assess what organizations are trying to achieve and it is . . . This information is an important part of how we manage our office.

In our annual report, which is the grey document that the Speaker referred to, we set out how we did according to our plans.

On page 20 . . . so there's the three goals that we have and the action plans and strategies and performance indicators that we set in place to make sure that we manage our work as carefully as possible.

On page 22 we describe several factors that affect our work plan including: the amount of government revenues and spending; the number of government organizations; the quality and trends in the quality of the government's management systems; the use of appointed auditors; professional standards; the co-operation we receive from government officials in getting our work done.

We also on page 23 describe several key forces and trends that we think affect legislators, government officials, and thus the work of our office.

On page 25 we set out our key risks and the controls we have established to reduce the likelihood that our risks will have an adverse consequence on our ability to carry out our work. As you probably know, we think that all government agencies should set out their key risks to achieve their goals and objectives and how they manage those risks.

One of our key risks that we set out is the risk of losing our independence. But the current law of The Provincial Auditor Act makes us independent of the government, of appointed officials, and elected officials so we can carry out our work. The law also has set out how we carry out our audits and has set out our responsibilities and accountabilities. So in these pages on page 25 and 26 we set out some of the key risks that we try to manage carefully so that we're able to successfully achieve our goals and objectives.

On page 29 we set out how we measure our performance. We do so in the terms of such factors as the quality, completion, and cost of our work, the use of our time, and the acceptance of our advice. You'll see in some of the information that we've included in this report that we manage our work through time, and that our staff prepare reports that set out what they do with each 15 minutes of their time, and that it gets charged to projects to audits. It's an important part of managing our office. We also monitor our performance in terms of such factors as the acceptance of our advice.

On page 30 we set out and describe the cost of our work. Table 1 on page 31 reports that the cost of one year of auditing is 4.522 million. On page 34 we show . . . we report . . . we show our spending trends over a five-year period and how we finance our spending trends over a five-year period.

We maintain net financial assets equal to about one month of our costs. This way we can respond to issues of the day, to new organizations being created, to unanticipated pressures, to change our timelines, or to just changes in management systems and practices . . . respond without coming back to request special warrants.

And on page 35 we set out if you're not able to recommend sufficient funding, here's the type of work that we will not carry out. I am again pleased to advise you that for the last four years now the Board of Internal Economy has supported our funding proposals. In the appendices, Appendix I, as I said earlier, we provide more detailed information about our spending and work plans. In Appendix II we provide answers to questions previously posed by this committee — or I'm sorry, by this board as well as the Standing Committee on Estimates. And in Appendix III we set out our suggestions in how you could

obtain advice of a more independent nature to help you assess our requests for resources. Chair, or Mr. Speaker, this ends my opening comments and certainly I'm here to answer any of your . . . any questions that you may have.

The Chair: — Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Streliaff. Members of the board, you've had a very concise overview of the focus of the Office of the Provincial Auditor and in its total with the three reports combined reference in a number of ways which is directed towards the budgetary request of \$4,442,000 for the next fiscal year. The floor is now open for questions or discussion related to the Provincial Auditor's budgetary proposal.

Mr. Heppner: — I guess just a couple of general ones. I hadn't planned on being first but that's fine. It's no problem. It's good to see that the increase is kept at least down to 1 per cent . . . I mean one figure amounts. The one positive — or two positive things — I like when we look on page 9 the intermediate outcomes, there are three of them that are side by side on the left hand side. I think those are key to giving people confidence in government. I think they need to know that those things are in place, and I think those deterrents are good and to the extent that your office does that, or you do that kind of work, I think that impact is good to have there.

I think on the aspect where you want to increase the size of your responsibility somewhat, I think that's fairly critical in that if those organizations or those bodies are actually owned by the people of Saskatchewan they need to know exactly what's going on over there so I think that has to be done. That auditing has to be there and has to be open to the public just so that the people know that they're ultimately the ownership of those bodies, and they need to know how well they're being run and they're not owned by a particular political party or something of that sort. So I stand behind that move to do some further auditing making sure that every aspect and every arm of government is assessed, and that those intermediate outcomes happen in those organizations as well.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Heppner. Is there further questions or discussion?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — A few comments, Mr. Speaker, to thank the auditor and his staff for the work that they've done in the past fiscal year. Certainly their scrutiny of government expenditures, I think, is important to the people of Saskatchewan. The work that your office does is critical in terms of delivering good government and accountable government. And so you are a very important component of the Government of Saskatchewan. And I want you to pass on to your staff that certainly we do appreciate your work and your involvement in I guess informing the people of Saskatchewan the state of our province in terms of the fiscal management of the government. It's very important we believe that that happen.

I want to say I'm pleased to see that you were able to look at internal two-year budget and indicate that you will be able to absorb some increased cost pressures on your operations. And we think that is a positive step. It's something that we're attempting to do across government, although I must admit not totally successful in all cases, in trying to stem the cost of several operations.

As you've noted in your report, the government has allocated more funds to the Department of Health. It seems to be — it's our biggest expenditure — it seems to be in some respects a money magnet. On the other hand, we want to deliver the best health care system in Canada, and so we continue to look for smarter ways of allocating that 1.7, \$1.8 billion a year.

So it's a challenge for us in that regard as we try to continue to balance our books so that we can become less reliant on the bond dealers and those that have borrowed money to the province over the course of the years. We're really working hard and diligently in an attempt to become less dependent on those folks, trying to reduce that debt load so that we can enhance some of the programs, and in fact, cut the cost of government. I often think of the three quarters of a billion dollars, or 700 million roughly I guess, that we spend on serving that debt. What we could do in this province if we had that money, and if we could allocate it to tax reduction and program enhancement.

So I guess it's always for us a challenge to maintain a reasonable level and at a reasonable cost to the government. But importantly as well, is to do it in a cost-effective manner ensuring that the \$5-plus billion that we spend every year is well spent, so it's a challenge for all of us. And I just close by thanking you again for the work that your department does, that your office does, and look forward to working with you in the upcoming year.

The Chair: — Thanks, Mr. Lautermilch.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you for the information that's been supplied with respect to your breakdown of staff. You mentioned about very roughly about 50 per cent male/female and I just want to bring that to the attention of the committee because I think you're to be commended for achieving equity in this way and that certainly is not the case in some other parts within departments I suppose, and within Crowns. So it's nice to see that that's happened sort of naturally and without being forced or maybe you did force it I don't know.

Do you have any stats on Aboriginal involvement, employment within your department, under your purview or do you have any way of even assessing that?

Mr. Strelieff: — Members, Angele correct me if I'm wrong or, we don't ask that question. And I know that we do have people, depending how you define the Aboriginal community but we don't have that as being an issue or a question that we ask.

Mr. Kowalsky: — No I think it's good. I'm glad we asked the question because in some cases it's nice to know your progress there or not, but in another case it can cause difficulty if you ask that question in a sensitive way. But I might ask you the same question next year.

Mr. Strelieff: — It's a good question but as you said, it's an awkward question to ask and so I just haven't done that. It doesn't look well.

Mr. Kowalsky: — I can see one of the benefits of the auditor's office is where you serve as a teaching station and where people go out into other endeavours in the province, and I know that

there are people in bands for example that are looking for good qualified people that have had a little experience in the auditing field. Probably be of benefit to do it. Thank you.

Mr. Strelieff: — I agree.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Strelieff, members from your department. I appreciate the work that you do. Certainly on behalf of the constituents that I serve in the legislature and certainly on behalf of our caucus, we appreciate the work that you do in keeping . . . irregardless of what of what government might be in power, keeping government accountable, and the people a little more satisfied as to how their money is being spent, and keeping our elected peoples a little more responsible.

I noticed in one spot — and I can't find it right at the time; I believe when I was reading over some of the information — when you're talking about health and health districts. And I noticed here in your annual report on your operations for the past year you talk about the amount of money that was spent and the amount of money that was deferred because of some projects that you've deferred to 1998, and that was SHIN (Saskatchewan Health Information Network) and a project that I see that the Twin Rivers District Health Board was going to do and they've deferred it.

But I think I also read someplace that one of the reasons that your costs are high in auditing the health districts is because of the way they do their books — that they're not all the same. Did I read that in here somewhere? And if I did, could you explain to us if that's good, bad, or indifferent?

Mr. Strelieff: — Thank you, Mr. McLane. We are . . . Included in our costs of the current year under operation as well as next year is the cost of examining the SHIN project. And you might remember that in our most recent report that we tabled a week or two ago there's a significant chapter on the work that we did at SHIN, both in terms of their financial statement work but also in terms of the project management that they are putting in place to make sure that that health information network is well managed and is successful. So we are doing work at SHIN.

In the district health boards I think it might relate . . . Your question about our concerns about the quality of financial management in the district health boards, we do have some variance analysis in some of our detailed schedules in the back that sets out why we've increased costs a couple of years ago related to our work in health. And a couple years ago we spent a lot of our resources focusing on district health boards because of the quality of their financial management systems.

They were new organizations with nothing or very little in place. So we spent a lot of our efforts trying to make sure that as they get off the ground, that they get off the ground with strong, basic financial management systems. More recently we think that they have established pretty reasonably strong, basic financial management systems. And more recently we've moved back and have not spent as much of our efforts examining individual district health boards. Instead we spend more effort on examining issues that related to all districts rather than individual audits.

So now you asked me where in this report do we . . . page 49 . . . that we explain, in item 3 we explain that we have been reducing our costs related to district health boards because, well, their basic financial systems are a lot stronger than they were two or three years ago.

Mr. McLane: — I guess one of the questions that I was referring to — I'm not sure where I've seen it — was I believe you made the comment that your time spent on the district health boards is a little longer than it might be because they have different ways of accounting, is that correct?

Mr. Strelieff: — That was certainly the first few years.

Mr. McLane: — And that's not the same any more?

Mr. Strelieff: — You're right — that's not the same any more. That was one of the reasons why we were pretty aggressive in the first two or three years within the district health board community; because we saw it as an opportunity to make sure that they establish more, I guess, comparable financial information so that at the end of the day, when you compare the financial results of one district with another district, they're legitimate comparisons.

As you know, we've said, or you might know we said in our recent reports that right now you can't make those comparisons for school districts. We wanted to make sure that as the district health boards got off the ground that didn't become the case. So it took us, well, it took the district health boards a few years to make sure that they did start off with good financial management systems. It doesn't make the decisions that they have to make any easier, but at least there's a better, more rigorous accounting of what they're doing.

Mr. McLane: — Can you give for us an estimate or a guesstimate of what — and maybe it's an unfair question; maybe you don't have the numbers — as to what the costs to do the auditing of the SHIN might be in the coming year?

Mr. Strelieff: — We'll find it when . . . today, I mean, right in a few minutes. If you have other questions, we can go on?

Mr. McLane: — You also talked about added expenses that your department has because of new government agencies. Are those listed anywhere?

Mr. Strelieff: — Page 49 — government organizations created.

Mr. McLane: — In the blue binder?

Mr. Strelieff: — Yes, in the blue book, light blue. There's some incorrect information on that schedule where we have Saskatchewan Power Corporation taking ownership for the Western Canadian Beef Packers. That really should be the Crown Investments Corporation. But those are the new organizations that have been created during '98-99.

And then there's another page, the next page, I think page 50 shows the organizations that no longer exist and therefore reduce the work that we need to carry out.

Mr. McLane: — I noticed you mention that you were able to

absorb some of the salary increases in your last . . . within your budget. Is that due because of decreased spending in such things as SHIN project that you were thinking you were going to be doing with the Twin Rivers Health District. Is that part of it or . . .

Mr. Strelieff: — No, our total costs, sort of on a standstill basis, increase about 7 per cent. And we're planning to absorb, I don't know, two-thirds of that cost by just trying to be more efficient in the work that we carry on. We're not planning to do particular work that we think is needed.

We're just thinking that, in probably my staff's view, we're tightening the expectations up. Remember we budget for all our projects based on hours and we require our staff to submit time reports setting out every 15 minutes how they charge their time to. Well what we're in general doing is saying, well, surely there's a way you can do that audit next year for less time.

Of course that's, in a management sense, that's a hard one to manage and continue to have a good, strong, corporate culture. But that's what we're trying to do.

Mr. McLane: — Well we're certainly happy to hear that you're doing that and commend you for trying to do that. That's all the questions I have, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Strelieff.

Mr. Strelieff: — Oh, the SHIN . . . We're planning to spend just over \$50,000 on SHIN in terms of our hours and there's two components to that. One is the regular audit of their financial statements in compliance with legislative authorities and their basic management practices. But also the other component is a continued examination of how they're implementing the actual health information network.

Mr. McLane: — We're not talking about a lot of money there. But I think it's important because of the type of project it is, of those two components of the audit, which will take the most time.

Mr. Strelieff: — The SHIN, the actual health information network project.

Mr. McLane: — Okay, thank you.

The Chair: — Okay. Thanks Mr. McLane.

Mr. Whitmore: — Yes, thank you. Mr. Strelieff, just a very small question regarding the cash and investments. And I see in the annual report, note 3, March 31, 1998, that many of the investments were of a very low-risk nature with the interest bearing at 3.74 to 4.55. Those are just simply short-term investments invested within the province are they?

Mr. Strelieff: — Yes, in the banks.

Mr. Whitmore: — And what would be the total of the breakdown between investments or cash, or is that a moving target?

Mr. Strelieff: — Well a move as . . . during the year; but as of a particular date, the financial statements should have that, I hope. Now your question was a breakdown between . . .

Mr. Whitmore: — Between cash and investments. Is the cash equal to what you have to pay in terms of suppliers and staff? And that's 342,000, and I'm going with now page 35.

Mr. Strelieff: — We're just looking it up but in general we would be managing our cash and our short-term, long-term based on our cash flow needs.

Mr. Whitmore: — Yes. Okay.

Mr. Strelieff: — We're looking at to see what the balance . . . the difference between cash and investments were at March 31, '98.

Mr. Whitmore: — Yes.

Mr. Wendel: — Mr. Speaker, the investments were \$359,000 at March 31, 1998.

Mr. Whitmore: — The remainder was cash then of the 630 . . .

Mr. Wendel: — The remainder is in the bank account. Yes.

Mr. Whitmore: — Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: — I have no one else on the speakers' list and if so then it would be appropriate to put the question. The request of the Provincial Auditor for the fiscal year '99-2000 is in the amount of \$4,442,000. If someone wishes to advise of the motion you wish to move then I'll recommend the appropriate motion. Mr. Lautermilch, you move that. I recommend to the board then the motion:

That the 1999-2000 estimates of the Office of the Provincial Auditor be approved as submitted in the amount of \$4,442,000, and that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

That's moved by Mr. Lautermilch, seconded by Mr. Whitmore. Further discussion? If not those in favour please indicate. Opposed? And that's carried unanimously.

And if I may say to you, Mr. Strelieff, and Mr. Wendel, and the other staff Ms. Tomlin, Ms. Walker, and Ms. Borys — it's the Angele — to express the appreciation for the service that you do for the trust of the people of Saskatchewan, and in particular for the service to the members in performing their duties as members of the Assembly. We appreciate that. And also to extend to you the best wishes of the season, and I hope that 1999 will be a year of good health and happiness for you and your families. Thank you very, very much.

Mr. Strelieff: — And thank you for your continued support. Just to remind you that this is the fifth year now in a row that the Board of Internal Economy has supported the proposals that we've brought to you, so thank you very much.

The Chair: — Thank you and thank you for your comprehensiveness as well. Well members of the board that is our third officer of the Assembly's budget who's been considered, and we'll now invite to come to the front of the table an officer — a new officer of the Assembly who will be before the board for the very first time. And I'll ask Jan Baker

to come forward.

Members of the board if I may introduce to you someone — well in fact I'm not sure that Ms. Baker is someone you have all previously met. Jan Baker, as you will know by the new legislation, has been recently appointed by this board as the Chief Electoral Officer. And with that decision in September at our meeting was the requirement for the first time that her budget would be presented to the Board of Internal Economy.

Now I must remind you before consideration of item no. 8, the review of the 1999-2000 budget for the Chief Electoral Officer, that her budget is statutory, and so the decision that you have to make is not on the number but is on the forwarding of it to the Assembly.

However having said that, that makes it no less significant. The information provided in the presentation of her budget and the opportunity for the board to discuss and question her in regards to that.

So with your first welcome to the Board of Internal Economy, Ms. Baker, and congratulations on your appointment, we'll turn the floor over to you.

Ms. Baker: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer is responsible for the administration of provincial elections, by-elections, and provincial election finances under The Election Act, 1996. The office also periodically conducts referendum plebiscites under The Referendum and Plebiscite Act and time votes under The Time Act. Further the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, pursuant to the recent amendments to the Act, is charged with the conduct of enumerations outside of the writ period.

Our principal mandate of the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer is the conduct of fair and impartial procedural, operational, administrative, and financial practices ensuring effective and efficient compliance with the Act.

The object of the office's mandate is to ensure public confidence in the integrity of the electoral process for the province of Saskatchewan.

I'm pleased to have been chosen the first officer entrusted by the Legislative Assembly with ensuring the integrity and conduct of the electoral process. That said, I'm forward looking with Saskatchewan parties and electorate predominately in mind, to ensure the vitality of the electoral process.

The office presents its 1999-2000 budgetary expenditure estimates in a base year and non-base year format. Specifically, expenditure estimates have been prepared in the context of the office's functions, annual operations, and potential annual electoral-related activities. Further expenditure estimates have been provided for office new initiatives for the 1999-2000 fiscal period.

Base-year estimates have been prepared for the 1999-2000 fiscal period for the office's operational activities and for four proposed new office initiatives. The operational component of the budgetary estimates have been adopted from the Saskatchewan Department of Finance's published expenditure

code manual. Specifically, expenditure codes ranging from the 100s, personnel services to the 600, capital assets have been employed for the office's benchmark expenditures by category.

Note the 100s code has also been utilized for the budgetary estimates pertaining to the expenditures associated with the appointment of the province's constituency returning officers.

The office has prepared new initiative expenditure estimates employing Saskatchewan's financial categories but has not followed the reporting categories strictly.

Non-base-year estimates include expenditures associated with five specific electoral-related activities that may occur in the 1999-2000 fiscal period. Specific electoral activities may include a provincial general election, constituency by-election, a non-writ period enumeration, referenda and plebiscites, and a time vote. While occurrence probabilities have not been included, the estimates have been prepared to give the board a financial context in the event that the province experiences one or more of the enumerated electoral activities.

These specific activities have been chosen to reflect the office's principle mandate and may occur individually or in combination given the province's electoral cycle in fiscal 1999-2000. As a result, fiscal period estimates for same have been provided. If in fact, any one or more of the activities and their associated expenditures occur, the financial estimates would have to be included with the office's base-year estimates in order to achieve an accurate expenditure picture for the 1999-2000 fiscal period.

As you are aware, the office has undergone major reform of its electoral law. The proclamation of the new legislation has resulted in new electoral processes and procedures, heightened financial disclosure and political contributions in recording of election expenditures, and the establishment of the office under the Legislative Assembly.

Following my appointment, efforts have focused on identification of operational restructuring to complete transition under the Legislative Assembly, including human resource requirements, ensuring immediate administrative effectiveness. To enable the office to fulfil its mandate in the manner which was intended, I have proposed a full staff complement of five individual permanent members. The office has adopted the permanent adjustment date — July 1; cost-of-living adjustment date — July 1 — for all subordinate staff.

I do not intend to go into each specific expenditure code, however I am willing to answer any questions you may have particular to those. I just would like to highlight a few of those that I would like recognized. Specifically the five additional permanent staff members. At the present time, all positions are vacant.

With respect to my position, an adjustment upward has been included. Eight per cent has been requested. The reason for that was at the time of my employment it was indicated to myself that a 4 to a maximum 8 per cent increase would be granted annually. I am suggesting or would like the board to consider 8 per cent, given the additional responsibilities of establishing the office operations under the Legislative Assembly, and it is a

step towards establishing parity with other CEOs (chief executive officer) in neighbouring jurisdictions.

Under section 140, I have involved integration of short-term personnel to facilitate administrative requirements heightened during election preparedness. Under 145, as you are aware, in the ordinary course of events the office maintains a state of election readiness pending forthcoming elections. Accordingly, provision has been made for four provisional personnel for warehousing inventory of communication materials, and that's distribution and assembly of electoral supplies.

I will at this point like to go in to pass through my operational without making further comment other than under section 171. I had mentioned that the returning officers were incorporated into the operational budget. Returning officer appointees receive an annual stipend of six sixty as a retainer on an annual basis and it has been incorporated into the operational.

New initiatives. The office ... these at this point are all conceptual at this point. Costs associated are very preliminary efforts I might say. However, I would like to highlight some of those. Web page development for purposes of electorate access. There are ... have been and are current concerns that others make provisions of electoral information without consultation with my office, resulting in inconsistencies.

Consideration of all facets of the electoral process, providing a general overview. For example, information specific to constituencies, polling divisions, poll by poll results of previous elections, and reporting of financial requirements of political parties and candidates would be a move towards a generation of information to the electorate.

The second initiative is a communications program for purposes of tapping into existing services as a way of educating our youth but also the electorate in general ... excuse me, of the democratic process. For example, brochures, tools, lectures, etc., full potential services, satellite TV service available through the U of R (University of Regina), preparation development design of speaking engagements with development of electorate exercise specific to the level of the audience. Those could be suggestions of exercises done in the schools.

The third initiative is federal-provincial data sharing initiatives, and this is always an area of discussion. It is specific to establishing a provincial voter data base in support of a permanent voter registry. I won't speak any further with respect of that.

The fourth initiative is a provincial electoral advisory committee focusing primarily on development discussions regarding the establishment of the committee, potential feasibility study which may result. Dimensions might include enhancement of electoral processes, on electronic enhancement, potential cost-effective related issues.

Political parties may not be interested in this initiative. However, it is the view of my office that in the past we were much more confrontational than need be and that we can make gains specific to each of our objectives if we establish a committee in the future.

I will not go any further, other than highlight that there has . . . The election budget that has been provided does not include election preparations as far as development, design, and printing of forms. That will be absorbed in the 1998-99 budgetary year.

I will, if you have any further questions, I will enlighten you to various processes that have been highlighted here. If not, I open it to questions.

The Chair: — Thank you very much, Ms. Baker. And we'll now open the floor to comments or questions regarding the budget as presented before you.

Hon. Mr. Laudertermilch: — Well I thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and, Ms. Baker, welcome. I guess we'll be meeting . . . or you will be meeting with this committee on a regular basis from here on in, and so on behalf of the government members, I want to say that we look forward to working with you as we assist you in your duties — hopefully as we assist you in your duties.

One of the comments that you made during your presentation encourages me, in that as one who has been part of the political structure and the political system for a number of years, I've often thought that there had to be a way to accommodate more positive working relations within the electoral process as it relates to our governance of the rules that we set for ourselves to elect ourselves.

And so I'm very much encouraged by your comments that you intend to look at some new ways to enhance a more positive relationship in which are some very difficult circumstances. The thirty-day campaign in the province creates a whirlwind of activity and some frayed nerves and some loose ends, and probably some phone calls and some conversations that some of us wish we would not have engaged in upon reflection.

Now having said all of that, there are a number of questions that I have. And not so much as it pertains to your budget. This is a new budget. I guess it's new water that we're breaking here. So it's very difficult to comment on what may transpire and what expenditures may transpire. But just looking through, seeing the different categories and the areas, it would tell me that you've covered a lot of the bases that I know you will have to cover.

And I'm really quite excited about the component on page 5, where you've titled new initiatives — Web page development, communications — I think all of that is very well-spent money. And I mean you budgeted something under \$9,000 or \$10,000 for it. So I think it's a very good expenditure.

The one area that I particularly want to highlight and perhaps ask you about is the federal-provincial data sharing initiatives.

I've often thought that we should quit trying to re-invent the wheel. And when we have information compiled — whether it's municipal government, provincial government or a federal government — we only have one taxpayer that pays for putting that together, and that there should be a better relationship in terms of the jurisdictions and sharing that information.

So I want to ask you: first of all in terms of staffing, when you

are expecting that you'll have your staff in place — your permanent staff — in place? As I'm concerned about the timing of an election.

A Member: — So am I.

Hon. Mr. Laudertermilch: — I don't know when the Premier will call an election. It might be April, it might be June, and it might be in the year 2000. I just don't know that. But I guess . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Or it might be tomorrow, Harvey. You never know. Or it could have been yesterday and we haven't heard about it yet.

The Chair: — Order, order, order.

Hon. Mr. Laudertermilch: — But I'm wondering if the early staffing is one of your priorities.

And I guess the other area that I'd like to question you about is enumeration, an electronic database, what kind of a system you're going to be proposing; when you feel you might have that ready; what it will look like; what it will be. So those are the areas that I really would like some discussion on here because I think we're all quite concerned, always, about election preparedness. And I'm certain that you will have all of your ducks in order whenever the Premier decides to call that election, but I'm just wondering if you could share with the committee where you're at and where you intend to be.

Ms. Baker: — My appointment is two months old. The focus has been staffing up the office and establishing the infrastructure necessary under the Assembly. It is a very slow process. I am hoping that I have, if not permanent staff in place by the end of January, I will have temporary, provisional, or contract employees in place to continue the election readiness for a potential spring election.

Specific to the automation to establishing a permanent voter registry, the office supports the notion of establishing a provincial voter registry as it facilitates parties' needs while ensuring the Saskatchewan electorate is in power to voice their democratic rights. However, current legislation makes provision for continued hard enumerations with one exception — enumeration outside of a writ period.

In my view, we require an enumeration to establish an automated voters registry tailored to the needs of Saskatchewan. However, consideration should be given to collection of data beyond the categories specific in the legislation. For example, date of birth, telephone numbers, et cetera.

A computerized database facilitates updates to readily available provincial sources. Sask geomatics, geographic referencing, for example helps date of mode of vehicle data. Annual enhancement would result in forwarding of information respecting Legislative Assembly constituency breakdown which potentially enhances voter participation in the province. Provision of updates on an ongoing basis to political parties and candidates are certainly advantages of a computerized data base.

Similar advantages, it eliminates gathering information already available in other data bases; it establishes the foundation for

harmonizing similar processes at the local, provincial, and federal levels; could be used for health and school board elections. It could also be manipulated to address redistribution efforts and polling division realignment of all levels of election, and it could be shared federally to complement maintenance of the federal registry of electors.

Enumerations are costly and a computerized list could be cost-effective increasingly over time. It would streamline the electoral process, heighten voter participation and knowledge, facilitate party and candidates' activities, restricts electoral information to electoral use which addresses the privacy concerns.

Having said that, if a potential election were to occur in the spring, the office doesn't have the opportunity for design development and implementation of a data base as I have described. I think most appropriate would be in 1999, a previous Chief Electoral Officer introduced SEMIS which was Saskatchewan Electoral Mapping Information System which was to be a link between the requirements, electoral mapping requirements and a computerized data base. That hardware/software, excuse me software or application is available. I believe at the very most it could be enhanced and be implemented for a spring election.

Hon. Mr. Heppner: — Also welcome you to this committee; I'm just about as new here as you are. And having gone through one election, I would sort of like to underline the part of having some good co-operation with your department. I guess once the heat of battle starts things get a little different once in a while but we hope we can carry that on.

And I guess . . . I had someone from outside the committee ask me to ask the question that was just asked about how we fit in with the federal voters' list for this next election. But I take it from your answer that this next election, whenever it is, we won't be able to use that particularly.

On one question dealing with budgetary items, you mentioned something about 8 per cent increase as far as parity with other jurisdictions is concerned. What is the total dollar change from previous years?

Ms. Baker: — I'm sorry, I don't have that information with me. As I said the appointment is only two years . . . two months old. It was initially at 78,036 I believe. The office has adopted the April 1 performance increase date which is applicable to all officers of the Legislative Assembly, and it incorporates a 2 per cent cost of living increase specific in the number that I gave you.

Mr. Heppner: — Okay. Those were the three questions I had. Thank you.

Ms. Baker: — I would like to make further comment. I would like to speak a bit to the adoption of a permanent federal voter registry. I am well aware that provincial parties do not have access to the current computerized list, the federal list. However, you also need to be aware that we need to assess from a Saskatchewan perspective our needs in order to give any consideration to adoption of the federal electoral list. Our voter data collection using postal code versus land based differs. Our

criteria for establishing constituencies differs; for example, constituencies, polling divisions, numbers, etc.

Harmonizing with the feds requires we risk loss of our provincial identity, which I never want to see occur. and that would result prior to consideration of a permanent voter registry established, developed, gathered, and maintained in Saskatchewan versus adoption of a permanent voter registry will have to be given future consideration.

However at this time, the provincial electoral office, because the office did not automate the 1995 provincial voters' list, we do not have — and because we have conflicting provisions in our legislation — we do not have that ability to use the current federal voter registry to compare that voter data or enhance that voter data.

So the best we can do is go with a base and establish our own enumeration through a hard enumeration during the next provincial election.

The Chair: — Thank you. Thanks, Mr. Heppner.

Mr. Whitmore: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I want to welcome you too, Ms. Baker, being the first independent Chief Electoral Officer in Saskatchewan.

In the area of new initiatives — and I want to take heart in the area of the provincial Electoral Advisory Committee, being involved directly in the writing of the new electoral Act that we had which brought in all parties to discuss it. And it was a very long process, but a worthwhile process by which all parties sat together and talked about similar . . . amazing enough found out there were similar problems in terms of the administration of the old Act and how to clean it up.

And I think the next step upon your appointment which was also based on an all-party committee doing so. I think there's a lot of room or opportunity to continue with that. Within the electoral time frame? No. But I think outside those time frames where we run into problems where . . . is to sit down, find out what those problems are, and then deal with them in terms of, I guess, amending the Act accordingly.

I think as you've mentioned some glitches already in terms of the database by which you can access the federal base. How we can bring those things together and do that. And I think that's where the Advisory Council can play an important role, not just from elected people but party organizational people too that come together, sit at the same table and talk about some common problems. So that — I just want to congratulate you on that. I think the web page development is a good idea too in terms of information flow and getting those kind of things out. I would certainly not adopt though, if you go into the election process of data . . . of collection the night of an election, the federal program. It had more holes and problems in terms of reporting . . . than certainly didn't fit the Saskatchewan model if you were going to build one for Saskatchewan.

Ms. Baker: — No you'll notice that the new addition of this are in the . . . under operational, under my operational expenditure estimates. Given the potential of a provincial election, many of these new initiatives may not get off the ground prior to a

provincial election.

Mr. Whitmore: — I fully understand.

Ms. Baker: — However I am in full agreement with the provincial Electoral Advisory Committee. I believe that electronic endeavours are the future and I think that, as I said, we have to assess the needs of Saskatchewan, not only the electorate but also the objectives of the political party and of the administrators of the electoral process. And if we could be cost-effective just by meeting on occasion and discussing these initiatives, it would be worthwhile.

Mr. Whitmore: — And I think too with the new Act, since it has not been tested on a writ yet to see how it works and make sure all the glitches are out of that Act too in terms of covering off some of the . . .

Ms. Baker: — Actually we've launched two by-elections . . .

Mr. Whitmore: — Oh, that's right too.

Ms. Baker: — Under the new legislation and no, we haven't worked all the glitches out yet.

Mr. Whitmore: — Yes.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Well, thank you very much but I think the questions that I was going to ask have been asked, so I will just make one little comment and that is with respect to the enumeration process and going into electronic voting system.

Is there any model that you know of anyplace, that has been used once at least, that has proven to be more efficient than the old system that we've got in place now?

Ms. Baker: — No.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you.

Ms. Baker: — I am not an advocate of a permanent voter registry. I believe that hard enumerations serve two purposes. They generate revenue at the constituency level during an election writ and they increase participation specific to that. They also, it is the number one way for an administrator as myself to inform the electorate that there still is a lot of the electorate out there that do not have access to media.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Now, Ms. Baker, I don't have any questions for you, I just want to welcome you on behalf of the Liberal caucus and congratulate you on your appointment. Having been one of those that has only been through one election and certainly a new learning experience for me as I'm sure it was for many of the other ones that were the first timers and hopefully that the next one will be much easier and much understandable for us and I'm sure that having heard what you've had to say today, that you're intending to help us in that regard and I'm looking forward to it. So I'm actually looking forward to that election in June . . .

The Chair: — Order, order, order, order. We keep getting around to this . . .

Mr. McLane: — I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman. I thought the members opposite alluded to June but maybe I'm mistaken. But anyway thank you and welcome Ms. Baker.

The Chair: — Having no one else on the speakers' list, if I may recommend to you a motion at this time. I recommend to you the motion:

That the 1999-2000 estimates for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer in the amount of \$580,233 statutory be transmitted to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Does someone wish to move that? Mr. Kowalsky. Is there a seconder? Mr. Heppner. Is there further discussion? There being none those in favour please indicate. Down. Opposed? And that's carried unanimously.

And Ms. Baker if I may also again repeat our congratulations to you, and I think obviously from the comments of the members their pleasure at having you in the office and the anticipation to see what kind of developments can occur through your office to facilitate the elections. And I think also to express our appreciation for your enthusiasm for the importance of participation by the citizens in the electoral process. Thank you very much for your detailed presentation here, and as well best wishes of the season to you and the very successful and happy 1999.

Ms. Baker: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you very much.

Ms. Baker: — Thank you, gentlemen.

The Chair: — Members of the board, we may now move forward to item no. 9 and which will relate to the Chief Electoral Officer. You have a backgrounder in your tab, item no. 9, and this flows forward just as a result of a minor oversight. When the board made the appointment of Ms. Baker back in September, on September 28, then it made the appointment effective October 1.

However, with the copy of the letter that you would have received at that time except for yourself, Mr. Heppner, the copy the members of the board received of a letter from the committee, the all-party committee an offer of appointment to Ms. Baker, pointed out that from the point of view of the committee that it would be effective September 1.

And so as a result of that there is a shortfall in remuneration to Ms. Baker in the amount of \$285. As you will know she was previously in the Chief Electoral Office and so she was already employed. With that in mind and that's outlined to you in the background, I do recommend to you the following motion:

In order to honour the offer made to Ms. Baker by the all-party selection committee a salary payment in the amount of \$285 be authorized to compensate Ms. Baker for the September salary loss.

Mr. Kowalsky, you'll move that. And is there a seconder? Mr. Whitmore. Is there discussion on that? If not, those in favour please indicate. Down. Opposed? That's carried unanimously.

This brings us along to item no. 10, and at this point I'm going to ask Marilyn Borowski I think — yes — Ms. Borowski to come forward. Now you will recognize that Ms. Borowski is much better looking than the Information and Privacy Commissioner but is not the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

You will have noted when we passed the motion earlier in today's meeting that the board would accept the responsibility of review of the budget of the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Conflict of Interests Commissioner that it was in response to a letter from the Minister of Finance to the Chair of the board dated yesterday and so the board has accepted that. Unfortunately, with the small amount of notice about this, the commissioner is not in the province and is out of province. And if it's acceptable to you, because I believe both budgets are for the exact same amounts . . .

Ms. Borowski: — No, they're different amounts.

The Chair: — No, sorry. They're different amounts but for the same as the previous year?

Ms. Borowski: — Oh, yes.

The Chair: — Yes. So given that this would be a first time presentation and that Derril McLeod, as the commissioner in both positions, has not previously made a submission for budget — this is the first time — but for the next fiscal year is requesting precisely the same figure as the previous year, if it's acceptable to you, then I would have the Legislative Assembly's director of financial services, Ms. Borowski, present them on his behalf. Is that acceptable to the board? Okay.

With your agreement, then, we'll move to item no. 10, review of the 1999-2000 budget of the Information and Privacy Commissioner and you will have that information in your book. And the fiscal request for the fiscal year of 1999-2000 is in the amount of \$63,000 which is precisely the figure assigned for the current fiscal year.

And, Ms. Borowski, were there any comments that you wish to make on behalf of the commissioner?

Ms. Borowski: — Well no, I don't think there are any really. It is the same as it has been actually for a few years now. His expenses as you can see are . . . his actuals have been less than that.

I understand from him he has a little bit of travel that he goes to conferences throughout, you know, possibly a Canadian conference or across the province. Other than that, other than his salary which was set by OC (order in council) and at the time that it was established was about one-third of a Provincial Court judge. It's fallen below that now but it's stayed the same.

Mr. McLeod had thought at the time the second part of this Act was proclaimed that his office would be busier but it hasn't turned out to be that much busier from when he was first appointed.

His expenses basically are done by contractual services. He has

an office in the firm where he is and so they provide him with secretarial support, reception support. They bill for the little bit of photocopying that he may have and some of those other expenses. That's pretty much the expenses for the office.

The Chair: — Okay, with those remarks the floor is open for questions or comments members may want to direct to Ms. Borowski on behalf of the commissioner. If there are no questions or comments, then it would be in order to have a motion. If someone wishes to indicate the . . . the request is for \$63,000, if someone wishes to indicate the amount that you wish to move. Mr. Whitmore.

If I can recommend to you then the precise wording for that motion:

That the 1999-2000 estimates for the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner be approved as submitted in the amount of \$63,000 and that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

As moved by Mr. Whitmore. Is there a seconder? Mr. Kowalsky. Is there further discussion? If not, those in favour please indicate. Down, opposed. And that's carried.

We'll move now to item no. 11 which is a review and that's in your tab, it's the next one immediately following, and this is review of the '99-2000 budget for the Conflict of Interest Commissioner who is also in the person of Derril McLeod.

And again you will note here that the budgetary request, this is the first budget for this office to come to the board, and the budget requests for fiscal year '99-2000 is in the amount of \$91,000 and precisely the same as the current fiscal year.

Having said that, I'll ask if Ms. Borowski would like to add any additional comments?

Ms. Borowski: — This is pretty much as the Information and Privacy Commissioner. The difference would be that the salary for the commissioner is higher here, and that's essentially the difference between this budget and the other.

The expenses of the office are somewhat the same — some travel expenses, his services, support services are provided by contract with financial services, Legislative Assembly doing his payroll and invoice processing — and then he has an annual report and that's pretty much those expenses.

The Chair: — Okay. The floor is open for questions or comments which may wish to be directed to Ms. Borowski.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Your item 220. I see building, other space at 24,000 and if I revert back to the previous budget that we passed, it would suggest to me that Mr. McLeod's office space should be then in the neighbourhood of . . . where is it . . . of twenty-four five plus 24, probably in the neighbourhood . . . just under \$50,000 for office space?

Ms. Borowski: — It's not all office space though, it will be the support that's also paid for his receptionist. That's kind of all those things that are in that amount.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — It's a contract split between the two entities.

Ms. Borowski: — That's right. Yes.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — So we're talking about total contract is around 50 grand then for office and reception and secretary, all of it.

Ms. Borowski: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay.

Mr. Heppner: — Okay, I think most of us have gone through this conflict of interest situation with you yearly a few times. I think it's been streamlined a little bit, maybe substantially, and hopefully it would be streamlined a whole lot more. So I would think that basically this should account for the time that we spend with the commissioner. And I think that's becoming a whole lot less for most of us. And I'm wondering if at some point in time that's going to be reflected over here as the system streamlines itself and becomes more efficient.

The Chair: — Are you referring to the amount of time that the commissioner spends?

Mr. Heppner: — No, the actual dollars over here eventually as the time should decrease.

Ms. Borowski: — I, again, would think that this is probably not likely in that his salary is set by OC and it is set at the 60,000; and that's the major part of that expense is the rest again because he does need an office to work out of and the other expenses are pretty basic when it comes . . .

The Chair: — I would add perhaps, if I may on behalf of the commissioner just through some conversation with him, that I believe he does share with members the desire to see some streamlining. I think there was some this year to try and make it a less complicated system of report without jeopardizing the accountability and the transparency of members avoidance of conflict-of-interest circumstances.

And I would concur with Ms. Borowski that in terms of cost, it's not likely that there's much potential to reduce that because it's set and Mr. McLeod, or the commissioner, must be available and is held available by position as opposed to number of hours invested. So either an increase or a reduction of time invested by him is likely to have very, very minimal financial impact.

Mr. McLane: — Just following up on that. I guess I'd ask the question, now that we're reviewing this now, does that give us any latitude? I mean is somebody else going to continue to set the salary for that position? I'm a little unsure of what we're doing here.

The Chair: — Yes, right . . . the responsibility . . . I'll let Ms. Borowski respond. The response to that, Mr. McLane, is the authority to set that by legislation, as I understand it, is given to the board and the board then by directive stipulated when the office was introduced in 1998 . . . no sorry, in February 1 of 1994, was said at that time to be half of the Ombudsman and

the Ombudsman's salary is linked to a provincial court judge. So it was established to try and put it into a formula that would represent the judicious expertise required and be fair remuneration. And then to specifically come back to your question, it is a matter then that could be altered by the board.

Mr. McLane: — I guess maybe this is something I should have raised when we agreed to take this on. I'm just wondering what purpose do we have in looking at this? I mean is it to one question, the question whether how much he spends on office space and rental or why are we spending time on it, I guess would be my question.

The Chair: — Well the answer to that question would be that it provides to the members of the board as representatives of the Legislative Assembly, by caucus, the ability to direct question and in this case budget, regarding officers of the Legislative Assembly. To what purpose? I guess really the answer to that has to come from each of the members of the board individually, and if there is a basic level of satisfaction that probably they may feel it doesn't require a lot of attention. If, however, in serving the Legislative Assembly as an officer of the Assembly, members feel that not only budget but procedure is a matter about which they would like clarification or maybe to have comment, then it provides a forum to do that. Okay?

Is there any further question or discussion? If not, then if I may recommend the amount requested in the budget is \$91,000. If someone would like to indicate whether you wish to move that amount? Mr. Whitmore. If I may recommend to you, Mr. Whitmore, the following motion then to achieve that:

That the '99-2000 estimates for the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner be approved as submitted in the amount of \$91,000; and that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Is there a seconder to that motion? Mr. Kowalsky. Is there further discussion? If not then those in favour please indicate. And opposed? And that's carried.

Members of the board, we've reached our . . . and thanks to Ms. Borowski for stepping in for the commissioner, Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. We'll see Ms. Borowski back again tomorrow as we proceed to item no. 12 which is the Legislative Assembly budget. We're at our time of recess now, and we said earlier that we would, before we would wrap up, that we would just address the time of our, the time that we're going to have. But, Mr. Lautermilch, did you . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well I wasn't addressing . . . I'm addressing a different issue.

The Chair: — Okay. Why don't you just go ahead quickly and do that then?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay.

The Chair: — Because what I want to do is just talk about our time. Mr. McLane had asked if we . . . what we were looking at and I want to review that.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay. One of our members have brought to my attention calendars that were purchased, pocket calendars, and it wasn't approved under the guidelines as interpreted by the LAO (Legislative Assembly Office) and by the Clerk's office. And I've had a look at it. I mean we approve wall calendars and we approve a calendar that you can sit on a desk, but we don't approve one you can put in your pocket. And I mean I thought the interpretation was a little narrow. And I think our members would like to see that included in that it's an expenditure that's already taken place, so it's a little bit of a different, a difficult situation for the member. And I certainly don't think there was any intent to expand in an inappropriate way what is allowed or what isn't allowed. But I mean you can have one on a desk, you can have one on a wall, but you can't have a calendar in the pocket. So I just raise it.

And we would certainly like, our caucus, would like to see that included in the interpretation.

The Chair: — As the Chair of the board, as Speaker, I would bow to the wishes of the board. This is not a matter that's in . . . it's not in, specifically, in a directive or a motion.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — It's not referred to in the . . .

The Chair: — No.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — . . . like in the directives.

The Chair: — No.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — But he makes the argument that I can buy one to sit on the desk, and I can buy one to put on the wall, and he can't buy a calendar to put in somebody's pocket, you know. And it just doesn't make sense to him, and I don't think it makes sense either but . . .

The Chair: — Well it's been the Chair's interpretation to deny that. But I'm in the hands of the board. If the board is indicating to me that you wish me to interpret that differently — they've done that occasionally in the past — I would find that acceptable.

Mr. Heppner: — I guess the only difficulty is we hadn't heard of this before. Because I guess we could rationalize almost anything into something else. I guess we have to draw the line some place, and wherever you draw it is going to be a crazy place — that's the problem. Other than that, yes, your argument is, is one's valid as the other. But you know the next thing you have pens that are calendars, you know and it just goes. So I don't know. It's . . .

The Chair: — I'm in the hands of the members of the board. If the members of the board are comfortable with that, I'm comfortable to changing my interpretation. If the members of the board are not all comfortable with it then I won't change my interpretation is basically what . . .

Mr. Heppner: — Just in the spirit I'll be charitable once.

The Chair: — Well let me ask the question because I need some clear direction on this, because what the board charges the Chair of the board to do is to make those fine point decisions

about the directives when they're in place. And obviously the directives don't have every i dotted and t crossed. That's my job to do it, and I accept that. If you're saying that you're comfortable with that, I'm comfortable doing that. Is there any objection to that? Let me ask that. If not . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay.

The Chair: — Then I'll give a little more liberal — small l — interpretation to the use of allowances to purchase calendars.

Now if I can come back to where we were. We'd said this afternoon that we would just review quickly. We're at item 12. So we've got left before us the LAO budget and some directive things related to that — a special warrant — most of which was looked at . . . a big chunk of the special warrant was the broadcasting stuff . . . No? No this is . . . What's before the board is entirely different. Okay, entirely separate from that. So there's some special warrant for the current fiscal year — that may take some time.

There is the request to have a directive to just slightly reorganize the *Estimates* book that comes to the Assembly. They separate out now, now that we have all of the officers coming to the board . . . to put that all in a separate kind of way from the rest of government expenditure. And then respond to the Provincial Auditor's memorandum and a caucus directive.

You will know better than I how you intend to work tomorrow. We're scheduled to start at 8:30 and adjourn at 12:00. That gives us three and a half hours tomorrow. And you're objective is to not meet on Friday. Ms. Crofford has told me before she left that she's not available herself either tonight or tomorrow afternoon or tomorrow night, so that whatever we decide, to know that she's not available.

What is your wish in terms of tomorrow? We will meet tomorrow at 8:30, there's no doubt about that. But I think you'd like some guidance for Friday, I think is . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Glenn, I think we'd like to accommodate Harvey. You know around Christmas time, I understand what goes on out there. There's lots of pressures. And I think we originally wanted to schedule enough time so that we can complete all our business and not have to come back after Christmas or whatever.

And I think certainly from what we have achieved today, the progress that we've achieved today, I really didn't think we'd get this far along. But I think we've made some good progress. And I don't see any reason that we couldn't adjourn you know by 12:00 or by 1:00 at the latest. I can stay here till 1:00 if I need to.

The Chair: — I can't, I could stay a bit past 12:00 but I can't stay I think anymore than 1:00.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — But I can stay if we need to. I mean if we've got Glenn's budget, and the rest of this stuff you know I mean a lot of it is just taking care of business, I mean it's just not a big issue. And unless we run into some glitch in the budget tomorrow, my guess would be we can complete by noon.

The Chair: — Okay, so we'll set as our target to complete the agenda by noon?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And if we have a little overrun from one, well, we'll see how it goes. I mean that's . . .

The Chair: — I think if you've got that assurance, I think you want to make some commitment. Because all I can say to you is if we're not then done by noon or within an hour of noon, we're really back at the end of January and those days we'd ask you to hold. So . . .

Mr. Heppner: — The agenda looks like we should get it done in about two hours to three hours the way we're going today. But you can get . . . we can get hung up on something really trivial and spend an hour on that.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — It's tough to make a commitment. If you knew it tomorrow at noon, Harvey, whether we're going to be railing on here or whether we're going to be adjourning, is that too late for you to make your plans?

Mr. McLane: — I think actually I made the commitment that I'll be there, and I think the way the agenda's going, we're going to be close enough to being finished. If I'm not back Friday morning, well then that's . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Look, if there's something left over, I think we can be flexible enough that we would . . . the budgets I think need to be out of the way.

The Chair: — Yes, I think if Mr. McLane isn't here on Friday, we do still have a quorum as long as Mr. Heppner is. So that doesn't prevent us from doing it, but I think we would prefer to be dealing with these things with all caucuses represented if at all possible.

Mr. Heppner: — If we can give it a good shot we might be done tomorrow.

The Chair: — Well let's do the best we can by noon, see if we need to extend an hour to complete, and if not we may have to come back to Friday to finish.

So see you tomorrow morning at 8:30 sharp. Thanks very much gentlemen.

The meeting adjourned at 5:03 p.m.

The Chair: — Let me call the meeting to order again and welcome you back for the continuation of meeting no. 4/98. And we will begin on item 12. We have items 12 to 16. Item 12, as you will note from your agenda, has several parts to it and I think will occupy a fair chunk of time.

I do want to make one alteration to your agenda as you see it before you. Item 12(b) is written as an information item; it should be a decision item. There's a decision related to that that will require a motion.

And also as we go through the Legislative Assembly Office budget, which will begin just momentarily here, that I'll present to you, it has been our practice in the past, and I really will insist that we continue the same, that on matters that relate to personnel or to security that we discuss those in camera.

There is and there will be . . . there is in both the budget itself, of course, as always, but there is some B-budget reference to security matters which I will want to do in camera. And because the Sergeant-at-Arms needs to be away by 5 to 10 . . .

A Member: — 9:30

The Chair: — By 9:30. Okay. If I can ask then perhaps at 9:15, if we're not at that stage, if we could just move ahead to the security items and do them in camera so that we can have the Sergeant-at-Arms here for that, if that's acceptable to you.

And let me introduce the officials from the Assembly who are joining us for the review of this budgetary proposal. To my right of course is the Clerk of the Assembly, Gwenn Ronyk. Everyone will know Gwenn. I think everyone knows all of these people, but for the record.

We have with us then . . . let's see. Beside Gwenn here — we'll do it in this order — director of financial services, Marilyn Borowski, who's here representing herself today. And she's actually herself today.

Marian Powell, our Legislative Librarian. Our Sergeant-at-Arms, Pat Shaw. Director of human resources and administration, Linda Kaminski. And Greg Putz, the Deputy Clerk, will be joining us momentarily.

If I can refer you then to the expenditure . . . estimates expenditure. Or expenditure estimates I mean for 1999-2000. And what I'd like to do, gentlemen, is begin on the very first page, sum 1. What I'd like to do is to outline on pages sum 1 and sum 2 the prevailing factors that will identify largely the bulk of what would be changes from status quo and that would also identify the most significant of the increases or decreases on either side.

So if we can start on sum 1, the budget basis on the right-hand column there; if I can just walk through this with you if you don't mind, the budget will be, as you will recognize, is divided into two categories. One is what's called budgetary, which is in essence . . . that's the administration of the Legislative Assembly, and that has to do with the operation of the Legislative Assembly in its many facets. The other part will be statutory.

And most of our emphasis here will be on budgetary because there are elements of control; statutory is largely simply consequential, because of the fact that they are statutory; and then factors that I'll touch on now.

In our estimates here, we have used 76 sitting days as our basis for calculation, which over the years has been our average amount and that's what we have used in the last several years and continue to use this year again in order to make an assumption for calculations. And that will affect both budgetary as well as statutory.

Now on the item no. 2, and this is where I would like to just give some element of focus, we find ourselves in the same circumstance in the Legislative Assembly, as will the public service, as will the offices of the Assembly who of the board has already heard from earlier in this meeting, and this has to do with personnel. Now in the budgets that you have before you or the budget you have before you, both the budgetary as well as the statutory . . . as a matter of fact 60 per cent of that budget is personnel of the total budget. It's 59-point something in budgetary and 60-point something in statutory, but it averages out to almost exactly 60 per cent is personnel. So the budget will be largely personnel focused in its content because that's the nature of how we operate.

I point out to you that you'll see this as we go through that there are absolutely no changes in person years. It is exactly the same as in the previous year's budget. But as you look through the budget, you will see that by far the areas that identify increases virtually always they will be in the personnel area. And the thing that drives that is the fact last year's budget was presented to you without knowledge of what the agreement was going to be for the public service. And as is put in statute, the personnel of the Legislative Assembly are required to be treated in a similar way to the public service and that has been our long-standing tradition.

In planning for budget we did the same. But then with the settlements that occurred providing for the 2 per cent October 1997, 2 per cent October 1998, and 2 per cent October 1999, what that means is all, in budgetary planning terms, that there's 2, 2, and then half a year so a 5 per cent salary increase is necessary. And the planning is outlined here to capture that in this fiscal year.

And you'll see that pressure throughout the entire budget because there's virtually every category — not virtually — I think every category will have personnel. And as you look at the personnel, you'll find virtually always that the highest financial pressure will be in personnel. And it will be because of that combined with the second factor which has to do with the government's new in-scope classification plan and pay equity adjustments.

And in the keeping of parity between legislative and executive public servants, then the classification review and the pay equity will have . . . the classification review will affect many employees throughout the entire public service including their own. The pay equity will affect those occupations which are predominantly female and will, clearly I think, to everyone be most pronounced in positions that we would traditionally call

clerical kinds of positions. And you'll recognize that the kinds of employment that we have in the Legislative Assembly is largely clerical in its nature, and therefore is significantly influenced by the pay equity as well.

So that, along with the 2 per cent cost-of-living adjustment to salaries and allowances and then the normal adjustments as employees move through their pay scales, will describe to you the rationale behind the large bulk of what you'll see on the increased size of this budget. So I want to emphasize that because you'll see that over and over as we go through.

On the left-hand side there you will see on the big figure last year's budget was approved at \$14,925,000 in total. And this year's budget then requests an increase of 3.68 per cent. Clearly the personnel pressures are actually higher than that and so we're up in personnel costs but down in non-personnel costs. We've tried hard in this to respect the desire for restraint and to manage where we could to incorporate reductions.

You'll see there on the left hand side then that there are some B-budget. It's not been my practice previously to bring B-budget items; but there are some items that I have not put in the A budget because these are items that I've identified as things that I think we could live without if we had to. And I put them therefore in the B-budget category for your information. So with the B-budget items included, the total request of this budget is 4.13 per cent. Okay?

If you flip over to the next page then sum 2, and if I can start again on the budgetary side because that's the order that we'll go through when we review the budget. First of all, then there will be some areas of decrease and I'll just concentrate on the bigger ones, or the ones that are either less clear or are more significant.

On the decrease side we've been able to find some decreases in broadcast services because of the equipment circumstance and changes we've made. Our request is down over 42,000 reduction there. Computer support in administration and Legislative Library combined, you will recognize — except for yourself, Mr. Heppner — that in previous years there have been consideration. We went for a long time where the Legislative Assembly was needing badly to update computers and it got delayed and delayed.

It finally was approved I think three years ago, four years ago, I forget the number, but from that then there was a plan for continued computer expenditure into the future that we've continued to follow. However, we varied from that in this budget and we've reduced our expenditure on computer hardware and software from the plan that had been previously presented and accepted in principle, and we've dropped that down by \$40,000 in computer expenditure in order to try and keep our cost down.

Our committee support, based on our experience in recent times, we think it's realistic and this is not the MLA-(Member of the Legislative Assembly)-related expenses, but the support expenses of the Legislative Assembly, we think we can reduce that by a little over \$10,000 realistically based on current practice.

In caucus offices, because of changes in long-distance expenses, we think we can realistically drop that by nearly \$10,000, and postage is down by over \$20,000. Again this comes back to having made the decision to put the . . . this is almost entirely explained by putting the *Hansard* on the Internet. So when we went to that we used technological advancement to make our *Hansard* more accessible, and also then we eliminated the printing of *Hansard* except for our internal purposes; and also one of the consequences there is we are able then to reduce our mailing costs as well.

Item no. 2, you'll see this is by far, this is where all the pressure is and I've just finished explaining that to you. On the personnel side then when we look at the equity adjustments, the in-scope plan, and the normal staff increments, and the cost of living, you put all of that together, it's \$259,000 for the staff that we have here. And you'll see on the budgetary side that with an increase of 200,000, in fact what we're presenting is a budget that honours the same kinds of commitments to the Legislative Assembly that the government has made to public service and other than that reduces our overall . . . actually is an actual reduction of overall expenditures in the neighbourhood of \$59,000 reduction.

Item no. 3, Saskatchewan is in the rotation of Clerk professional development conferences in the nation. It's our turn in this fiscal year, so there's a \$20,000 request there to honour our obligations in that annual event.

And then on item no. 4, the distribution of the televised legislative proceedings, a couple of factors. The fibre optic link between the Legislative Building and SaskTel, and as well as the maintenance and help line result in an increase of 22,000 over last year. But when we get to it, you'll see it's still a substantial decrease over the year before that. Item no. 4 again is beyond our control and has to do with simply delivering the televised proceedings as we have been doing, and as you know, increasing our coverage there.

Item no. 6 is one that's brand new. It's also a double digit — \$12,000 — the social sciences teachers' institute. And all of the caucuses will be aware of this from discussions that I've had. In order to assist the teachers of Saskatchewan, our social sciences teachers, to make that link between the legislature, the legislative process, democracy in Saskatchewan and the classroom, as you know in April we will be having some 24 Saskatchewan social sciences teachers from all around the province who will be coming to here to engage in professional development and you'll be interacting with them at a whole variety of levels, why they're doing that.

So this is the Legislative Assembly's, under the auspices of the Speaker's office, attempt to contribute to professional development to our education system and increase the effectiveness of the teaching of democracy as applied in Saskatchewan.

Then no. 7, because of the increased space in Walter Scott Building related to the Legislative Library, SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) has increased their charges to us and that's in the amount of \$17,000.

On the miscellaneous increases and decreases, the one that I want to bring to your attention — the others are all straightforward and smaller amounts — is the broadcasting, the advertising program for sessions.

What we did last year with the expansion of the television services to a number of rural communities that hadn't previously been covered, in addition to asking MLAs in those areas to advertise through their own means, the Legislative Assembly did some advertising as well to let people know that the channel was going to be available where it wasn't before.

We don't have any expansions this year and I'm recommending that we don't do any pre-session advertising at LAO expense of the availability on TV, and that we pull that out of our expense and rely simply on MLAs to do that as they would see fit. We'll communicate to the MLAs a reminder, make available posters that MLAs could use and that sort of thing, but we wouldn't do some newspaper advertising.

So that's on the budgetary side.

If we flip over to the statutory side, the two . . . There's a couple of things there that I would like to bring to your attention. The statutory side will largely be, you will know from our directives, will largely be affected by the cost of living increase because their formulas tag to the cost of living. And so by far the most significant figure on the statutory side is the figure 2 per cent because that is what we decided was the most accurate estimate of the inflationary increase and that's been applied then to all of the various grants that you see listed there. And as you go down that list, you'll see virtually all of them are tied to that. And so that's by far, in item no. 1, the 2 per cent, you'll see the increases that that causes in the budget on the statutory side.

There are some decreases there as well that you will note. And then on the item no. 5, on the research officer's salary changes, that one we're assuming at this point in time that because there's a formula for that one that we're going to apply to our formula — the 2-2 and half of the third 2 — in the per cent increases as calculated. There will be a specific item on your agenda that I'll refer you to later but that's our budgetary assumption on that.

Our postage. There is a postage rate increase because of our anticipated rate in the increase of postage that also affects formulas and you'll see the impact there.

In constituency assistants, with the changes, there has been a change in classification and currently the formula for . . . because monies available to MLAs for your constituency assistants is tied to clerk 3. So when that changes, that triggers the change in monies made available to you.

Now what has happened is that in the classification changes, clerk 3 has disappeared. That is a category that no longer exists. And as we have tried to . . . tried to tie it to the most appropriate parallel that we can find in the classification then that will also result in a significant increase in monies available for MLAs to use for your constituency assistants as you can see. Now that isn't money that goes directly to them, that's monies available in the formula for members to use and . . . but that's where that

comes from and you will have a parallel motion. That's one of the decision items as well that comes, that would need to change the directive in order to put that in place. And we'll come to that more in specific detail at that time.

So members of the board, that outlines to you the prevailing stresses, opportunities for reduction, and the overall big picture. And what I'm going to recommend then is that we will move through the budget category by category and I'll simply go to you for questions as we're going through it, but that at 9:15 if we're not at the Sergeant-at-Arms services by that time, that we'll go in camera for consideration of those.

But before I get into the budget on these prevailing factors, is there any questions or comments anyone would like to make before we starting dealing with it page by page? Oh, and Margaret will pass out the background for the B-budget items as well. We'll come to that later in our agenda. We won't deal with that as we're going through on the first part.

Any questions or comments anybody wants to make on the big picture?

Mr. Kowalsky: — I may have missed the . . . what you mentioned there, under statutory increases, number 6, postage rates.

The Chair: — Yes.

Mr. Kowalsky: — What is the source of that increase?

The Chair: — Canada Post is increasing the cost of a stamp by one cent in January. And that's part of the formula for funding to MLAs for the communication activities tied to the cost of postage stamps. So that's, that's where it comes from and how it's applied.

Anything else? Okay. Are you ready to just starting moving through it then? If we can start walking through it then and you'll notice on page 1 then what I said, you know, my introductory remarks on the personnel summary, you'll see on the permanent employees: 56 employees in our current statutory year and 56 is the proposal. Sessional employees equivalents of person years 23.29 current fiscal year, 23.29 in the proposal. And as you look at them you'll see that all of the categories are — excuse me — are identical. So that outlines our personnel status which is a status quo.

Now on the first item then is number 0010, Board of Internal Economy. And that's the budget related to our operation ourselves, and you'll see the summary on page 2 and then the specifics on page 3. And I'll ask if there are any questions anyone has related to the board proposal. If not, then we'll move to general administration, number 0009. And you'll see assembly administration then, 0901, on page 5 is the summary and you'll see a pattern here that personnel services are up and you'll see virtually always the other expenses is a much lower figure and often is a reduction as it is here.

And then as you go to pages 6, 7, and 8, you will find the specifics. And then as you go to pages 8.1 and 8.2, you will find summarized the attention to the computer services. And you will note on page 8.2 a reduction of \$30,000 computer expenses

from the Legislative Assembly offices. And then as I said before, there is another 10,000 in computer services that comes out of Legislative Library later on.

And page 9 then outlines the personnel specifics.

Are there any questions anyone has in any of those?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes, Mr. Speaker. Just on computer expenses, page 8.2. I have a question with respect to 272 consulting services, management system services. This would I would assume be consulting contracts, troubleshooting. Is that correct?

The Chair: — It's a combination of permanent and contract employees who are providing services on an ongoing basis.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Is any of this service available on a broader basis? I guess what I'm asking is, are any of these services made available to the caucuses, the individual caucuses?

The Chair: — Not from 272, Mr. Lautermilch. We had a contract with a help desk that was offered to caucuses and to constituency offices that was not taken up, so we've taken that back last year.

This is something that could be done. But if we were going to provide that kind of resource to caucuses, we don't think it could be done with the amount of resource that we have here. This is occupying the time of the contract and employment person that we have with the amount available in 272.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — How much is in house and how much is contracted?

The Chair: — Of the . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Of the 72,000 that you're requesting.

The Chair: — So this is all contract. And then the full time is how much? 47,000 for the full time and then the 72,000 is all contract.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — You'll have to explain to me. The 47,000 is where?

The Chair: — You'll find that on page 6, code . . . in the 130 category, so I guess if you went to page 9, you'd . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Under permanent salaries?

The Chair: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Then see page 9?

The Chair: — Then see page 9. If you go to page 9 and then it's in code 130 on the . . . it's included in the permanent staff, five years, \$203,951 under personnel administrative services.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Is this part of . . . is this one of the two non-permanent staff then or how is this one dealt with?

Ms. Ronyk: — It is actually . . . It's a permanent position but it's filled on a non-permanent basis at the moment.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay, I'm just wondering in terms of support to the caucuses, this kind of support, do we have this as a component of the caucus budget, or is it just part of the formula. How does that work? In terms of support for caucuses and the computer . . . you know, I just, I guess I look at the dependency on the computers, both within your office, and I'm assuming that the same pressures are there as with the caucuses. And I guess I'm wondering if the amount that we're allocating the caucuses with respect to support to their computer systems is on a parallel basis with what we're doing with the Legislative Assembly Office.

Ms. Ronyk: — The funding that caucuses use for their computer support is out of their own caucus grants. The Assembly does not provide separate funding for computer support for the caucuses.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — So then we really haven't, I guess, in the formula . . . Has the formula taken into account changing pressures with respect of computerized systems over the years?

Ms. Ronyk: — No.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — So we're asking the caucuses individually then to absorb these kinds of incremental costs; they're tied to their formula.

The Chair: — The funding has not been changed for quite some time.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I know that.

The Chair: — Yes. And so the answer to that would be in terms of that or any other kinds of changes it may be an argument for reviewing the formula. That's a pressure factor, I think, for the caucuses, it's fair to say, it has not altered in any way the budgets that the caucuses . . . or the grants that the offices . . . that the caucus offices are receiving.

Yes, I'm reminded as well, there have been, as you will know on one occasion I guess, there was a one-time grant for hardware that was related to computer pressures. But there have never been any particular grants to caucuses for support services in computer services.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay, so basically we haven't in the formula recognized any kind of those incremental pressures or increased costs. It's just a matter of formula, and they internally are asked to then within their budget, within their allocation, they will absorb these kinds of costs within their formula.

The Chair: — That's right. That's right. And it's not specified in any specific detail how that would be done and that is all of course reported publicly then when the caucuses submit their audited statements.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I guess the question I'm asking here, just as a more general question. We have spent thousands and thousands of dollars on upgrading our computer system

within the Legislative Assembly Office and I don't see an end to . . . I would expect with a new system there are going to be some start-up pressures and I understand all of that. But, and I see overall in computer expenses there is a decrease here of \$30,000, but I would have expected after the investment that we put into upgrading that system, that we could be looking a much greater decrease in terms of the amount of expenditure.

I would take you to item 641. And I'm certainly no computer buff — I know very, very little about them. But what I do know is that we continue to spend more and more and more and more on computers. And I'm looking on page 82, item 641, computer hardware — you're asking for another \$60,000 to replace a server, network hubs, adapters, monitors. And I'm wondering if we were, if we were not to do this would your system crash? Would things fall apart?

What I'm looking for here is a way to . . . And I know you're attempting to control your costs, but again we're looking at a 4 per cent increase, almost four point whatever if we look at the B-budget as well. Is this an absolute necessity or is our system going to crash if we don't do it?

The Chair: — Let me just answer in general terms, and then I'll ask Ms. Ronyk to respond a little more specifically. When we . . . You'll remember having been a member of the board when all of the discussions went on for, I think for two or three years actually, before there was the approval to make some major investment in computers here in the LAO. And at that time then what was presented to the board with that proposal when it was adopted was a financial plan which would involve the maintenance of the system so as to prevent it from becoming outdated and reaching a repeat of the circumstance where we find ourselves having to make a major investment in any given fiscal year.

With that in mind, as I've said earlier, what we've done is we've taken that plan and this portion of it and reduced it already in the proposal before you by \$30,000, and with an additional \$10,000 reduction out of the library. So what we've . . . Do we think that we're jeopardizing the ongoing, you know, the ongoing maintenance of the system in the operations of our computers somewhat by doing that? The answer is yes. But I think in minor terms. But we do recognize that we're starting to step back again from what we would consider to be reasonable maintenance of a system once you've invested the money to put it there to keep it operating to serve you.

But I'll ask Ms. Ronyk to add the specific terms to that, Mr. Lautermilch.

Ms. Ronyk: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I can just maybe give a bit of an overview of how our expenses in the computer field have developed over the years. And it certainly is an important part of our budget and has been for some time.

I think if we look back about 15 years ago when we first started to automate, what kind of . . . what was the mode then was you went and you bought a new system and you put it in and then you used it for three or four or five years. And then by that time it was obsolete and outmoded and no longer meshed with anyone else's, and so then you replaced it and you bought another system. This time it was for a likely for a little bit

shorter time before it got outmoded.

But we did that twice. And the last time we renewed our system in 1995-96 we realized and were advised that times had changed substantially, and it was time to upgrade our system and to maintain it at an upgraded level. The technology is changing just too fast for us to purchase and then sit still for two or three or four years as we used to be able to do.

So what we now do is we did make a substantial purchase in '95-96. Our computer expenses that the board approved that year were \$555,000. That was the big blip that you're referring to.

This year we're asking for 270,000 compared to that large amount. So I think we have in many ways achieved what you're looking for, Mr. Lautermilch, in seeing some savings compared to that initial outlay that we experienced in '95.

But what we're also being able to accomplish is that we're maintaining our system at a good level. We don't have a Cadillac but we have a system that is able to adapt to changing technology. We upgrade our hardware and our software on a regular basis as the new releases come out. We're keeping up to date.

And over this time period since '95-96, that investment has paid off in several big ways. One, we've increased our service to the public and to members, primarily by giving access to legislative documents and information online on the Web site. And that does take . . . We keep it up to date. It's one of the best we think in the country and we do have people that keep telling us that. And it does take a lot of resources to do that, but we think it's important.

And at the same time by doing so, as Mr. Speaker announced earlier, we have over the last couple of years saved in printing. We're saving in postage. So that even though our request here is substantially less, it doesn't reflect necessarily the savings that we have gained in other parts of the budget as well.

So we feel that our management committee that manages our computer operations really wanted a \$300,000 budget this year and we did cut that back to 270,000. And it just means we'll delay replacing certain pieces of equipment. We do have a major server purchase that we have to make that has to be done this year, and that will use a good hunk of that hardware estimate this year.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — That's part of item 641 then?

Ms. Ronyk: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — If you were to delay that for a year, what would be the deferral?

Ms. Ronyk: — We've already delayed our server for a year and we just feel we have to do that this year.

If we delay . . . Like the hardware purchase here, it's only for a small part of our overall system. We have a large number of pieces, printers and monitors and computers and servers and network equipment in our system. And we now have to expand

it to include our staff that had been out of the building into Walter Scott. *Hansard* and library staff are now over there.

And we've had to make sure that they're still part of our network so that we don't lose the benefits that we have through technology. We can minimize the effects of having them removed from the building by having the technology, the links, and the e-mail and the Web site that we have.

If we delay, if we cut more out of the hardware for example, it just really means that we'd end up spending more on repairs. And maintenance and repairs are expensive as well, because we do have . . . a large number of our monitors are getting to be in the three and four years old.

The last thing we upgraded was the CPUs (central processing unit), the hard drives, but we didn't change the monitors at that time. Now we are needing to upgrade more of the monitors. And if we don't, we end up then with more money in repairs and in the staffing support that we need to provide.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — In terms of your repair budget, where has that been say over the last four years, five years, as we've invested money in new computers, new monitors, whatever we're doing? How has that repair budget decreased? Have we had a corresponding decrease in the amount of money we've invested in new stuff to get rid of the old stuff? Is our repair budget decreasing?

Ms. Ronyk: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And where can I see that on . . .

Ms. Ronyk: — Because the repairs are largely not so much hardware related because we keep it . . . we keep them up to date. But it is . . . the bigger effect is on the personnel, the computer consultants, that we have . . . having to maintain outdated equipment is burdensome there.

The benefits for having new equipment is, of course, they're under warranty for how long usually . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Either one year to three years' warranty. So repairs there are not an expense to us as long as they're under warranty. And as soon as we lose the warranty on a big piece of equipment, some of our bigger printers or copiers, then we're looking at more in maintenance.

Now I don't know if we can identify an item that's . . . If you look under code 277 in your list there — hardware support — you will see that we're asking for 10,000 and last year we had asked . . . In '96-97 we had asked for 20,000. And last year for 11,000 and this year for 10 . . . or this last year for 10,000. So it's come down from 20,000 to 10,000 with the new system.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Are these the actual expenditures? What are the actuals in hardware support for those years, then? If you could give me the budget and the actuals for those years.

Ms. Ronyk: — In code 277, in 1996-97, the approved was 20,000; our actual was 15,700. In '97-98 . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — That was '97-98?

Ms. Ronyk: — No, that was '96-97.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — '6-7, okay; '97-8?

Ms. Ronyk: — In '97-98, our budget was 11,000 and our actual in that code is only 1,459.

A Member: — 1,400.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — 1,400?

Ms. Ronyk: — Yes, we did purchase some new equipment that year instead of renewing maintenance leases.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And '98-99, your request was 10?

Ms. Ronyk: — Our budget request was 10,000.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And your actual?

Ms. Ronyk: — And I'll have to look up our year to date. That'll just be year to date and it's . . .

The Chair: — Just a little over halfway through '98-99.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Projection, though. Like I guess I'll ask what you've spent and what you think you'll spend.

Ms. Ronyk: — We've only spent \$1,000 as of October, in November, in that code this year.

But as our equipment gets older, that's where we would expect to see the pressure.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Can I ask you then on item 645, your maintenance on your software, you're requesting 35,000 for this year, and '98-99 was 35,000. Can you give me the corresponding actuals and budget requests for that, item 645?

The Chair: — Just while they're looking it up, Mr. Lautermilch, I'm looking at the clock. Do you have a few more questions on this or is this is your . . . if this is your last, we'll finish here and then go to . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — No, I have more questions on this.

The Chair: — Maybe if you don't mind can we just move to Security and then come back to this then.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes.

The Chair: — If you just had one more I'd finish it and move along, but if I can ask the staff to just find that information for Mr. Lautermilch while we move to security services, while the Sergeant-at-Arms is here and before he has to leave.

And if I can get you to move to page 36. And for this then I would like to declare that the meeting will go in camera.

The meeting continued in camera.

The Chair: — Okay, gentlemen thank you for that consideration of security matters in camera. We'll now renew

our discussion of general Assembly administration. And we'll come back to Mr. Lautermilch's question regarding computer expenses. And I'll ask the Clerk to respond to your question, Mr. Lautermilch.

Ms. Ronyk: — We'll continue on with the question with regard to hardware maintenance on code 277. Our budget for this current fiscal year is \$10,000. Our check shows that to date we've spent about a thousand dollars of that but all of our maintenance . . . or a number of our maintenance contracts are coming due now. And we expect our projections are that we'll be spending \$12,000 in this code in this fiscal year.

Your next question had to do with software, maintenance code 645. These are mainly upgrades to our software licences. You buy a licence to use software for a period of time and you have to . . . whenever there's an upgrade you have to upgrade the licence as well. It gets quite expensive.

Our budget in '97-98 was 35,000; our actual expenditures were 22,300.

In '98-99 our budget was 40,000, year to date already we've spent 40,400 and there could be some more charges yet in this fiscal year. And our budget request for the next year is 40,000.

There's wider use being made of more variety of software in the Assembly as people become more skilled and software becomes more tailored to particular uses, and we want to make use both of what's out there and the skills of our people as well.

Do you have other codes that you want to query, Mr. Lautermilch?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — No, just for that particular code could I have the figures for '96 and 7 as well. I had them on item 277, I'd kind of like them for this . . .

Ms. Ronyk: — Sixty-four, our budget in '96-97 was 55,000. We actually spent 26,800.

The Chair: — That's 646 because you combined them — you were looking at them together.

Ms. Ronyk: — Okay. Then combined the budget was 65,000 and we spent 38,000.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay.

The Chair: — Okay, any more questions. And coming back to your previous reference as well. It's certainly legitimate for the board, as you're going through and approving the Legislative Assembly budget, it's certainly legitimate to deal with these things on a line-by-line basis and when, you know, when we're talking about cost implications for, you know, for operating an office, the fact that the caucus office budget's formula has not changed for quite some time may be something that the board would like to direct be reviewed and considered in light of, you know, modern day considerations and expenses for operating with technology in the caucus offices. Because quite admittedly, that has not been changed for quite some time.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I think, Mr. Speaker, if I could, I

think it would be appropriate to ask the Clerk to consult with the caucuses in hopes of maybe understanding better the pressures if there are any there, so that we might be able to have a recommendation come to board members and be able to deal with that in the context of the formula that we're using to fund the caucus offices for next budget year . . . for the next budget cycle.

Ms. Ronyk: — Certainly I would be quite prepared to do that. And it is something that we have known for years we needed to address, whether we ought to be looking at technology and computer expenditures on a Assembly-wide basis, rather than just the Legislative Assembly support areas, doing our thing, caucuses each doing their own thing, constituency offices doing something else again.

In many jurisdictions they have put in a sort of a common service throughout and with common networking. Take Alberta, for example, they provide the . . . the Legislative Assembly provides computer services and support to the constituency offices, to the caucuses, and to all of the Legislative Assembly offices. And they feel that's a good way to do it.

We have probably over the years saved money by doing it separately but we haven't done as well. We haven't properly provided the services that caucuses could use and need and certainly not the services that constituency offices could use.

But just as an example, in Alberta the systems group that they have to support that is seven people. And we're looking at doing . . . we support our own with two people but were we to do a larger network, it would be a central cost.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Just to finish that, I haven't consulted with any of the other caucuses on this, but I know in talking with our caucus staff, they do experience some pressures. I'm just wondering if the opposition caucuses would agree to having a look at that and maybe some recommendations coming back to the board from the three caucuses.

The Chair: — I've got a list here and I think . . . and that's legitimate. We're not dealing directly with the budget. But we are really dealing with budgetary matters and to look at alternative forms of delivery, it all comes out of still this same budget so this is . . . I don't consider this off topic even though it's not specifically dealing with the pages that are before us.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think it's probably a good idea certainly to talk to the other caucuses or to all caucuses about this. But I think it should go farther than that, I think it has to go out to our constituency offices. Being one that's 75 or 80 miles from a major centre or someone that knows anything about computers and comes to fixing them, it's a major expense for my constituency office when I have trouble.

I think it needs to be looked at in the context as well with the — I'm not sure which directive it's under — but with a \$6,000 one-time allowance for computer equipment — being one that accessed that program — I have had nothing but trouble with the computer since I've got it, thinking that the computer maybe was used before in some form and has created some problems

with me on the Internet and all type of things, and paying people to come from the city to constantly look at this thing. And if you look at those total dollars in the context of other MLAs, I don't know who anybody else is having trouble but we certainly have, and I hear from other people so I think it's a must that we look into this and see if there is something.

You know there's always a cost attached and we're dealing with the cost of computers here today again, but I think it's something that has to be looked at in the context not only of the caucus offices here but in the constituency offices and especially those out of the cities.

The Chair: — Thanks, Mr. McLane.

Mr. Whitmore: — I guess beyond that too, looking at . . . I think we also have to look at the concept too of members within the Assembly. Some Assemblies now are allowing access not just within the offices, in the Chamber in terms of accessibility because there is a link here as Mr. McLane has stated and has been stated in terms of the caucus offices. They are not up to the same speed or technology as the Assembly or anywhere else in the modern world in terms of the linkage into the system.

And I think this is a broad-based thing that has to be looked at because if the members aren't in at the same realm in terms of participation, I don't think the system does anybody any good. If Mr. McLane's computer is unable to access on the Internet and the Web site in terms of *Hansard* or in terms of other documents that are put out by the legislator or his own, or his own caucus office, then within the system that we have here the system only exists within the four walls. Because if that system cannot communicate with the elected members, then it's not serving any useful purpose.

And I think that has to be noted within any system how it connects with the members, that includes caucuses and the elected officials and within the Chamber or within their offices. I know there is expense and all that but the system has to work in terms of the elected officials and the contact with the public.

The Chair: — Just in response to that, Mr. Whitmore, the Communications Committee of the legislature has, at its last meeting in the spring, begun some discussion about the whole use of electronics within the Assembly itself. And in my judgment in essence decided that it's an important matter to consider but I believe felt it was an appropriate task to do early in a new term rather than late in a term. And what it would require is for the committee to receive a mandate to do that from a motion of the Assembly. The committee had had some discussion about that. It didn't decide to proceed at this time.

But I do anticipate that early in the next term, there may very well be a desire from the committee to seek a mandate from the Assembly to do a review and make recommendations. And that they consider that among a number of other things as well.

Mr. Whitmore: — Well in light of that and as made mention, technology changes every 24 hours. We're not keeping pace and I guess I urge a greater sense of urgency, though I know that it can't be done this session. But I think we have to look at it and Mr. McLane's right, buying the system is one thing, supporting it is another and that's not represented in the

constituency budget that there at that time. Now maybe we can share resources in terms of what's provided in the Assembly in terms of some of that systems support, I don't know, but we need to be looking at those kinds of things.

Mr. Heppner: — Okay, just a couple of general comments. I think our caucus probably is having some of the same difficulties all the rest are with just, you know, kind of replacing one piece at a time and the whole thing is never in step. I think that's the other thing we have to look at over here because we're talking about what we're dealing with right now and we've thrown constituency and caucus into the mix.

What tends to happen I think is we take one area and we move it up to where we're at in time and then half a year, a year later, we move a different area, it takes that one step ahead and we're never dovetail. So there may be some argument to be made today to go ahead and hold everything back with the idea that, well let's let things get a little antiquated here for a year or two and then do the whole thing at once.

Because if we don't do that what will happen is we'll have that discussion and we'll say yes, but the caucuses are now all up to date and they just bought all new equipment so if we're going to put it all together we're going to have equipment that's sort of out of sync again. So maybe we have to let things . . . I know it gets a little scary to run down a computer system, but let it all run down a bit and then say we're going to do the whole thing.

The Chair: — I think what I'm going to do here is ask the secretary to try and formulate a motion for your consideration after we've gone through the budget just on this matter. Because I think what I'm hearing around the table is unanimous desire to see some review take place.

And I think what I'm hearing being suggested is a request that the Clerk of the Assembly undertake a review of computer demands in the Legislative Assembly, caucus offices and constituency offices, and bring recommendations for board consideration regarding putting in place appropriate resources for the members to perform their duties — or something of that nature. But I'll ask the secretary to formulate a motion for us that we'll come back to and then we'll do it before we move on to item no. (b) so as to get the direction from the board as to what you want us to do. Is that fair? Okay.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — The discussion tells me that we need to take then a very close look at — just based on Mr. Heppner's comments and sort of my observations — that we need to take a very close look at any new capital expenditures on computers for this fiscal year until that report comes in.

So in light of that, I think page 82, I would ask that we identify any expenditures here of a capital nature other than maintenance and just to continue the system along for this calendar year until we've had the report back and can make a decision on the overall computer system in the next budget cycle.

So I don't know what that figure is. I think I can identify some under 261 and I would think there might be some flexibility within that budget. So if we could have the staff identify what are capital costs within that 270,000 request for '99-2000, just

identify those for us and then we can, when we have completed our deliberations, we can identify those and then act accordingly. Okay?

The Chair: — Just to make sure that the question is clear, I think what you're asking is if the staff would identify, assuming that there would be desire to implement computer services that were compatible between — and I don't know if I'm using the right words here — harmonious. Can computers ever be harmonious? I'm not sure. But between Legislative Assembly, caucus offices and constituency offices, so that you could use common resource people, I think, and . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well it could be support people, support staff, purchasing . . . To me it's all part of one package. All I'm saying is I don't think it would be prudent to do any capital expenditures at all this year that aren't absolutely necessary.

I think in terms of the computer expenses, we should look at what is absolutely required for maintenance — you know, licensing, tapes, diskettes, toners, those kinds of things. I mean that's all important. But I think I would like from this budget identified any other expenditures that aren't absolutely necessary in this fiscal year.

So if we could have them put that together and maybe we can just go through with our discussions here then.

The Chair: — Yes. Okay. So I think in essence what you're asking is if there's . . . with the category 641 which is the hardware item . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes. I think . . . I don't know if there's any other inside of this page 8.2. There may be other expenses related to that.

The Chair: — Right. Okay. Well we'll consider that. And as you'll recognize, that the hardware item has already been reduced, but you're asking, in this context can it be reduced some more.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I recognize . . . Well I'm not suggesting reduce. And I'm saying if there's any expenditures here, any purchases that we can defer for another year, I would like those identified.

The Chair: — Right. Okay, we'll come back to that and we'll ask for advice in that context before we consider the final number.

Okay. We're still on Assembly administration. Is there any other questions or comments?

Mr. Heppner: — Just a general one as we go through this. For example, if we're on page 5, you have the percentage increase, decrease, and under personnel services it's 9.14. And I notice as I go through it, those numbers differ.

Is that percentage as we will find that throughout the rest of the morning, the pay equity plus the other raises, or are there also personnel? Because the numbers aren't the same from page to page.

The Chair: — Because the reclass effects and the pay equity effects won't be the same. And sometimes people will be at the top of their pay range so there is no annual increase. Okay. So that'll be the differences between them. But you'll know from the personnel page on page 3 or whatever it was, that the positions are the same. So there's no movements of people but the bodies aren't always the same, okay.

So that's what . . . When you see percentage differences, then it will be the same pressures, but as they get applied to the people, and we've done our estimates with the people who are there and they're very, very specific.

Okay. Anything else? If not, then if we can move to caucus administration on page 10. And you'll see the summary there. And then in the caucus administration there is a request from the caucuses for a replacement of the fax machine in each of the caucuses. And that's as a B-budget; that's there as a B-budget item. So I note that; point that out to you as well.

And then on pages 11 and 12 and 13, you find the specifics. Are there any questions there?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, with respect to the long-distance telephone costs, and I see this year a request for 1999-2000 of \$50,000. The breakdown reflects a request, or I guess an estimate of expenditure of the government caucus of 12,500, the opposition of 21,500, and the third party of 16,000.

And if I look at the number . . . I'm not sure how this works because if I look at the number of members, that certainly doesn't reflect a proportional expenditure.

And my other question is, does this reflect the new costs of long-distance service as it relates to, you know, the competition who's driven long-distance rates down. I see '97-98 an actual 56,000, and I know that that's come down considerably. And the other question is with respect to the . . . I mean it just, it looks to me to be a disproportional expenditure here.

The Chair: — The estimates are based on current usage, and then applying best estimates as to what new rates would be. Now to be, to look at it in a balanced context it would be noted as well that several of the government members are not in the government caucus. Some of the government members are in minister's offices and so would be using, would be using telephone services from this building out of their own. So I think you have to keep that in mind when you're, when you're looking at this.

Okay. Any other questions or comments regarding caucus administration?

And I just point out on page 13, you'll see on the top of page 13, I just want to make one slight alteration here. The dollar figures are correct, but there's one error just based on a recent change after this was printed. In the box at the top there the independent members it lists as three, that should read two. And then the consequent budget for session in terms of persons is not 1.5, it's 1.0. Okay.

And I do point out that on the explanation just to the left of that box that when a position has any fraction over zero, then it

rounds up to the next full number. Okay. So that as you're looking at the personnel they're all, they're all full people. They're full people, real people, full-time people — pick your term. Any . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . that's right. Let's just stop right there. Okay.

But I do point out to you that if a caucus is eligible, then for personnel it's any fraction at all over zero, it rounds up to the next number. Okay.

If no questions there we'll move to constituency office administration. And you'll see the summary on page 14, and then on pages 15, 16 — sorry — on page 15 the particulars.

And this is, Mr. McLane, when you're referring before to the directive that provided for the computers and like, that's directive 24, is the directive you're referring to. And I do remind members that directive 24 has built in to it a sunset clause that it expires at a general election, and then has to be reconsidered by the board to carry on for a new term.

So given that we're into the fourth year here now, I think that's probably something that's worthy of note for members, particularly in light of as well the conversation we just had a few minutes ago. But also I remind all members — hopefully this won't be relevant — but that members of the board are members of the board until you're replaced, whether you're members of the Legislative Assembly or not.

And the fact that directive 24 has a sunset clause with the election, it may necessitate the board needing to meet very shortly after an election to facilitate newly elected members particularly being able to equip their offices to start operating. Anyhow, in the budgetary terms that would come down to this one.

Any questions? If not, we'll move to accommodation and essential services. You'll see on page 16 the summary and on page 17 the particulars. Are there any questions there?

Mr. Whitmore: — Regarding the increased cost of library materials now at Walter Scott. If I knew of that, it will be directly due to the new storage facilities. Is this the time to ask how that's working out or what the stage is at at Walter Scott in terms of those facilities?

The Chair: — Whether this is the time or when the library comes up. Either one.

Ms. Ronyk: — Actually it's not an increased cost due to increased space at all. It's when they transferred the accommodation, the rent, from the Provincial Secretary to the Legislative Assembly a couple of years ago, they transferred us \$43,000 which is the figure you see in the '99 . . . '98-99 *Estimates* but the actual cost was just under the 60,000 that we're budgeting this year. So somehow there was a glitch in the SPMC's billing at that time. So now we're actually paying for the full value of that space. And Marian I think, can tell you how the mobile shelving project is going.

Ms. Powell: — Well it's coming along but I have to say it's slow. We're into the last phase. There were four phases. In order to make the materials that are stored there, which are 75

per cent of our collection, available to our clients throughout the project we had to do it in four pieces. So we kept relocating onto the new shelving so we can release the old shelving to put up the new shelving. It's like moving at home.

And we're into the fourth phase now and at this point, the flooring is almost completed and the laying of the track for the final phase of the stacks to be installed. And following that, then we have to do another shift of materials, a lot of it from our other storage area so we're finally going to recoup the reductions that we had anticipated earlier as well as have the materials together.

And right now because of the delay in the floor laying, I'm estimating that the shelving will actually be installed and ready to be moved into sometime in January. Probably if we're lucky, the project will be finished sometime in February.

The Chair: — Okay. Any other questions or comments related to charges to the Legislative Assembly office?

Mr. Whitmore: — Mr. Chair, if we could break for 10 minutes.

The Chair: — Okay. Are we looking for a 10-minute break?

Mr. McLane: — No.

The Chair: — Well, Mr. McLane, you can probably stay and sit at the table if you like. Now how are we, if I just before we break, I want to remind us we had said yesterday we would aim for 12; we could extend it till 1 at the max today and if we're not done, then we'd have to come back tomorrow and finish off. So I just remind us of our times. We do have a fair amount of stuff and I'll ask members not to be long in our breaks. So if we can start at 10:12 precisely.

Ms. Ronyk: — Could, before we do that could, on this topic, could I just alert the board to a potential pressure that we have here. As you know, as part of the restoration of the Legislative Building we've had to move out two large components of staff. The whole of *Hansard* are now in Walter Scott and a major portion of the library staff, the public, the technical services people, support services staff have been moved over to Walter Scott.

Now our understanding at the beginning of the project was that because these people had to move because of the restoration project for the building, that we would not be charged for their space, their rent for their space in Walter Scott.

The Chair: — We don't pay rent in the Legislative Assembly building.

Ms. Ronyk: — We don't pay rent here and we didn't . . . we thought it was well understood that we didn't pay rent over there and it would be absorbed by the project. We just, the other day, got a bill for an extra \$40,000 for that space. We are objecting to it. We have not budgeted for it. We believe we'll be able to be . . . agree with SPMC that that was not the intent and should not occur so we have not budgeted for it but I did want to alert you in case we lose that debate.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — We'll look into that.

The Chair: — In that case then we can have a recess. 10:14.

The meeting recessed for a period of time.

The Chair: — The meeting will reconvene, and we're on the subject charged to the Legislative Assembly Office. And I saw no questions there so we'll move to Legislative Assembly . . . sorry, to Clerk's office, to the Legislative Assembly Office and then, first of all within that, the Clerk's office.

And you have the . . . That's right. You have the summary under Legislative Assembly Office, 18. Then page 19 is Clerk's office. You have the summary and the details on pages 20, 21, 22, and 23. Are there any questions anyone wishes to ask there? Questions or comments?

Okay there. We'll then move to *Hansard*, page 24 summary, detail on pages 25, 26, and 27. Are there any questions there? That's okay.

We'll move along to broadcasting with the summary on page 28 and the detail on pages 29 and 30. Any questions?

Mr. Whitmore: — The new capital system that was . . .

The Chair: — Were you looking somewhere in specific?

Mr. Whitmore: — Well it's a general comment regarding broadcasting in terms of the capital system that was installed under special warrant. Now there's no other costs that will be incurred with that now since it's up and running and paid for fully and it's been installed and . . .

The Chair: — Yes. It's been installed and we've come in just under the budgeted amount.

Mr. Whitmore: — Okay.

The Chair: — So no further costs.

Ms. Ronyk: — And if I might add for the board's information, because our own staff were able to install it — our two technicians who have been with us since the beginning of the system — we have really saved a large amount of money if we'd had to have the company install it.

But the other benefit is that now our two technicians know the new system inside out and will be able to maintain it and operate it and repair it as needed. And we've certainly benefited from having those technicians able to do that and to continue to serve it in the future.

The Chair: — Thank you. Further questions or comments? If not, then page 31 is visitor services. And you see the summary on page 31. B-budget items. I'll just refer to those as we've been going along. I have with all the others.

There is the contractual services there. The gift shop to visitor services from the cafeteria, and these are . . . the contractual services is mostly construction and some purchase of items, and then to do some additional work on the kid's corner to make the

entry . . . As you come through the front door of the building, you'll recognize recently there's been a number of changes to try and make it more people-friendly.

The lights across Canada is currently at protocol. There's a proposal to make that a Legislative Assembly item. And then the Capital City's Conference, and this is largely tied with special emphasis on Year 2000 activities, our relationship there. We've already talked about item 636 so I point those out to you.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Just with respect to the visitor services. It seems to be an area of expenditure that continues to put financial pressure on. I see an increase request here for 10.73 per cent, which is a fairly substantive increase. And I'm wondering if there aren't some areas within . . . And that's without the B-budget. If we look at the B-budget, it's just under 20 per cent. And I'm just wondering if there aren't some areas within there, within that budget, that we can effect some savings.

I recognize the desire to make this building more user-friendly and certainly the focus on young people I think is commendable.

I worry though about the increase in this budget. You know the overall request I think is an increase of three point some per cent, and this one is substantially like three times that much. And I'm just wondering if there aren't some ways within this budget that we can pare down some of the expenditures.

The Chair: — It's a difficult thing to do. When you look at the personal services here, 11.05 per cent, it's exactly all the same stuff applied that we've talked about throughout. And in this budget of the grand total of 237,000, 209,000 of that is personal services. Visitor services is essentially people. As you look at the other figures they're all mostly in the hundreds or even in the double, only two digit items, because there's not much that happens at visitor services that isn't the people that we have there.

If you were going to do something in visitor services that would find you cost reductions, I think in reality what you would be doing is reducing the tour times that we have available to the public.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — The promotion budget, I note under 305, media placement, Regina guide, telephone book, airport, *Leader-Post*, TransCanada map, King's Acres, in and around Regina, and I recognize that that's certainly part of the promotion. But you've got an expenditure there of fifty-four fifty — and I know it's small money — but you've got . . . I think you're 28,000 outside of the personnel budget, roughly.

The Chair: — Sorry. Do you just want to repeat the last part of that, Mr. Lautermilch? I was just . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I was just saying I know it's small dollars but . . .

The Chair: — Just in response to that our . . . I don't have before me the figures. Our visits are up. But what the visitor services is trying to do is to partner with provincial and city tourism. As you'll see, I mean as you pointed out it is a small

number, and in 1997-98 the actual expenditure was fifty-one eighty. The request this year is fifty-four fifty. And what we're trying to do is to partner in tourism activities, to have people see the legislative building as an historical and significant building that is not just a political business place. So that's really the objective there. I support it and do recommend that we would continue to do that in that context.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess I have a question in regards to what do some of the other legislatures in Canada do in terms of tours? I certainly would not want to see any access limited to people of Saskatchewan. However, there are many tourists that come to the city of Regina, and in many of the places that I've been in when I've been away touring there are specific times that you can only tour. You know, if there was a tour here at 2 o'clock then you'd have to be here at 2 o'clock to tour.

I'm wondering what do other legislatures do in terms of one-on-one tours? I've noticed in my time here there's been many occasions when a tour guide has one or two people touring around the building. Is there a cost somewhere there that we could be looking at?

Possibly maybe what we should be doing would be to have someone bring us a report back as to those types of things in comparison to other legislatures, to what we see here in terms of tours, tour times, rather than just having it kind of open. You can walk in I guess and go on a tour at any time of the day you want. There's a cost attached to that. I think maybe that'll be something that will be helpful to the board if we knew some of those costs, to try and at least keep the costs down if not reduce them.

The Chair: — I think probably the best we can do, Mr. McLane, that's not a question I can answer in detail and specifically now, but I can bring back to the board I think a comparison of two things: tour activity in other provincial jurisdictions — well and we'll include Ottawa as well — and also the budgetary commitments, for the information of the board.

Our tours here in Saskatchewan are available on top of the hour and on the half-hour, and are done on request as you will know as well as by pre-arrangement. Okay. But we'll bring that back for you in some detail. And we're just not able to do a comparative comment right now.

Mr. Whitmore: — Yes. On the area, code 290, the gift boutique, the establishment of the gift boutique, does this then . . . is this one to be permanently staffed with someone on an ongoing basis?

The Chair: — Yes. We're using visitor services' staff. There would be no additional staffing implications.

Mr. Whitmore: — No. But there would be established then with a separate area in terms of . . .

The Chair: — It would be right at the front desk and . . . right by the front desk where there is currently — what do you call it — a showcase there. It'll be in that area there. So it would be the visitor services' staff that are located right there. This would

have no staffing implications.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Just back to the major bulk of this expenditure. We've got a director and we've got three permanent staff for a total of four — 131,000. Over and above that we have temporary salaries of 73,800 plus overtime budgeted this year for \$4,000.

I think if we're going to be looking at increasing . . . you know, if we're going to be looking at some of the B-budget and perhaps the gift boutique, I can see very rapidly as things happen around here a request for incremental staffing to deal with yet another requirement of this office.

And I frankly — and I understand the increases here — but temporary salaries from an actual of 55,672 to 73,800, I think that in terms of the hiring and the activities that that office is doing, when we're doing tours on the hour as Mr. McLane indicates and on the half-hour, that may be a little excessive. And it might be appropriate to have them scheduled at different times.

I certainly have a difficulty with budgeting for overtime on this, and I have a difficulty with budgeting for temporary salaries an increase from 55 to 73. It's almost 74. And I think that's one area of this budget that we could look at.

Certainly I think the overtime could be deleted just by better management, allocation of staff I would assume. And with respect to temporary salaries, I'd like to know what the pressure increase is and how that might be eliminated — how we might as matter of fact eliminate, if we can, totally the temporary salaries.

The Chair: — First of all the increases in temporary salaries is totally explained by what we've already described — the pay equity, the reclassification, and the normal salary adjustments. So there is no increase in service there. It's exactly the same.

The overtime is because we do tours on statutory holidays. And when people work on statutory holidays, they're eligible for overtime pay. That's the labour standards legislation. So there is no planned overtime in the context of extra hours worked. The way to eliminate the overtime would be to close the building on statutory holidays.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — With respect then to the temporary salaries . . .

The Chair: — These would be the summer students largely and . . . Well, you'll see them listed there. And the fact that we extend our hours in the summer, that we're open in the evening and weekends. So this again, could it be reduced? The answer is yes; the way to do it would be to not offer tours on weekends or in the evenings in the summertimes.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Do any of our permanent employees work on weekends or . . . I guess what I'm asking is: is it possible to have the three permanent employees in guide services perform some of the duties that the temporary salaries are now doing?

The Chair: — Of the permanent staff, one is secretary and two

tour guides and they don't do weekends because then they would have to be paid overtime. We use non-permanent staff who actually are lower paid and then are not paid . . . obviously are not paid overtime, they're paid straight time.

Ms. Ronyk: — I think too when you look at what the actual cost is for the service that we provide and the public perception of them being welcomed to the Legislative Building . . . for example, if we closed the building on winter weekends — that's from September to May each year — we could save about \$9,000 there.

But what is \$9,000 compared to the frustration of people who have visitors and they want to come, bring their visitors to the Legislative Building. There's not a lot of them, but even those few, when they can come here on a Saturday afternoon in the winter and get into the building and have a tour, it's not just a question of having tours, because if we don't have them, the building can't be open. It's a security matter as well.

So it's an issue that if we don't have the guides there to give tours, the building is closed to the public. And I think we do provide an openness and a welcomeness for really very few dollars overall when you think of the total there for the non-permanent, the seasonal guides, and the weekend — winter weekend — guides for \$73,000.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm curious as to what this . . . I understand its role and its function. But I'm wondering if we could have a comparison with some other jurisdictions in terms of their expenditures; the process that they use; what their costs are compared to ours; and the number of visitors that we serve. Sort of how the logistics of that works — when people come and when they access the building — to see if we can at some point perhaps rationalize the expenditure here a bit because I think it's . . . for me it's an area of concern.

I recognize that we want to keep the building open and access to the general public — it's their building. And with respect to tourism, it's certainly a component of what Regina and what Saskatchewan has to offer. But I think it would be prudent, though, to have a look at our costs compared to other jurisdictions and how we operate compared to some other jurisdictions, in light of, you know, ensuring that we're getting . . .

The Chair: — I think that's in essence really what I think we're committing to in response to Mr. McLane's question and we'll provide that for you. I would also point out that I think all or most, if not all, of the non-permanent staff are students as well. So these would be, these would be, the people who are doing the tours on these, all the weekends and evenings, are also young people of Saskatchewan which I think is also a nice touch as well.

But Mr. McLane, you had another comment to make.

Mr. McLane: — Yes, thank you. I have a couple of things. I guess one to Ms. Ronyk when we were talking about \$9,000, yes, if you say it quick, it doesn't seem like a lot of money. When we were looking at this as an elected member of the legislature sent here by some 17,000 people in a rural constituency, and we all have heard of late the dire straits that

our agriculture community is in — \$9,000 is a huge amount of money to a lot of those people.

So when I'm sitting here and we're looking at these things and we're trying to do our job, we have to look at all the aspects of it and all the needs that are put on by government as I'm sure Mr. Lautermilch can agree to.

So when we're doing this, we're trying to do it with the best interest of the taxpayers' money at mind and at heart, and to see where the money is best spent. You know, yes, we can say that we'd only save \$9,000, but it's \$9,000 here and it's \$9,000 on a previous page and maybe \$10,000 down the road. So I think we have to be very cognizant of that, of how we're spending our dollars and to the satisfaction of all the people of Saskatchewan, just not those in and around close to Regina that can access the building.

In regard to the gift shop, the first question I would have on that would be, is there a sense or is there a plan that that shop in a very short period of time will be a self-sustaining shop? I guess what I'm asking: is it going to pay its way? Are we going to see that if it takes in \$10,000 a year in sales, the shop is going to cost \$10,000. That's my first question.

The Chair: — The answer is yes and a big part of that, Mr. McLane, is because there's no staffing costs attached to it. And so there will be some initial . . . the bulk of the initial cost is just some construction related stuff at the front of the building and then purchase of materials for starters. And then they would be sold for profit. It's also important to note that in thinking about it, the items it would have would be Legislative Assembly or Saskatchewan items and they wouldn't be in competition with other gift shops that would, you know, or what we would normally think of gift shops in the neighbourhood.

Mr. McLane: — So when could we expect to see our \$8,000 investment back?

Ms. Ronyk: — It will depend how long it takes up to get established and whether we can get a few . . . We'll start out very small. Right now, the gift shop has only got pins and a little leather portfolio. That's all it has for sale. We want to offer, start out with three or four other items with a legislative theme, whether it's a pen or a mug and some postcards and things like that. And it will take time to build up enough variety so that we can see some profit.

But we've had reasonably good sale of the pins already. Well, it's under the — the gift shop has been under the cafeteria and we do make some profit on those. SPMC is willing to . . .

The Chair: — Although the cafeteria is not, is not, I think we all know, is not the ideal place. And what we see it as evolving to, is something that will sell legislature stuff for people who are coming, who want a souvenir of their visit to the Assembly.

But also I think in a small kind of way, some of the things that may be valuable to members as well or protocol-related visits, you know, some things that you could get from the gift shop for members to use as well.

So the target would not be just the public but also members of

the legislature and the kind of things that they like to use.

Mr. McLane: — So back to my question then. When might I expect to see a return of the \$8,000 investment?

Ms. Ronyk: — A good part of the eight will be for infrastructure for display, two display cases and some lighting, and I think three or four thousand will be for inventory. When that sells I guess is the plan . . . what we do want to do is a business plan for this which we haven't done yet because we didn't know whether we were going to get a go ahead on it. It will be operated right at the front door. That should increase its visibility and the likelihood of sales substantially from where it is now.

The Chair: — I don't think I can give you a firm answer to your question though.

Mr. McLane: — I guess a business plan would have been something that would have been helpful to this board, certainly to myself, to try and understand if this is a good investment or not or if, as the . . . (inaudible) . . . office alluded to that it's just going to continue to cost us money. So I hope that would be forthcoming in the near future. If we look at . . .

The Chair: — The thing that I could say is that after the construction costs it's not something that should cost money because there's no operative . . . the only money you're paying out then is for materials that you're selling. So your investment is in your stock.

Mr. McLane: — Under code no. 309, there's promotional items, \$2,300. Saskatchewan pins for distribution to out-of-province visitors. Well, should that then come out of this budget request because those then will be saleable items if I'm not mistaken. Those items can then be sold out of that gift shop to these out-of-province visitors.

The Chair: — Yes, we don't give pins to every visitor that comes in the building. These would be . . . these are given complimentary in, I'm not sure what occasions, I could get a comment in a moment. But it would be these kinds of things that would be available for purchase by people who are . . . by tourists coming through the door, that kind of thing. How are those used now?

Ms. Ronyk: — We have been doing the pins for out-of-province visitors. I think Ms. deMontigny's proposal now is that we would restrict that to out-of-country visitors . . . that we would give them free.

Mr. McLane: — Are you talking about the people that come in just as tourists or are we talking about delegations? I guess there's a difference. If it's just people who come in the door then I suspect that I would just as soon have somebody's yen from Japan to buy our pins as opposed to giving them. Delegations are a different story because their maybe distinguished . . .

Ms. Ronyk: — It would primarily be delegations that are sort of official visitors and so on. I think they make a judgment at the time, the guides do. I think they need to . . .

The Chair: — I think your point is well taken. If we have them for sale then it makes sense to sell them to them. Yes. A point well made.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Yes, I would just like to pick up on what Mr. McLane has said. What I would like to see happen on the gift shop . . . well first of all, I think the gift shop is a great idea because it's overdue. I think other legislators and I have travelled . . . specifically when I go to a capital city, I walk into the legislature and I always like to pick up a postcard or a mug or something like that. And what happens is I end up showing these things to my friends or people or visitors that come over and I think it tends to help make the place that I visited a tourist destination spot and it could end up having that kind of synergy here in our capital as well.

But nonetheless, when we get into a gift shop I think it's pretty important that there be no perception by the business community that this is somehow subsidized by the taxpayer. There's no reason why a gift shop cannot pay for itself. And I'd like to see a business plan put forward where the cost of the infrastructure is amortized out of the profits over the next few years. And that way there should be no question on the part of anybody from the general public that we're competing with the public. And all we need to do is show how the profits are being used to pay for infrastructure.

The Chair: — And that's a reasonable expectation and a business plan would be done.

And again I repeat it would be a shop that would not be in competition with other gift shops. It would be special and to the Legislative Assembly. Okay? Anything else on visitor services?

Ms. Ronyk: — The 309 item on promotional items is only partly for pins. But it also provides the balloons that they use in the kid's corner and some of the other items that they have in the children's program — the bags of things they use on the Wascana walk program . . .

The Chair: — Yes, the green-jacketed information packets on our system — how we conduct elections, role of MLA and so on? All those information pamphlets as well are included in that?

Ms. Ronyk: — Not in that.

The Chair: — No, not in that?

Ms. Ronyk: — They're in printing — 308, 308.

The Chair: — Okay, I'm sorry. Okay, okay. Any other questions or comments? If not then can we move to . . . We've taken a look at Sergeant-at-Arms in camera Unless there was anything . . . anything else you want to raise. Okay.

Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk, you see the summary on page 40, the detail on 41 and 42. Any questions there?

If not, Legislative Library, summary page 43 and the detail on pages 44, 5, 6, and 7. Are there any questions or comments there?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Just one question, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the travel. I see the amount has increased in . . . I think in all of the other budgets I've noticed a decrease in the amount of expenditures, if I'm right. And I'm just wondering what would be the pressure on the travel budget for the Legislative Library for this year?

The Chair: — Ms. Powell is able to speak with more specificity there.

A Member: — Marian, I think we go through this every year.

Ms. Powell: — We do.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And I wouldn't want to disappoint you by not asking the question.

The Chair: — Mr. Lautermilch would be extremely disappointed if he didn't ask this question.

Ms. Powell: — I think so.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — How many years have we done this?

Ms. Powell: — Many. This is our annual discussion on travel.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — It is our before-Christmas discussion.

Ms. Powell: — Absolutely. The pressure this year is solely, and in fact changes in the other aspects of the travel budget have actually accommodated for some of the increase, the entire increase is constituted in the fact that the Saskatchewan Library Association conference is not in Regina, and therefore we have travel costs in-province.

It's in Regina, one, two, you know, every second or third year, and that's the change.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — That's a very good answer.

The Chair: — Are there any other questions related to Legislative Library? And as we previously discussed, 10,000 of the computer reduction is from this category as well.

If not, then we'll move to committee support services. Now this is not the MLA portion, but this is the support services. You have the summary on page 48. And then the detail on pages 49 and 50. And you'll note that these would be based on our best estimates about the use of the legislative committees over the course of the fiscal year. Okay?

And you'll note from that the estimates are relatively low. But that has been consistent with the recent practice. And then what will inevitably happen if there's a large expenditure in some area, that would end up with special warrant. But those things flow out of the legislature.

That completes the budgetary consideration of the proposal. We'll now move to the statutory and you will see that approximately two-thirds of the total budget is in the statutory category — summary on page 51.

Then within that, on page 52, indemnity allowances and expenses to members, and on these all of what we've previously described as the effects on the formula are applied. And they're based simply on that. You have the detail on page 53 and 54. Are there any questions there?

If not, allowances for additional duties on page 55. Again that's a strictly formula affected. Questions?

If not, members' committee expenses on page 56. It's the summary. On pages 57 and 58 are the detail. And these will be the MLA impacted ones, and again they're just simply applying the formula and based on the same assumptions that were used previously on the support services for committees. No questions.

Then move to third party caucus and Office of the Third Party on page 59. Any questions there or comments?

If not, then we'll move to page 60 for the government caucus. Again you'll see the formulas. It's just applying the formulas there. Questions or comments?

If not, opposition caucus and Office of the Leader of the Opposition, page 61 — applying the formulas there. Questions or comments?

There being none, then to page 62 which is the office of the independent member. And again that's just applying the formula as you see. Questions or comments?

There being none, we then move to the revenue side. And now that we no longer sell *Hansard*, the revenue side has dropped substantially. However, the expenditure side of that has dropped by even more. So although our revenue side is down, the expenditure for the revenue is also down by more. And you'll see the summary and the specifics there. Any questions there?

Okay. If not, then we come back to the question that was previously asked by Mr. Lautermilch regarding, if we can flip back to pages 8.2 I guess is probably the page there, and we were asked, in light of a desire to take an approach to seriously consider coordinating and bringing under some common umbrella resources . . . computer resources not only for LAO (Legislative Assembly Office) but caucus offices and constituency offices, and in light of the fact that this budget as you see it before you is a \$30,000 reduction from previous, is there any more that could possibly be done?

And I'll turn to the Clerk for that.

Ms. Ronyk: — The request for where we could delay some purchases and capital expenditures would come down to the hardware purchases under code 641. And what we're projecting with the \$60,000 there this year is to replace the alpha server, upgrade the network hub so that the service access can be faster. They're too slow. I guess there's increases in usage.

And the other major part of this is for monitors and printers upgrade. We have a thousand monitors within the legislative . . . 100, sorry, 100 monitors, 100 . . . just getting a little out of hand there.

We have 100 monitors that we do have a plan over three years to upgrade these and we would have to delay. We would just delay them by a year. We still do it in increments because we don't want to do it all at once. That's too expensive. So we do it over . . . in a phased way. What we would propose is that we would delay a replacement of upgrading of some of the monitors and hopefully we can avoid having to purchase printers because printers are more expensive than monitors. And what we would suggest is that we could see this reduced by 20,000.

But we still feel we need the central core things, with the server and the network hubs and the other things that we need to maintain the heart of the system or all of our expenditures may be a waste. The investment that we have . . . we need to maintain that investment.

The Chair: — The answer to your question is \$20,000 then, Mr. Lautermilch from 641.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Just I guess as an overall and just some comments in terms of what I think we might want to support in terms of changes for the recommendations, I want to first of all deal with the B-budget items. I think it becomes fairly clear with the discussion of Sergeant-at-Arms with respect to the card access system that if we're going to maintain the integrity of that system, we should probably . . .

The Chair: — Mr. Lautermilch, I think I'd prefer if comments are going to be made related to security systems that we make those in camera.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Oh, okay.

The Chair: — And we can just do that for a moment or two if that's what you want.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes, all right. It would be pretty short.

The Chair: — Yes if we can and if we could just move in camera for just a minute or two.

The meeting continued in camera.

A Member: — *Hansard, no Hansard.*

The Chair: — Kind of . . . when you're in the cone of silence or not.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay we're now out of the cone of silence.

Okay, I'd recommend deferral of the fax machines until the fiscal year. The gift boutique we've already discussed, kid's corner, we can support that.

The radios for guides, I think that we would ask them to absorb that within their existing budget if want to proceed with that for this year. There must be some room to find that internal to do that. And that's the comments I have with respect to the B-budget.

The Chair: — Any other items?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I would just defer them. The computer expenses, I'm hoping there's enough flexibility within that budget to do what is required for this fiscal year, but we would recommend that we delete item 641 on page 8-2.

The Chair: — Delete it totally?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes, and try and manage within the context of the remaining budget for the year. I'm just looking through my notes here. And I think those are the comments that I would have to make with respect to the budget for this year, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Lautermilch. Sure, Gwenn.

Ms. Ronyk: — I would ask the board to consider leaving some funding in the hardware. I mean, we don't know when we're going to have a breakdown or have some piece of equipment fail and have to be replaced. And we do know that we need to replace the alpha server, like it's the life blood, it's the heart of the system. It's the file server for the whole Assembly system.

What it is, is it's an old piece of equipment that was part of our Digital system. The file server now . . . Digital has now gone out of business and has been taken over by another company. They don't want to support that piece of equipment any longer and if we can't get, you know, the software to upgrade it and support it and we have delayed that from last year to this year. And we feel that's a \$12,000 item. We really would ask that we be able to keep that because we think it really jeopardizes our whole system if we can't maintain the heart or the brain of the system.

And I think we do need to have some flexibility to replace something that fails, even if we can delay other things. And we do know that by delaying it's going to cost us in support. So can we look at some number other than the whole works going out?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Chairman, we would ask the Clerk within the confines of her budget . . . you know, hopefully over the course of the year there might be some flexibility in some of the other expenditure items. You know, we've looked at item 645, items 277 and it appears there's some flexibility in some years. And I think that the board has been, in the context of other arms of government, looking at the non-statutory expenditures of the Legislative Assembly Office and comparing that to some other arms of governments, other jurisdictions. We have been I think very flexible and fairly supportive in terms of the initiatives and I don't think it's a large request that we're asking.

With respect to this year's budget, there might be some areas in travel across the non-statutory component. There might be some areas within the computer expenses. I can't offer suggestions; I can only suggest that I think within the context of the overall budget, we're really not being unreasonable in asking for a deletion of item 641. And hopefully that can be managed in the context of under-expenditures and other areas of the budget.

The Chair: — Okay, thanks.

Mr. Heppner: — Okay. I'd definitely support Mr. Lautermilch on the two areas that he discussed and the moves he's recommending there — the part on the B-budget as well as with his part on computers. I think that just has to be found someplace else.

It's been a rather, in a way, rather frustrating four hours, because we're trying to put this budget together and we're taking it, trying to get the money that we need from . . . takes out of services that are there. And part of it is . . . I think we've expressed that frustration over the whole computer thing and maybe we need to just stand back and take a whole different view on that somehow because I think we're being caught up in a system that's a little beyond ourselves, as is most other business and that sort of thing.

The other thing that really seems to be hurting us here as we go through is the key thing is that the pay equity is come back and we're trying to get this out of something else. And I think that was an ill-conceived thing to start off with because it has nothing to do with equality. Had it been instituted properly, it should have been with a zero cost and work out those shuffles as they need to be if that's the direction government wanted to go. Instead of that, it's ending up costing services all the way down the line.

Because that's what we're doing; we're trying to chop from wherever we can to make up that situation out there. And I think that's unfortunate and we're paying for it this year. And we'll be paying it for years in the future.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Heppner. Okay, if there are no other comments, then we'll come back to item (e) in the B-budget item itself and then the item (g) is the motion for the statutory estimates. So we'll deal with them specifically in those places.

If there's nothing else on the review of the budget document, then we'll go to item 12(b), and you'll have that in your background material. And this is my recommendation to you, you'll see listed at the bottom of page 2. Do members have that? It's decision item and in the top right-hand corner it's 12(b), meeting no. 4/98 . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . It came with your meeting materials, with your original meeting materials.

A Member: — No, it just came out the last day or two.

The Chair: — Oh, sorry. It was just a couple of days ago?

A Member: — Yes.

The Chair: — No, not this morning. It's this one here . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Oh, distributed yesterday morning through your caucus office. Do you not have them?

You have yours, yes. You have yours, Mr. McLane? Government members don't . . . Margaret, just hand yours over here for them to see. The secretary of the committee was just . . . I'm sorry we don't have extra copies.

This is the decision item which applies the classification and equity plan . . . Sorry, this is just on the classification. Okay?

And applies that to the Legislative Assembly Office employees.

So these figures have all been . . . or estimates of these have been included in the budget as we've gone through. And as I explained when we started, we don't have . . . we're estimating on these because the government has done this and we're in the process of doing it but we're not yet completed, and we're meeting our obligation, statutory obligation, to treat LAO employees as public service employees.

So you'll see there in the background then what we're tying it to — the public service plan and agreement between SGEU (Saskatchewan Government Employees Union) and the Public Service Commission and the pay equity on page 1, and then on page 2 the class plans. And the budgetary implications then, as I described to you when we very first began, we're estimating \$130,000 as our grand total as we've gone through person by person.

So I recommend to you a motion:

That the Legislative Assembly non-management positions be realigned from the old SGEU class plan to the new SGEU classification plan, effective October 1, 1998; and that the Legislative Assembly work with classification consultants to determine the classification level of each applicable position; and that the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly approve the classification level of each position and its alignment to the new in-scope class plan.

And you'll move that, Mr. Lautermilch? Is there seconder for that? Mr. Whitmore. Is there discussion?

Mr. Kowalsky: — I just want to mention that I know that it's a lot of work to reclassify and to meet the sort of goals of achieving pay equity and equal pay for work of equal value. And I want to commend our staff on the . . . and the people who were involved in the negotiations on this, and yourself for the supervision of this. Thank you very much.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Kowalsky.

Mr. Heppner: — Having said what I did before, I stand by that. It's still I think important that we put all these employees on the same table. And if the rest of them are there, I think these probably have to go there as well just to create some fairness on the situation.

The Chair: — Thanks, Mr. Heppner. Any further discussion? Okay, you have before you the motion then which is the recommendation listed at the bottom there. Those in favour please indicate. Down. Opposed? And that's carried. Thank you.

Item no. 12(c) is a decision item and that is also then . . . It's your next item. Now those who didn't have 12(b), do you have 12(c)? You've got that? Okay. So you'll have that in front of you.

And you will see . . . Then you've got your backgrounder. Again this relates to applying the reclassification to the formula for constituency assistant expenses that's available to members of the legislature.

And what I recommend to you, and you would see the recommendation if you turn to page 2 of 12(c), you would see the directive no. 6 as it would then read.

A Member: — No, this one isn't.

The Chair: — Oh, this one isn't changed. This has not been altered?

A Member: — No, this is just . . .

The Chair: — Okay, this one. Then what you would do . . . Okay, well you can just apply it. What I'm recommending is that the directive be changed and then where you see in subsection (1) where it reads "Clerk Stenographer III", that that be eliminated and substituted with "the Program Support Level 4 position".

And this has been included in your budgetary estimates which you've just considered. So this is to attempt to apply that funding formula to something that currently exists and then it would just stay with that. So you have the backgrounder there and my recommendation to you.

And if you preferred not to do that but to just . . . you'll see under the alternative recommendation to just apply a percentage to the current clerk steno 3, then it would be the alternate recommendation.

I recommend to you the first of the two.

Mr. Whitmore: — I so move.

The Chair: — The first of the two. Is there a seconder? Mr. Kowalsky. Then the motion before you moved by Mr. Whitmore is:

That directive no. 6 constituency assistant expenses, be amended to delete "a Clerk Stenographer III" in the fourth line of subclause (1) and substitute "the Program Support Level 4 position" therefor.

Is there discussion on that?

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Is there someone here that could explain the difference between the three recommendations? What do they mean? Why did you give us three alternatives in this? What's the difference between each one of them?

The Chair: — I gave you two alternatives on this. Are we on the same . . . the constituency assistant expenses?

Mr. McLane: — Yes.

The Chair: — Okay.

Mr. McLane: — And then you have an alternative recommendation. So that . . . the two were tied together?

The Chair: — Yes. The difference . . . If you look into the third line from the bottom of the backgrounder, Mr. McLane, there's a formula of 2,516 per month. Okay? And if you look in the

backgrounder of the alternative, the last line, 2,361 per month. That's the difference between the two in terms of dollars. And what we're doing . . .

What I'm recommending to you in the first recommendation is to say we'll move the constituency assistant allowance available to MLAs to the equivalent of a position that the clerk steno 3 used to be. So in other words, to modernize it after the class review.

If you don't want to do that for the funding for clerk assistants . . . sorry, for constituency assistants and you just wanted to leave it as is and only apply the percentage formula and not have the reclass impact there, then you'd go for the second recommendation. And you see the dollar difference between the two. Does that answer your question?

A Member: — Thank you.

The Chair: — The question before us then is the first, and is there any further discussion? Then those in favour please indicate. Opposed. And that's carried unanimously. Thank you.

Item no. 4 — or sorry, (d), the amendment to directive no. 9, caucus grant, research services — I'm not able to present to you yet at this time, and so I do . . . I don't have an item for you to consider. We've not been able to define that yet, and what you have in the budgetary proposal was the status quo, was it . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, it was the status quo and that was the figure that was in your budgetary proposal that you considered.

So I will want to, if you wish, me to bring this back to you, I will but we're not able to do that at the moment and that would affect the caucus grant for research services. And if you just give me your direction on that as to whether you want me to bring that at a future time or not . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That's right. And the objective there would be the same as we just did with CAs (constituency assistant) — would be to convert it to the new formula. But we're just not able to do that as we meet right now.

Do you want to see it converted to the new formulas? For the caucus offices? Okay, I'll bring that to the next board meeting then and for your consideration there. And I apologize that when the agenda was put together, we'd hoped to have that ready by now but we're just not able to.

Okay, item number (e) is the consideration of the B-budget request, and on that item, Mr. Lautermilch has expressed support for B-budget items related to the security system and the kid's corner for a total of \$41,230 — if I understood you correctly, Mr. Lautermilch.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'm not sure of the figure.

The Chair: — It was those two items though?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well if that's what they add up to.

The Chair: — The security . . . Well just make sure I've got the items — the security and the kids' corner?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Right.

The Chair: — That was it?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes.

The Chair: — Those total \$41,230. And it would be in order to have a motion then:

That the B-Budget items be approved as follows:

The security system, \$39,230, and kid's corner, \$2,000, for a total of \$41,230.

Is that your motion?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — That's my motion.

The Chair: — Is there a seconder for that motion? Mr. Heppner. Is there discussion on that? There being none, those in favour, please indicate. And opposed? And that is carried. Thank you.

We'll now move to motion to approve the revenue estimates.

Okay, it would be in order if you approve of the revenue estimates as proposed to have a motion:

That the Legislative Assembly estimates in the amount of \$9,000 be approved for the 1999-2000 fiscal year and that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Does someone wish to move that? Mr. Whitmore. Is there a seconder? Mr. Heppner. Is there a discussion? Those in favour? Down. Opposed? And that's carried unanimously.

Item 12(g), motion to approve budgetary and statutory estimates.

First of all, before proceeding to a motion to approve the budgetary and statutory then we would need a motion to achieve what you had asked, Mr. Lautermilch. We'd need a motion to reduce the code 641 ... to reduce code 641 in Assembly administration estimates by \$60,000.

Can you move that, Mr. Lautermilch? Is there a seconder? Mr. Whitmore. Is there discussion? There is not. Those in favour, please indicate. Opposed? And that's carried.

Then it is in order ...

Ms. Ronyk: — May I just confirm that it's the ... the board is comfortable with us ... if we have to replace a piece equipment, we do so but we find the savings then elsewhere in the codes.

A Member: — Somewhere within your budget, Gwenn, yes.

Ms. Ronyk: — Yes, thank you.

The Chair: — Can you get me the figure, Marilyn, for the budget then to be voted?

A Member: — Okay.

The Chair: — I need the budgetary and the total.

If I can recommend to you, if what you then want to achieve is to approve the budget as presented with the 60,000 removed and the 41,230 B-budget added in then the following would be the appropriate motion:

That the Legislative Assembly expenditure estimates in the amount of \$15,455,410 be approved for 1999-2000 fiscal year as follows:

Budget to be voted — \$5,308,070

Statutory Budget — \$10,147,340

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

Someone wish to move that? Mr. Lautermilch. Is there a seconder? Mr. Whitmore.

Is there further discussion? If not, those in favour please indicate? Opposed? And that's carried unanimously. Thank you.

Now as we previously said when we had our discussion about computer services, what I recommend to you if you ... or let me read to you a motion I recommend to achieve doing a review of the computer services as they affect the LAO, caucus offices, and constituency offices. It would be in order to have a motion:

That the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly undertake a review of computer requirements in the Legislative Office, constituency, and caucus offices; and that she bring forward for board consideration, options regarding computer development to assist members to perform their duties.

If that's acceptable to you and someone wishes to move it, then it would be on the floor. Mr. McLane, is there a seconder? Mr. Whitmore. Okay.

Is there further discussion?

Now this doesn't ... just if I may add, this does not include approval for expenditure to do the review, and I think what we would probably do is, first of all, with our own resources here, is we'd do a quick assessment of those jurisdictions that have coordinated the computer services now and take a look at that and see if it's something that we could propose with our own means.

In my judgement, it's more likely that we probably will find that we need more expertise than we've got to give you the comprehensive proposal that you'd want. And that we'd have to then come back to the board to ask for approval to spend some money to have a consultant do that. So there is no additional expenditure approved here and I just want to make that clear.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, just to concur that we are not of the opinion either. But we're approving additional

expenditures and we would expect and hope that within the context of the budget that we've approved that whatever resources that could be allocated from the internal budget should be applied to this initiative.

The Chair: — Yes, and to be frank, and I mean obviously, to state the obvious, to do it will be stretching because what we've just approved is a budget that reduces our computer services by \$100,000 . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . \$100,000 of flexibility. So I don't want to be misleading to you. It's a little hard to take out \$100,000 and find more flexibility so that you're not . . . don't have any illusions. Is there any further discussion?

Mr. McLane: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, I think the intention of my motion and what the board has talked about is to, first of all, find out the consensus amongst the caucuses, certainly input from MLAs and their assistants out there what they're feeling. There's a lot of views out there that I hear from our MLAs and others as well about some of the concerns that they have, and I think that's a big part of getting to where we want to be going and so that we have the consensus and it's a lot easier to move into a specific type of program once we know that the consensus is there and where we're heading.

Then we may well have to come back and review this again and see where we're going to go from there, certainly in terms of a system.

The Chair: — Yes, and I think if there's not anything near consensus it would be a futile effort. But I think we're also . . . It would be my view that if we have some desire to go ahead, the timely time to do it would be early in a new term. And so this is not something we'd want to delay I don't think.

Okay, any further discussion? Those in favour of the motion, please indicate. Opposed? And that is carried.

If we can then move to item no. 13. Item no. 13 is a decision item. And the special warrant request was distributed to you this morning. And what I bring before you then is the request for a special warrant for 1998-99 fiscal year in the amount of \$341,500.

You will have . . . This is from both the Legislative Assembly as well the Office of the Children's Advocate. And you will have the specifics of the portion related to the Office of the Children's Advocate on the second page in a little more detail — the 36,500 that relates to that. And this does not include the robotics for the broadcasting and the Legislative Library mobile shelving that was previously dealt with by the board, and that is there for your information on the third page.

What you have before you are then a request that is made up of the following: accommodation in central services — I think this was referred to earlier — the actual accommodation charge for library space rental was higher than the amount originally estimated in the amount of \$20,000 for this year. Now that amount has been included in the budgetary considerations that you've just approved for next year. But we got hit with that one this year.

The Legislative Assembly Office; then there are those staff adjustments, for the same reasons we've been talking about,

that have occurred in this fiscal year. We've taken all of that planning into consideration then in the budgetary estimates, but that's been the impact for this fiscal year. And sorry, that's been the net unpaid — sorry, unpaid is not the proper term — net unmanageable. The actual amount, the actual impact this year is about \$54,000. So it's about half of it that the Legislative Assembly is not able to absorb.

Then related to the Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk, some unbudgeted expenditures. Then related to the replacement of employee unable to perform regular duties, and that is estimated there at 120,000. Then committee support services, and this will be because of the Crown Corporations Committee meetings that were not anticipated and were not able to be absorbed in the amount of \$188,000.

On general administration, because of a take-up on directive 24, our projected take-up on directive 24 that we project will not be used in this fiscal year. There is a found saving there of \$50,000, Legislative Assembly total amount, 305,000, added to that the 36,500 from the Children's Advocate office, and the grand total being \$341,500.

And that is the recommendation to you and the floor is open for discussion. And then I'll ask for a motion. Does anyone have any questions or comments you'd like to make?

Mr. McLane: — I just have one question, Mr. Speaker, and that's regarding 0005, the Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk on budget expenditures. Could I have some idea what that pertains to?

The Chair: — On that one, if we can ask again, because it's a personnel matter. Can we talk about the rest and then just move into in camera for discussion of the personnel matter.

Are there any other questions before we do that on any of the others? If not then, if I can direct the meeting to move in camera.

The meeting continued in camera.

The Chair: — Okay, the meeting will reconvene. And you have before you then the special warrant request in the amount of \$341,500. Is there any further discussion or questions related to that? If not then, if someone wishes to move that amount or a different one. That amount, Mr. Lautermilch? Then if I can recommend to you the motion that would achieve that.

That the special warrant request for the 1998-99 fiscal year for Vote 021 Legislation and Children's Advocate in the amount of \$341,500 be approved and forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

That's moved by Mr. Lautermilch. Is there a seconder for that? Mr. Whitmore.

Is there discussion? If not, those in favour please indicate. Opposed? And that's carried. Thank you.

Now we have decision item no. 14. You'll have a backgrounder in your information provided to the meeting. And what you have in the backgrounder is the recommendation, the reasons

for the recommendation, that when the estimates book is printed — this is the one that comes to the Legislative Assembly — that it will have a slightly different format than it's had in the past, and that what it would do is put into a category by itself the General Revenue Fund detailed expenses, legislative branch of government. And it would separate that out from the rest.

Now that all of the officers of the Assembly as well as the officers within the Assembly are all having budgets approved by the Board of Internal Economy, I think for clarity of presentation of that for public consumption but also for, I suppose, clarity — it's not necessarily for the members here but members heretofore — to differentiate between the executive branch of government and the legislative branch of government in the *Estimates* book, the recommendation is that we change our format to be as you would see it laid out here then, just separated differently in the book.

And if someone is wishing to move that, then I would have a motion to recommend to you which is my recommendation. Mr. Whitmore. The motion I'd recommend then would be as follows:

That the Board of Internal Economy approve the proposed format for the *Estimates* book which collects legislative branch estimates in a separate section, and that this approval be communicated to Treasury Board by the Chair.

Is there a seconder for that? Mr. Heppner. Is there discussion on that? If not, then those in favour, please indicate. And those opposed? And that is carried. Thank you.

Now item no. 15 is a decision item and we will have received here at the board, tabled at the board meeting of September 28, the auditor's audit memorandum on the board. I committed to the board at that time that at our next meeting — which is now — that I would recommend to you the board's response to the auditor's memorandum.

In my judgment and I think our collective judgment, when the auditor makes some statements about functions, it is important that we consider them and respond to them, either by following the recommendation or advising what the view is, if different.

And so I lay out for you what I recommend be the board's response. It would go by the . . . under the signature of the Chair, and it would include what I think is thoughtful response to some of his concerns, reflecting that the board is of the view that with 11 per cent of our client group — our client group being the MLAs — being on the board itself, that we have a high level of confidence about the board's access to the concerns of its client group.

Also that the high level of commitment to public awareness of the functions of elected members through things such as *Hansard* and broadcasting and expanded television coverage and so on, as well as our publicly accessible building and welcome environment here, speak to the ability for the client group — being the public at large — to judge the effectiveness.

And also then that, having followed the recommendation of the McDowell committee, that the board has a high level of confidence in the accountability of members' expenditures as

well as their transparency.

And that finally, and if you approve this, that we would implement something that the auditor recommends that we are not currently doing and that we would direct the Clerk — this is the final sentence of the letter — to distribute a financial report and fiscal forecast with explanations of variances to board members on a quarterly basis throughout the year.

One of the recommendations that the auditor had in terms of maintaining fiscal management was to have quarterly . . . was to have regular reports, and I recommend to you that we implement quarterly reports that you would receive. We wouldn't need to meet to receive them. They can be distributed to you as board members on a quarterly basis.

So that's the meat and potatoes of what I recommend to you as a response to the auditor's memorandum, and I open it to you for discussion if someone wants to move that we do this and I can recommend the motion to you.

Mr. Heppner: — Having discussed this to some extent with my caucus, I guess we can live with doing it either way. I don't think we have any difficulty with the way we're operating right now. And we could, you know, if it needs to be tightened up, we could do with that as well. And so I guess on that, it'll be the government's decision on whether we wish to go with this one because we can live with it either way.

The Chair: — Is there any further discussion? Does someone wish to move that this be the response to the auditor or wish to move something else?

Mr. Whitmore: — I move that this be the response to the Provincial Auditor's memorandum.

The Chair: — If I may recommend the motion to achieve that then:

That the draft response to the Provincial Auditor's memorandum of audit observations on the Board of Internal Economy for the year ended March 31, 1998 be approved and forwarded to the Provincial Auditor on behalf of the board by the Chair.

Is there a seconder for that? Mr. Lautermilch. Is there discussion? If not, those in favour, please indicate. Opposed? And that's carried unanimously. Thank you, gentlemen.

And then finally, decision item no. 16. Now decision item no. 16, you have already — no, sorry — this is a new item. I committed to you previously at a board meeting that on the matter of caucus accountability after an election, that . . . which was adopted — which was a McDowell committee report recommendation adopted by the board in principle but needing some further definition — I committed to the board that I would ensure that the caucuses would be consulted and then that I would bring a recommendation to you.

What I bring to you is a partial recommendation because I think we're in a position to achieve most of what's desired here but not quite all. And if I can just outline that to you. After meetings that involved your caucus chiefs of staff, there was

discussions, and in a nutshell there were a couple of concerns that were expressed that have a great deal of credibility for me.

One is that the filing of an audited report, although desirable, is difficult to achieve within three months, and that six months is a more practical time. If a caucus returns with exactly its same responsibilities in the legislature as the third party, official opposition, or government, and it's approximately the same size, probably it can do that in three months.

But if a caucus status or size changes substantially and its operations change substantially, then its first focus will be reorganization and it's difficult to achieve this obligation within a three-month period. And I agree. And so the recommendation . . . there is a recommendation here to make the requirement that the audited report be filed within six months.

And also of that, the term outstanding accounts which currently has the words "including employee benefits" was thought to be unrealistically restrictive and the recommendations — and I concur — are that it is a reality of effective business operation for a caucus that they will have obligations to staffs, to their employees, which they must meet and that's currently recognized, but also that the caucuses will have obligations related to leasing arrangements.

And it is increasingly common, as we all know, in the world of office operations that equipment — particularly equipment — but equipment and other matters are contracted on a lease basis as opposed to a purchase basis, and that legally when entering into a lease the caucus is obliged to meet its legal obligation. That to me is a sound argument and one with which I concur.

There is also the desire to approve a format for these audited financial statements. And on that matter I'm not able to make a recommendation to you yet at the moment. I will continue to consult and will bring that back to you. And given that we're in the fourth year of the term, I will do this as expediently as possible but I am not in the position to give you a recommendation on that.

So I do recommend to you that the caucus accountability and disclosure directive no. 23 be altered to extend the period of time with which the report must be filed from three months to six and that it extend the definition of outstanding accounts from "including employee benefits" to also include "and existing lease payments".

So those are my recommendations to you. If you turn over you will see directive 23 amended and the form the way it would look with the amendments included in it . . . so with the adjustments. And that is my recommendation to you. If somebody wishes to move that, then . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That's right, and sorry; and now the part I was silent on here and one is to simply reinstate the . . . to the directive, the requirement that it be done.

So it's those three things in total and there are three separate motions. And if someone wishes to move one, two, or three, then I'll recommend to you the words to achieve that. Mr. Lautermilch, you'll move the first? If I may recommend then the words:

That Directive #23, Caucus Accountability and Disclosure, be amended by adding a new clause (3) after clause (2) as follows:

"(3) Within six months following the polling date subsequent to the dissolution of each Legislature, all surplus funds determined pursuant to subclause 2(a) shall revert to the Crown."

and that clause (3) be renumbered as clause (4); and further,

that clause (4) be amended by deleting "subclauses (2)(b) and (3)(d)" where it appears in the last line and substituting the following therefor: "subclauses (2)(b) and (4)(d)".

So moved, Mr. Lautermilch? Is there a seconder? Mr. Whitmore. Is there discussion? Those in favour? Opposed? That's carried.

Then on the matter of extending to six months. Does somebody wish to move that? Mr. Whitmore. And the words for Mr. Whitmore to achieve that would be:

That Directive #23 Caucus Accountability and Disclosure be amended by deleting the words "within 3 months" where they appear in clause (2) and (4) and substituting the words "within 6 months" therefor.

So moved, Mr. Whitmore. Is there a seconder? Mr. Kowalsky. Is there discussion? There being none, those in favour? Opposed? That's carried unanimously.

And finally on the matter of adding existing lease payments. If somebody wishes to move that, I'll recommend words. Mr. Kowalsky. Is there a seconder?

A Member: — I just wanted to speak . . .

The Chair: — Okay, is there a seconder for that? Mr. Whitmore. Mr. Kowalsky, if I can recommend the words:

That Directive #23 Caucus Accountability and Disclosure be amended by adding the words "and existing lease payments" after the words "including employee benefits" in subclauses (2)(a) and (4)(d).

So moved by Mr. Kowalsky; seconded by Mr. Whitmore. Discussion?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes, I don't want to throw a wrench into the works here, so I'm just asking a question: is there any obligation or is there any requirement to caveat some lease arrangements so that we don't have a bunch of open-ended leases. I know that we do with lease arrangements in terms of office rental. And I think it's a requirement that as part of your lease, there is an escape clause when a member ceases to become a member.

So I guess my only concern with respect to the leases is that the caucuses would all understand that any contractual obligations that they enter into. It should be understood by the lessor, you know, that you're not going to sign a five-year lease on a

four-year normal term on the fourth year of a term. And then obligate public expenditure for the interim of that lease.

So I don't know if there's anything written into that, but if there isn't, I think that we need to explore it.

The Chair: — If I'm to respond to that, Mr. Lautermilch, two difficulties with it. One is the caucuses will currently have their leases that they've got of course so there's been no context until this motion passes. But secondly, I think, that matter was an item of discussion and I think there is an understanding and I point out, that each of the caucuses has a representative on this board which could be communicated the importance of the understanding that that's something that's done on a honour system.

At the end of the day, what will happen of course, and I point out in the context of accountability and transparency, this will be reported. And I guess what that means is that if a caucus reported that it retained part of its caucus funds to honour a lease agreement, that seemed to be publicly irresponsible, then I think a caucus would expose themselves to public criticism for that because this, I mean, this is all dealing with a matter that is of public report and I would suggest probably high-profile public report.

I don't think there's any of us in this room that would imagine that this would not be a report that wouldn't be looked at scrupulously by the media and appropriately so.

It's difficult . . . Leases are rarely, I think, entered into for five-year terms for example and constitutionally a term of office could be for five years. So to try and tie it to something that would be your constitutional length of a term is almost getting meaningless because leases don't tend to be signed that way.

So one could attempt to be restrictive. I personally am comfortable with the honour system that it applies. I have no reason to believe the caucuses would be anything other than honourable in honouring it, based on discussions and input that's been given.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I think, Mr. Chairman, just in aid of the caucuses when negotiating a lease, if there was some form of guideline from the board, it would enable our caucus administration staff to lever a lease arrangement which would allow us to exit a lease arrangement in the event that that is no longer a requirement.

You know, I'm somewhat troubled with this in that . . . And I understand it's going to be public and the individual caucuses will have obligations, you know, contractual but moral as well — moral obligations — in terms of public expenditure. I do however know that with respect to individual MLAs and their constituency offices, we have rules and regulations in place with respect to, as I understand it, contractual arrangements.

I don't know . . . And I understand your position in terms of, you know, caucuses acting in an honourable way; but I think what it might do is allow the caucuses a lever to negotiate an exit clause. And that might be something that we would want to look at.

I won't belabour this but only to say that I think that I'd like us to have another look but in the meantime, if we would communicate to the individual caucuses the concern with respect to contractual arrangements and, you know, the implications that may be a result of those things. But I think this should be brought back at another board meeting.

I don't want to complicate what we're doing here. I think what I'm doing is looking for protection for the caucuses.

The Chair: — But we will need to come back to this because I'm not in a position yet to recommend a format to you and there will be some continuing discussion with the chiefs of staff at the caucuses to do that.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — We'll support this in the interim.

The Chair: — If you're comfortable passing this, I commit to you, and I ask first of all that you will go back to your caucuses and communicate the importance and the concern of the board on that. This is the first time it's going to be there and we all know and understand the importance of it being seen as publicly credible for the good of the institution. And I don't think any caucus would want to be in the position where they were seen as different in their public responsibility from the other caucuses, for sure.

So if I can ask that you communicate that and also in our continuing discussion to come back to you with a recommendation and format, I'll have that matter raised with the discussions again and try and come with some further refinement on that if I can find something that I think is workable and sensible. If that's acceptable?

A Member: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Okay. So we'll commit to follow up the motion in that kind of way.

Is there further discussion? Is it clear what the motion is before you then? Those in favour then please indicate. Opposed? And that's carried unanimously.

Gentlemen of the board, we have completed our agenda and I don't anticipate us meeting in the near future. We will need to come back on this matter that we've just discussed and we will come back as soon as we can on matters related to computer review. And so is there anything, any final comments or matters for the good of the functioning of the board?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Just a comment to Gwenn on behalf of our caucus — to Gwenn, you and your staff — the work that you do for us during the course of the year. I think sometimes we don't often extend our thoughts and our appreciation for the services that you provide and the professionalism that the whole Legislative Assembly Office does really exhibit, and so I think we would want to have you pass that on, on our behalf, to your staff.

I'd like you as well to wish them all a very merry and prosperous . . . Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year on behalf of the folks who we work with.

Ms. Ronyk: — I'll be pleased to pass that on to the staff.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And by the way to *Hansard* as well if they're listening.

Mr. Heppner: — Yes, and on behalf of myself and our caucus, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to everyone here.

The Chair: — Thanks very much.

Mr. McLane: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. As well from myself and our caucus to members of this board. I appreciate the diligence that was put in the last couple of days so we could come to a conclusion this afternoon in a timely manner. I appreciate that. I certainly appreciate when a meeting does move along and we have a good discussion and certainly our differences and our conclusions are always well sought.

And I would wish all the members of the Legislative Assembly, through your caucuses, a Merry Christmas to the people that work here as well, and to everyone here the best of the season.

The Chair: — Thanks very much, Mr. McLane. And if I may also add my words of appreciation to the staff of the Legislative Assembly.

Having had the opportunity to come to know their professional dedication and performance since coming to the Speaker's office, I can go anywhere in the country, I assure you, and feel very proud of the level of service and professional commitment and competence that we have here in Saskatchewan.

And so I appreciate that very much and extend to you best wishes for Christmas. I thank you very much for working diligently in these last two days. We had a large agenda; I think we accomplished it expeditiously and responsibly. And I think in these couple of days you have served both your caucuses and the people of Saskatchewan very well.

Thank you very much. Merry Christmas, happy New Year, and the meeting stands adjourned.

The meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.