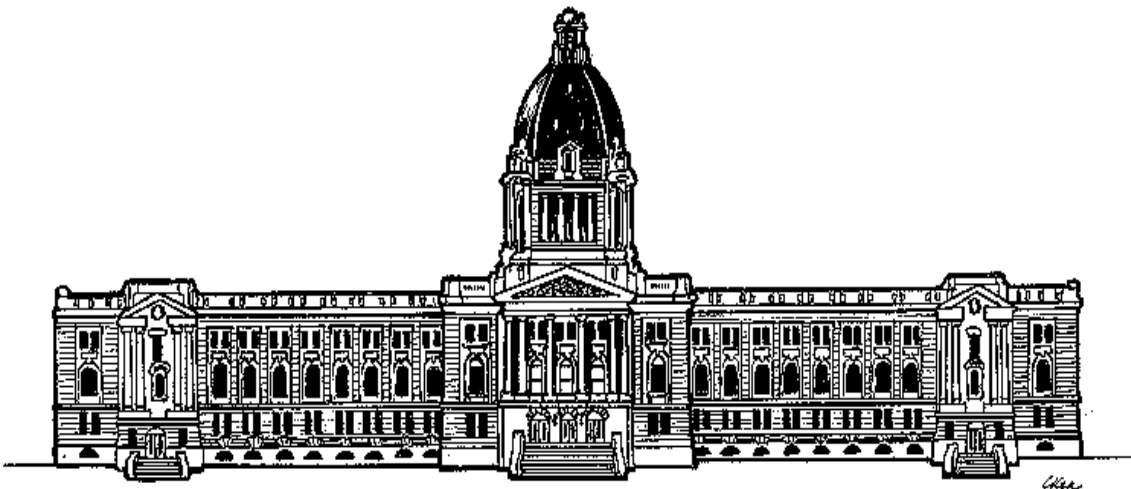




STANDING COMMITTEE ON CROWN AND CENTRAL AGENCIES

Hansard Verbatim Report

No. 14 – November 24, 2004



Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

Twenty-fifth Legislature

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON CROWN AND CENTRAL AGENCIES
2004**

Mr. Graham Addley, Chair
Saskatoon Sutherland

Mr. Wayne Elhard, Deputy Chair
Cypress Hills

Mr. Dan D'Autremont
Cannington

Mr. Andy Iwanchuk
Saskatoon Fairview

Mr. Warren McCall
Regina Elphinstone-Centre

Hon. Maynard Sonntag
Meadow Lake

Mr. Randy Weekes
Biggar

The committee met at 15:00.

The Chair: — I call to order the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies. Just to advise that Mr. Chisholm is filling in for Mr. Weekes. And we have Mr. Elhard, Mr. D'Autremont, Mr. McCall, Mr. Sonntag, and Mr. Iwanchuk.

Just to advise the committee that the committee has received an order of reference dated November 16, 2004 to consider and report back on the supplementary estimates for the following departments and agencies: vote 53, Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation and vote 74, Information Technology Office.

And we have Minister Thomson for Information Technology Office, and if he would care to introduce his officials.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates
Information Technology Office
Vote 74**

Subvote (IT03)

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I am joined today by three of my officials. Seated to my left is Don Wincherauk, who is the deputy minister. Seated to my right is Fred Antunes, who's the executive director of corporate and customer services. And seated next to him is Travis Asmundson, who is the chief information officer for the Information Technology Office, which is kind of a nice title.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister Thomson. The first item before the committee is vote 74, (IT03). Are there any questions for the minister? I recognize Mr. Chisholm.

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We note that the IT (information technology) office has anticipated additional spending, a request here for \$1.715 million, which is some 34 per cent of their original . . . an additional 34 per cent, if you like, of last year's anticipated expense.

So I'm just wondering if you could outline what happened during the year that required this additional expenditure, or what you are hoping to do.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Over the last several years, we've been attempting to move forward with consolidation and streamlining of the government's IT systems. We have looked at this in a number of different ways.

The current process that we are undertaking is to begin migrating in government systems from other government departments into the ITO (Information Technology Office) operations branch. This \$1.7 million will allow us to accelerate that movement, and over time will allow us to capture more quickly the savings back that we expect can be achieved through consolidation and streamlining. So this new money will facilitate us in the acceleration of the consolidation process.

Mr. Chisholm: — Okay. I guess my second question is, is this money being used for capital expenditure or is it additional

staffing or is it a combination of both or . . .

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I would ask the deputy minister to provide the details.

Mr. Wincherauk: — Okay. Within that 1.7 there is about six different items. One would be to lease core network equipment for the ITO data centre, and that's about \$150,000. You'd have to conduct security audits to ensure the IT security processes and the new data centre are protecting government data, and that's about 200,000. We'd have to assess the applications across all of government, and that would be around 175,000. We'd be doing some work on government on line, and that again would be another 175,000.

There'd be an additional \$400,000 to pay for communications, human resource component of the organizational development plan. And then as we would start to pull individuals from other departments into the ITO because of agreements with the Provincial Auditor, the ITO would have to pay their salary, but those funds would be basically either frozen or backfilled in their home departments. And then there would be a pool of money of about round 500,000 that would be used to assist departments as they come into the new consolidated shop if there's some problems with some of their legacy applications.

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you. So I guess what I see is that ITO office then has the idea of expanding its operations. It's certainly not going to be staying the same size. It's going to be getting bigger and bigger. Is that the plan?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — What will happen is that the current configuration in government where every department has a separate IT shop will eventually be consolidated down into the ITO as we reach agreements with those departments. And so while it will reflect the ITO growing, overall it should result in a stable or shrinking budget expenditure for IT across government.

This has been one of the difficulties we've had in the last several years, is getting a better understanding of how we're using the IT money that is provided to government by the legislature and how we can achieve more efficiencies out of it. The current spend is, we estimate, about \$100 million a year. So this should allow us, through consolidation, through more central policy application, to reduce that amount or to be able to use the savings from reducing legacy systems and duplication, and to move service delivery.

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you. I guess the question now is, which departments of government or divisions of government are the ones that you are hoping to first evolve into this new integrated system?

Mr. Wincherauk: — Currently we have within the ITO the Department of Highways and Transportation, the Department of Agriculture, the ITO itself, Grain Car Corporation, Northern Affairs, and just recently we were in discussions with Industry, and Relations, and they are now joining the IT cluster.

And then over the next while, we do what we call due diligence on departments and then slowly start rolling them into the ITO.

Mr. Chisholm: — So how long would you see this process taking, to the point that all, if you like, government IT would be run through the auspices of this office?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I would anticipate by the '07-08 year that most of them will be. There's still some question about how we deal with the Department of Health, in particular, because of its unique relationship with health boards. So there are some issues there that we need to sort through. But I would anticipate by '07-08 we'll have reached . . . the vast majority of the departments will be rolled in.

Mr. Chisholm: — I understand in, I think it was early 2004, there was an advisory council set up with some of the stakeholders, outside people. I'd just like to know how that's going or if you've met, and how many times, or how that's . . . what's happening there.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — We did establish the Minister's Advisory Council on Information Technology early in '04. It is chaired by Dr. Barnard of the University of Regina, and has on it a number of different individuals from representative parts of the IT sector. They've had the opportunity to meet several times. In fact today in Saskatoon they are meeting with a larger group of industry officials to talk about how it is that they can deal with the sector growth strategy.

There are three key issues that I have asked them to consider. First of all is, how do we deal with capacity building within the sector? Second is, how do we deal with commercialization issues to encourage a narrowing of the commercialization gap between our research institutions and the markets? And third, how do we deal with the capitalization crunch that a number of companies have identified?

I have asked the advisory committee to report back by September '05 with a report on these issues and any others that they may see fit.

Mr. Chisholm: — I think that's all, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: — I recognize Mr. Dearborn.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and welcome to your officials as well. You've said that there would be about \$100 million expenditure across the government departments in IT. Has your department undertaken a study or had a study done by any of the partners subcontract with . . . about when the systems are integrated so that their operating systems are consistent and hardware and software and everything can talk to each other — what the actual cost savings would be in program delivery? So aside from the IT actually making the programs which exist in government, which are assisted by information technology, what those savings would be.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — We anticipate the savings will be in the 10 to 15 per cent range in terms of that and we have undertaken — and I don't know if I've previously provided to the committee the Gartner report — but we did undertake work with the Gartner Group to provide us with some advice on how to look at reconfiguring the government's IT systems.

Mr. Dearborn: — Specifically with regards to the savings in

program effectiveness, that wouldn't be in that particular report, but has there been work done on that? So making the IT work better and performing its job and what actually . . . what the savings will be passed on to the other departments, that work has been undertaken?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — One of the difficulties we've had is because the systems have billed out, been billed out by individual departments, it's very hard . . . it's been very difficult over the last few years to ascertain exactly what the expenditures has been and what it's been on. There are a large number of legacy systems built into the government's IT infrastructure. As that money becomes freed up, that becomes available for program delivery.

The question, if you are asking me about improved productivity as a result of this, is a difficult one to assess until we have a better understanding of what components are encompassed in it. But I have no doubt that there will be a productivity benefit as a result of this.

Mr. Dearborn: — It looks like your official would like to help answer.

Mr. Wincherauk: — This is one of the reasons we will be undertaking the application assessment that I spoke to earlier on. It would allow us to have a good feel of where all the legacy systems are, and which ones are critical to the operation of the government IT system, and ultimately the programs that the departments deliver. That would become sort of the basis by which then we would start assessing each one, ranking them in how critical they are to government and then deciding whether or not you build another one or put it on the shelf. Or a whole host of issues could crop up at that time.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — But again we haven't at this point been able to ascertain what the full dollar value of that is.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you. Would the minister be prepared to table . . . or first of all, what sort of time lines would we be looking at when . . . (inaudible) . . . could be made about the productivity gains? It's great to have . . . everybody understands the general concept but it would be helpful for this committee and for the members of this Assembly, you know. I believe that there likely are cost savings to be had in the integration of the IT networks and the hardware and software and whatnot but the majority of the savings, I suspect, would be to be realized through actual effectiveness of program delivery. And hence what would be helpful, Mr. Minister, would be time lines on when that information could be put forth to this House because that would help in allowing for the line of questioning around the effective use of budgetary expenditures that are being requested through the estimates process.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — One of the difficult issues is to find the appropriate set of metrics to measure productivity gain. In fact, I was in a discussion this morning with an individual with IDC who, of course, are noted experts within the western world around productivity and the IT sector. The difficulty we have is benchmarking this. This isn't unique to government; this is a problem within the sectors generally. So I'm not sure that there is an easy answer to the member's question. We're certainly endeavouring to do that and we'll have a better understanding

as we roll the systems in to see how much duplication and overlap there is and as we begin to see what other opportunities are available for new service delivery. For example, some of that will be contingent upon what new investments we make in application software, whether that's around integrated case management softwares or whether that is in terms of any other type of activity. At this point we're in a consolidation phase to try and weed out the legacy in duplication of items within the system, at which point we'll be in a better position to determine what additional new resources we may put in for productivity. It is a difficult question, although I think it is a fair one to ask.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I agree with you. I do think it is a difficult thing to determine. However, I think it would still raise my comfort level in this Assembly if there were some time lines put around it. And this isn't to . . . you know, even if they're 2007, 2008 when the . . . you know, if that's the time that it takes before the evaluation and the actual program savings can begin. I think that to have approval to vote off the estimates, this is a necessity to know what the timeline is around the overall plan. Otherwise it seems at the end of the day, this is goal of the plan. I think it's a laudable goal. And it's one that should be pursued.

That being said, however, I am interested in the timelines around that and how that's going to actually unfold because it would seem to me that this would be a level of government that could, down the road, see some increases and very possibly, if it's going to result in net savings, should possibly even see market increases.

So would the minister be able to more definitively put out a timeline around when the studies around the productivity savings would be available to the Assembly?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — We're not looking at this point of undertaking a productivity savings initiative. What we are looking at is proceeding with the consolidation, hopefully to be complete, at least in a very mature stage by '07, '08. We'll still need to make determinations in terms of new programs as we move forward with them. And that will need to be done on a program-by-program basis. I am not in a position to predict globally where we'll be at on that.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you. The next question I would have has to relate with value for dollars spent. And I'm just wondering in the IT sector . . . I have a number of friends involved in it in Toronto, well actually globally, Silicon Valley and whatnot . . . When bids come in, they tend to be fairly high. And the cost overruns within the industry are, well they're very . . . it's the norm. It's not the other way around. Has the minister considered, or what sort of comptroller issues do we have in place with our department? And secondly, what type of mechanisms do we have to audit for value when we're subcontracting, or even for internal audit of work done?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — The mechanisms that we do have of course are those that are normally in place with all projects for the legislature that the government funds through the Provincial Auditor and otherwise.

But I do tend to agree with the assessment that there is a high risk, or at least has been in past years, in terms of building out

IT systems with potential for cost overruns. One of the key areas that we need to address and need to develop is a better capacity to handle program management . . . project management through the ITO and have that centrally administered. This is a similar process that obviously SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) deals with in terms of capital issues. We need to build that capacity I think at a central location, and ITO means to I believe address that as part of its plan in moving forward.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, can I . . . I don't want to put words in the minister's mouth, so I'd just like some clarification for that. I take it then that that means there will be a movement towards some kind of value audit for dollars spent. And specifically in IT as it relates to government, what we've seen in the federal government and the cost overruns in, for example the gun registry — land titles provincially — these are systems that are complicated, that require a large and specialized level of technical expertise. And this is the same — it's not a government problem, it's an industry problem around IT. It becomes very difficult to assess when you're dealing in intellectual property, in essence, how a computer program works. I can tell you that I certainly don't know if lines 1,000 through 6,000 are necessary or not. Yet they can still be billed out at \$180 an hour.

And so the question for the minister is, you know with the agreement that you've shown, that this is a problem, it's not a problem that's specific to our government. It's a problem specific with the IT sector. What steps are being taken to ensure that the people of Saskatchewan, our government, and this ministry in particular, are getting value for dollars spent? And will we see a controller or more specifically an auditor or the auditor's office expanded to be able to make these kind of evaluations on information technology products?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I would argue there are two separate issues here. One is the question of the value of the work done and the accounting for that. That is a good discussion to have I think with the Provincial Auditor through the public accounts process. The auditor's office does have the ability to undertake this and does on a periodic basis do so.

The second issue though that is raised is the question how projects are managed. And this is the area, at least in my limited time here, that I've come to conclude that we need a more centralized body of expertise to deal with.

If, for example, we take a look at where projects in the past have ended up in cost overruns, it has a tendency to do with the number of change orders that are made in the project from the time they are initially conceived to the point that they are actually developed and delivered. The most notorious case of this, of course, is the gun registry that the federal government ran into.

That has very little to do with the value-for-money proposition. What it has to do with is a question of how the project has been managed. In this case it's not much different than difficulties you run into in changing blueprints, as you build out major capital projects. That's a second issue, and that is one that the ITO needs to tackle, I think, that is going to be well positioned to tackle as we move through consolidation. We'll have a

central body of knowledge. We'll have an ability to know what is the best way to manage it. And I think we'll be in a better position to handle those kind of issues.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. The question I had is — and I raised this in the spring, but there's new monies being put forth — has there been recommendation from this department to the other departments which are later down the line to be consolidated, their IT sectors, that procurements will be standardized for operating systems, for hardware, for software?

Mr. Wincherauk: — Yes, we are involved in that process right now, where if departments are making expenditures in the IT field, they work closely with our shop to make sure that it will fit with the final enterprise system that we will have.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you. I'd commend you on having that foresight because I do think that that's an important piece of the puzzle.

The next question would follow, in the rapid depreciation of IT equipment in general — be it software, hardware — is it the plan . . . Or I'll ask the philosophical question first. Is it in the best interest of the taxpayers and the persons of Saskatchewan that we actually own the infrastructures — specifically in the computers and the software — when they seem to date themselves quite quickly, and especially moving towards a one-consolidated system, having departments outside the system making purchases that are in essence anachronistic for the overall plan as presented today. Have we looked at, you know, the cost benefit of owning as opposed to leasing?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — The short answer is yes. And there may well be sensible ways in some departments to move forward with a leasing regime or a life cycle renewal process. I mean, we can look at it either way. Certainly IT does depreciate. There is a finite life to it. It's not forever going to be up to the state of the art or standards. So yes, we do look at that.

The other question that you ask is, does government need to own it? The answer is, no, government needn't own it. What we need to sort out is on a case by case basis how to deal with that, both in terms of the outsourcing of the data systems or the lease of capital equipment. And there's pros and cons to all of those, and that's part of what we look at, you know, on a case by case basis.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you.

The Chair: — We have Mr. Elhard. Does Mr. Dearborn want one more question?

Mr. Dearborn: — I have one final question for the minister.

The Chair: — One final question, then Mr. Elhard.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And the final question, Mr. Minister, is just with retention around your staff and the expertise there.

I have a number of friends, as I said, that work in the IT sector and the remuneration can be high. What steps are being taken to

ensure that we can retain personnel capable of running IT for what is in essence the equivalent of a corporation with \$6 billion annual budget?

You know, these persons are in very high demand the world over. We do have an IT sector in Saskatchewan, but in essence for that level of expertise we're maybe not dealing all with local, or local are often in their own businesses. What is the plan to be able to retain these individuals which, obviously, you know, because of their expertise, are important to the overall effectiveness of the department as a whole?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I'm advised there is a public service review of IT remuneration underway and how that fits into the overall retention strategies that we have to make sure we've got skilled individuals available to us.

I would note however that it does ebb and flow in terms of the preference of individuals, and indeed the benefits, of either working for government or in the private sector. Several years ago during the tech boom, certainly stock options were highly appealing, something government could not provide. On the other hand, government provides a secure environment and a reasonably good benefit package. These need to be weighed off by individuals.

Today, with the tech bust having been underway, stock options aren't nearly as attractive. And so they look more to a direct compensation — financial or in terms of other ancillary benefits. We try to remain competitive. I think that as I look throughout the sector we have a fairly good retention rate. We'll need to think about this though as we move forward dealing with the general issues that we have with human resources within the government sector.

The Chair: — I recognize Mr. Elhard.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, to the minister. Even with the undoubted capability of your senior staff here with you today, and others that work in the ITO office. Has the ITO office engaged the services of outside consultants to help pursue the fulfillment of this particular project; and if so can you identify them for us?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Yes. Certainly key among those was the Gartner Group who are an internationally renowned company dealing with IT restructuring.

Mr. Elhard: — Do you anticipate a continued arrangement with outside consultants from time to time as this project unfolds, or is this a temporary measure? And if so how will those consultants be retained?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — The short answer is yes, we continue to look for outside advice. I think it's important that government continue to have that advice, just as any large company would, as it deals with these technical issues. The approach would be the same as a normal private sector enterprise would engage. We would look at a set of issues and seek a normal consulting relationship contract with them.

Mr. Elhard: — Do you issue requests for proposals, that type of activity, to achieve the consultant?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — In some cases yes. One of the difficulties with the sector is that there are a relatively few companies who do the very large issue consulting. And indeed we tend to have a relationship with all of them. So they are . . . tend to be drawn in as, yes as need be.

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Minister, are there Saskatchewan-based consulting companies that can or are prepared to play a role at this level?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Yes, and we do engage them as we need. Certainly when we think about the expertise that's needed to bring together the kind of IT consolidation we're talking about where we're dealing with, how many different government departments . . .

Mr. Wincherauk: — Eighteen.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — . . . eighteen different government departments, \$100 million worth of expenditures, a number of disparate systems, we tend to look for people who have expertise in those kind of very large enterprise ventures. And what that leads you to are . . . tend to be the larger companies. In this case, Gartner was the primary group we dealt with.

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Wincherauk indicated earlier that today you've been successful in bringing about half a dozen departments under the ITO umbrella, which leaves another dozen to accomplish. What are the obstacles to achieving that objective quickly? Can you identify some of the problems? Is it just a matter of time or is there serious technical issues? Are there other considerations?

Mr. Wincherauk: — Time is an issue. We also face, within government departments, different cultures. The current state of infrastructure, the type of equipment that exists in each one of the departments is not standard, and so we have to work to bringing about standardization. There's fiscal reality about you can only do so much over a certain period of time. But those would be the major ones.

So we like to sit down, look at each department and see how it fits in with what we've got, our current infrastructure, and how we can move that forward.

Mr. Elhard: — When you identify culture, are you talking about, you know, the mechanisms and the programs and the formats that are used by a given department or are you talking about personnel issues and resistance to change?

Mr. Wincherauk: — It would be both, and not necessarily the resistance to change. But when you look at a department like the Department of Highways, which is predominantly staffed by engineers and its function is to you know build the roads, fix the roads, maintain the roads and then you look at a department like Agriculture, which has a huge program delivery and it's also a very large, policy-type function, that's what we're talking about.

Mr. Elhard: — Does the ITO at this point have plans in the future to take what it's learned from this experience and offer outside consulting activity?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I think it's fair to say the answer is no.

Mr. Elhard: — There was an indication earlier that, I think it was a figure of \$400,000 was being spent to achieve staffing and communications objectives. What kind of communications is required with this program?

Mr. Wincherauk: — As we have worked on this in the past, we have found one of the most crucial things is how you communicate with the staff. And that not only being the IT staff but also all the people who exist in a department. They have to know that their needs are going to be fulfilled, that the problems that they raise are going to be dealt with, and how they're going to get the services they need to do their job. And so it's a huge communication part of it.

And you can imagine, when you start to bring people into an organization, a lot of these people have been in their departments 15, 20 years and have a lot of concerns and issues and you have to be able to address those. And we've found our approach has been communications, communications, communication.

Mr. Elhard: — There is an indication of FTE (full-time equivalent) staff component of 21. Does this amount of money cover that specific number of people?

Mr. Wincherauk: — The 21 you see in the book are the previous ITO people. As we start flowing people in from other departments, that number will go up.

Mr. Elhard: — Can you give me an estimate of what you expect as a full staff complement?

Mr. Wincherauk: — If all goes well over the next couple of months, we would see that number grow anywhere between 70 to 90 FTEs.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — But can I also indicate that that will have a corresponding decrease then in the departments as they migrate in. So this is a . . . We should think about that as a, almost a transfer directly of not only FTEs but the appropriate corresponding budgets.

Mr. Elhard: — I appreciate the minister bringing . . .

The Chair: — Just to interrupt, members. Just to advise members that Mr. Belanger is sitting in for Mr. Sonntag. I recognize Mr. Elhard.

Mr. Elhard: — I appreciate the minister indicating that; that was my next question. Will the office accommodate the movement of people within the various departments that are affected and consolidated by this program? Or would they ultimately be replaced by other people who are maybe, you know, more specifically educated and capable in these areas?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Our expectation is that for the most part it would be a simple migration and the person who has the job in the department of X, Y, or Z would continue to do that same job but would now be associated with ITO.

Mr. Elhard: — Do your current facilities foresee the

accommodation of these 70 to 90 people?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I think it's also important to recognize that in many cases, the function will continue to happen within the department. So it's not necessarily a case that we'll have a giant ITO with every person working in there. We will need to think about how it is, as we bring together helpdesk staff and others, that we deal with some of the physical demands. Some of that will need to be physically consolidated.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe my colleague has some additional questions.

The Chair: — I recognize Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you very much. I'd just like to carry on where my colleague left off. When you transfer the IT functions from one department into the ITO, will the department need to maintain still some of its own IT services to ensure that ITO is providing the service that that department wants or has been receiving in the past from their own department function?

Mr. Wincherauk: — What happens over time, is when the integration is completed it becomes a fully integrated IT shop within the ITO and there's no IT staff left behind in the old department.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So if a department had a concern or a proposal on how they wanted their information dealt with, then they wouldn't have anyone on staff who would necessarily be cognizant of what is available, what is possible with IT. They would go to the ITO office for that function. I'm just wondering, though, about the communication between ITO then and the department on how are they going to know what is available, what is possible for them to achieve with the result that they're looking for.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I was just going to say, it's probably easiest to think about this model as being a consolidation in terms of it being a shared services kind of approach, where we'll have a central pool of IT specialists that departments will obviously interact with. They'll still deal with the . . . And they'll still set out what their program needs are. The response of the ITO will be to be the service provider.

So instead of each department having the expertise within management of the IT staff, that will be centrally housed. What we'll still have, though, is the ongoing dialogue back and forth between the program delivery people to make sure that the IT needs are being met. Some functions can obviously be centralized and are standard across government. Desktop, helpdesk, those kind of issues can be standardized. There'll still be . . . There's a significant difference between what the Department of Learning needs and the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Highways, and those continue to need to be worked out with the executive teams in place.

Mr. Wincherauk: — And what we leave behind is in each department they have what they call an information technology management committee which liaisons with the ITO. So their issues, their concerns come up through that route and then we

deal with them over at the ITO. And you know, behind them they also retain their business analysts which are the program-type people.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. I think that's probably the area more that I was interested in, is how does the department feel they're getting the results from IT that they need to be receiving unless they have someone in there who can assist them in the sense of telling them, yes, you're getting the right information, or no, you're not getting the right information.

Mr. Wincherauk: — The ITMCs (information technology management committee) that I was talking about, we tried these successfully with the Department of Agriculture and some of our partners, and they worked very well. And the departments, I believe the departments believe they're getting what they need to get their work done.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. On the legacy issues. Obviously these departments over time have been running various OS (operating system) platforms that don't necessarily talk to each other. On the information that the department has had now for a considerable — not the day-to-day operation for today, but information that they have had over a period of time — what is the IT office going to do to ensure that information that has been archived can continue to be accessed? Is that information going to be transferred into the platform that is going to be used throughout government today and into the future? Is it going to be maintained in the old platform that it was initially saved in and if it is, how is that platform then going to be accessed in the future?

Mr. Wincherauk: — This is a very detailed technical question, so I'll turn it over to Mr. Asmundson in a second, but each one of these we will deal with on a case-by-case basis. And that's again one of the reasons why we'll be doing the application assessment, so we get a good feel for which legacy systems you're going to have to either rewrite or redevelop over time, or in some cases you can simply put them on the shelves. But maybe Mr. Asmundson can . . .

Mr. Asmundson: — Yes, I do think that's one of the benefits of the assessment that we are going to embark on, as Don had mentioned, in this fiscal year. And I think some of the assessment that has to be done is identifying some of those risks that do occur as we move away from legacy systems, and some of the data that is backed up and retained for archival purposes needs to be restored on a system of that nature. To date there has been no issues with that. And in fact there's been the ability to use other systems to do the restores of data, but I think that is something that will come out within the strategy that we were working on this fiscal year.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, well you know in the past some of the data has likely been stored on the big gold reel drums. And you know that . . . Are we going to maintain a machine that reads it? I know one of my local guys still has a machine that will read an 8-inch floppy, which most of us have never even seen. But he maintains it and keeps it up because there is information that he still needs to access.

So that's my question, is are we going to retain some of these archaic systems or are we going to be able . . . are we going to

transfer that data, which could be very costly as well, to transfer that data from the past systems into the future systems? And how do you maintain a storage system? When you take a look at the old books, you know we have books that are thousands of years old, handwritten, and yet we can still access them and read them today. But if you go back, for most of us, and try and access a five and one-quarter inch floppy, it's no longer available to us because our machines don't have that capability. So I guess, as a concern, are we going to loose data and information as we move ahead because we don't maintain contact with those old systems?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I think there are a number of important issues that we do need to address around that. Certainly we need to go through on a case-by-case basis as departments migrate into . . . their systems into the ITO, to see how we deal with this. This is also an ongoing discussion that falls under the purview of the privacy framework and how we deal with archival issues. To what extent should we start moving that information over into easily accessed hard copy? To what extent do we need to continue to have it within the digital format, and how do we sort through this?

One of the single biggest issues that I would identify for government that we have not yet come to grapple with is, at what point do we dispose of information and how long should we keep information? And these are key issues that we do need to tackle with the Provincial Archivist.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I guess one of, you know, something that has been coming up just lately, in the future, is the opportunity with the centennial year coming forward to be able to look back into birth records. I mean that certainly deals with the privacy issue, and yet there is a growing demand to be able to access that kind of information by the individuals involved.

And yet most of that information will have been initially saved on paper, later on, on some kind of, what we would think of now as archaic computer system that isn't usable today. And so is it valuable to save that information? In that particular case, it probably is. But in other cases, if you're looking at 50-year-old medical records, it might not be.

And I guess that's a huge area that the government needs to be involved in, that IT obviously is, will be a part of, in the sense that they are the ones that will be dealing with a certain portion of this information.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Yes, certainly what the member identifies is correct, that there are different values and obviously different privacy and security issues attached to different types of information. As it pertains to vital statistics, obviously we need to make sure that that is handled in one way. Medical records have a much higher security that need to be handled, and we need to think about how that's dealt with.

That, in many ways, is less dependent upon the decisions around the hardware and software application than it is actually about what we keep as government. One of the problems with the information age is it has allowed us to keep a huge amount of information that may not be necessary to be kept. How long should we keep transaction records from people buying fishing

licences or — I don't know — park permits? I mean these are issues that we at some point . . . I mean we've got them, I'm sure, within the system today. Do we need to have them there? Do we need them for more than five or six years? I don't know.

And that's one of the sets of issues that I'm particularly interested in us tackling, around the discussion about privacy and security. ITO is involved in that as one of the agencies, but obviously Justice, Health, Learning, Executive Council, and others are also involved in terms of how do we classify information, how do we make sure it's accessible and how do we make sure appropriate information is either archived or disposed of. And these are key issues that certainly we're going to need to address in the coming years.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I think they're trying to hurry us along. The security issues, I think, are a great deal of concern, and not just since 9/11. I mean 9/11 maybe focused us on it but I think it . . . a huge issue without that even. When you look at having under your new data systems currently what Highways, Agriculture, the IT office itself, Grain Car Corporation, and I think you mentioned one or two others, those departments — because you're on the same database, because you're using the same OS — there is the capability to access that information from department to department.

Now you have security systems in place that are supposed to prevent that, but because you're running a common platform, that opportunity is there for someone who has the ability to cross that security boundary.

Have you made changes since we last talked to ensure that that system becomes more secure? Have you made the changes to ensure that only the people who have appropriate authorizations have access to the information?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — The short answer is yes, and this has been largely driven by the work that we received in the Deloitte Touche report on privacy and security. Of course when we think about security, it's not as much an issue around the 9/11 type security we talk about as it is with the contract government has with its citizens where people expect their information to be kept private and secure.

Those issues are there; we have certainly looked at that. I think there's a lot of work underway and there's an ongoing dialogue with the Privacy Commissioner about how we deal with that. But from a technical standpoint, certainly firewalls, security procedures, data classifications, these are all underway and being implemented as appropriate.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Have there been any problems developed in that area since there has been the use of the common database? You've talked about other departments coming in on this. You've talked about the difficulty surrounded with Health because of the privacy issues, but are you planning or what is the sort of schedule that you may have in mind for the other departments, such as Industry and Commerce, such as Social Services, Learning, the other major departments of government, and when will they be brought into the system?

Mr. Wincherauk: — Yes. Currently we are doing information

collection and due diligence on three departments and we would anticipate all three of those departments, rolling them into the ITO by the end of the fiscal year if all goes well.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Do you want to enumerate which those are?

Mr. Wincherauk: — And those three departments would be Government Relations, Department of Finance, and Industry and Resources. And then, we have two other ones queued up after that, but our resources only allow us to take on so many at one time.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Although I think the objective again is by the '07-08 year to be having the systems fully migrated.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. How about the Crown corporations? Are they envisioned, as they represent a huge portion of the government apparatus within Saskatchewan, are they envisioned to be a part of this? You have already the Grain Car Corporation as part of this, so that's one of the Crowns. Are the other Crowns going to be a part of this?

Obviously someone like SaskTel has a huge IT department of their own, but some of the other Crowns, you know, are considerably smaller than SaskTel or SaskPower and have the potential to perhaps benefit from the opportunity to participate in this.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — The CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) Crowns would not be considered under this strategy. It may be worth pursuing this with CIC at some point as to how they see that working in terms of consolidation. I know there's some sharing between Energy and Power on billing and those issues.

With regard to Treasury Board Crown corporations, there is a huge difference in terms of the capacity of some of these corporations. Some are set up for different reasons, are essentially run on the government systems today. So it depends again on the nature of them.

Do we see, for example, Liquor and Gaming coming in? Probably not. But some of these smaller ones are certainly so.

Mr. D'Autremont: — One of the issues that came to concern earlier, at sort of in the initial formations of the ITO office, was the contracting of government services either across the board for IT services or through the IT office and across the board. When ITO will be handling the data information for the various departments like Highways and Ag that it currently is, will the contracting for both hardware and software for the common system, will that be done in-house through the ITO office, or will it be done through an agent of some form?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — If you're asking about our expectation around contracting out, we haven't made any formal decision about it. There's still always a mix of what is better handled within the private sector and what is handled outside. For example, the government e-mail systems are currently on a contracted-out basis. In a large part I anticipate that those kind of initiatives we'd continue to look at case by case, but there's not any anticipation that overall we would either move to

insourcing or fully outsourcing.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I know, though, in the past that there was a concern that the government would have one agency — a private agency in that particular case — that would deal with most, if not all of the new . . . Both IT services' hardware and software that ITO would be dealing with would be done through that one agent, even though that agent in turn would be a competitor to the people that were tendering through that system. And that caused a great deal of concern amongst the suppliers who were providing their technical information and their bids to a company that could have been a potential competitor to them.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — No, we're not anticipating using that model. We would look at continuing to have a direct . . . where necessary to directly contract with individual vendors, but not to contract and then subcontract out as was considered with the EDS (Electronic Data Systems) deal. So that is not a model that we're looking at following at this point.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. On the money, the 1.7 million, that is now additional supplementary funding for the department, for ITO. If this money was not available, would these programs have been carried on this year, or would they have been held in abeyance until the next budgetary cycle occurred?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Certainly this accelerates the schedule. We would have had to work through what was affordable within the context. This will accelerate it.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Oh, one other question. Just about . . . I noticed in the paper within the last couple of weeks that, I think it's SaskTel but I'm not 100 per cent sure, is carrying on a wireless Internet test, I believe, in the North someplace, La Ronge perhaps, La Loche, or . . . Is ITO a part of that?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — With specific regard to that project, I'm told the answer is no, that we're not. But we do work with SaskTel with respect to CommunityNet and others, in terms of various initiatives with broadband build-out.

The Chair: — Okay. Vote 74, (IT03), for the amount of \$1,715,000. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That's carried.

Subvote (IT03) agreed to.

The Chair: — Therefore a motion:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2005, the following sums for Information Technology Office, \$1,715,000.

Would a member move that? Moved by Mr. Iwanchuk. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That is carried.

Vote 74 agreed to.

The Chair: — That concludes the estimates for Information Technology Office. Thank you, Minister.

We'll take a brief recess while the SPMC officials and minister comes in.

The committee recessed for a period of time.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates
Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation
Vote 53**

Subvote (SP02)

The Chair: — Order. The committee will reconvene. The next item before the committee is consideration of supplementary estimates for Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation, vote 53, which is found on page 14 of the Supplementary Estimates book and I would recognize the minister and ask her to introduce her officials.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'd like to introduce to you and to members of the committee the officials from Saskatchewan Property Management that are here with me today. Sitting to my left is Deb McDonald, the president of SPMC. And to my right is Garth Rusconi, vice-president of accommodation and services. And to our far left is Deb Koshman, vice-president of corporate support services. And sitting behind us is Donald Koop, vice-president of commercial services.

I'd like to thank them for coming before the committee today and for their help, I would assume, in answering questions that the committee may have about the incremental funding that SPMC is receiving this year. And just in order to help move discussions along, I'd like to offer a few brief introductory remarks.

I'm sure that everyone here today knows next summer Regina will play host to athletes and spectators from across the country for the 2005 Canada Summer Games. All eyes will be on Saskatchewan during these games, and we want to make sure that our province is putting its best foot forward. And for this reason, SPMC has sought additional funding for game site preparation work within Wascana Park. This project will build upon the tremendous success of the Wascana Lake urban revitalization project.

And with this funding, SPMC will add hillside seating to Pine Island to help accommodate the interest racing events on our newly . . . the interest in racing events on our newly deepened lake. And that's sure to be a huge draw. And as a permanent feature on Pine Island, this seating will serve as a lasting legacy that will be used for years to come. This funding will also be used to extend the existing park pathway system on to Pine Island and to add trees and shrubs to newly created areas like Pine Island and the Albert Street promenade.

There are many reasons to celebrate in 2005, and we know Canadians from across the country will be joining us for those celebrations. Through this contribution, we will enhance that experience and leave a lasting legacy for generations to come.

And I look forward to your questions.

The Chair: — (SP02). I recognize Mr. Brkich.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to welcome the minister and her officials here today. To start with, we're dealing with supplementary estimates, \$470,000. Is any of that cost going to be associated to the department going from the Crown to an in-house department? Is that why some of the money is put in there?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — This money is for preparation for sites and enhancements within the park in preparation for the Canada Summer Games that will be held here next summer.

Mr. Brkich: — Okay. Ms. Minister, with them going to an in-line from a Crown, will there be any costs associated with this budget for this year?

I had information from one of them . . . couple of calls from Regina saying that you were moving buildings. Would that be associated costs, or are you considering moving from your present building?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Currently what SPMC is doing, is doing an assessment of the building that they are in. That building is 40 years old and its envelope and mechanical systems are in need of either replacement or to be updated to . . . I mean for a number of reasons, for energy efficiency; and many parts of the building are well past their lifespan. So there's an assessment currently going on. But these funds are purely for the summer games, the Canada Summer Games that will be held here in Regina. And issues with and the due diligence that's being done on the head office building, that's entirely separate.

Mr. Brkich: — That's already built into that, the budget from . . . that was passed this spring . . . cost of the assessment?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — SPMC does a continual assessment of the buildings. I mean, it's part of our mandate, is supply and service to government and government departments and Crown agencies. So this is an ongoing process to keep consistent and up-to-date data on the condition of buildings and to what may need to be done in future years or needs to be done currently.

Mr. Brkich: — So, Madam Minister, on the assessments ongoing, has there been any recommendations to move to another building?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — No, there hasn't. The work is continuing on the current building to assess what needs there are and what options are available and once that is done then a decision will be made. But the due diligence is currently being done.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you. I also want to thank you for maybe giving me a little leeway here, but I did have some calls from Regina. Another one that dealt with, and I . . . looking for more, I guess, information, because I couldn't quite follow the call on

it. She left a message, but she was from the city of Regina. She says that SPMC's apparently selling some land, and she called it green space. I think maybe — I don't know if you call it that — but she called it green space. It was . . . there was flowers on it plus it was used for growing food bank gardens in Regina. I don't know if you have any information on it and I just said I would try to find some information out for her on this.

The Chair: — Just to advise members that the item before the committee is SPMC vote 53, asset renewal (SP02) and it's relating to the 2005 Canada Summer Games site.

And the member is quite right that the Chair did allow quite a great deal of latitude on his previous line of questions, but I think this line of questioning goes beyond what we're dealing with today. So unless there's some connection to the Summer Games and Wascana Park, I would rule that question out of order.

So if the member wants to try again and relate it to this . . . otherwise I'd rule it out of order.

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Chairman, since I don't know where the property is, it could be part of the Wascana Park, part of the lands that they're looking at, that she is concerned about. I don't know. So that was my following question. And I believe that if it is, then it might deal with this money that is being used to do some work on Wascana Park.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Chair, I must say to the member, very good attempt.

The land that he is speaking about is formerly the Diocese of Qu'Appelle land which has been declared surplus a while ago and there is a potential buyer of the property.

What's happened over the last number of years, Grow Regina has had community gardens in this part of this area. So what we've been doing, with the possibility of there being a developer interested in the property, we have been looking for alternative areas for Grow Regina to relocate their community gardens. There's been considerable work put into this by SPMC and by Grow Regina and we'll continue working on it in case the possibility of the developer taking over this land and purchasing it for other uses that there needs . . . that Grow Regina needs to be relocated.

This is an important asset to Regina and many people, useful and therapeutic, I mean, to go out and spend time in a garden. So it's an area that we've been working on for a while and we'll continue until we find a satisfactory relocation place.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, I will pass it on to her, because I had two or three calls on it and they were quite concerned.

I guess, getting back to the estimates, so this is just going to deal with the Summer Games that are coming up in 2005 and all the work is to be done just around Wascana Park? You'd mentioned . . . Can you give me more of a breakdown? You'd mentioned two or three things, but can you give me the costs per — you mentioned about two or three items — would you have that available?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — What I have is a breakdown of the various projects. I don't have a definite cost attached to each one for you though.

But what I can do is let you know that the Albert Street promenade that is at the Albert Street bridge, this will be for landscaping. Yes, I have no sense of direction when I'm in this room. There will be planting of trees and shrubs and installation of bike racks.

On Broad Street there will be manually operated irrigation systems at the east entrance into Wascana Park; installation of pathway lights; also more planting of coniferous and deciduous trees and shrubs.

There will be installation of park furnishings, benches, trash units, and also bicycle racks on Pine Island. And if you're aware, that's the new island that is within Wascana Lake. There will be also manually operated irrigation systems; installation of pressure dust pathways; and selected areas will be sodded. Installations of more park furnishings, benches, trash units, and bicycle racks and also a stair structure connecting the boardwalk to the seating area that's planned; and the amphitheatre seating within Pine Island for viewing of the various boat races and events that will be held on the lake. And also more landscaping, planting of trees, shrubs, and pathway lights.

Also there will be pathways finished with crusher dust on Broad Street North and also installation of safety railings.

Mr. Brkich: — It sounds like you're getting a pretty good buy for your \$400,000 with that. Do you expect a cost overrun?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — What I will say to you is the total cost of this is \$1.2 million, and we are working with other partners, looking for contributions from both the city and the federal government. This is our portion of these enhancements and completions for the Wascana or the . . . in Wascana Park for the Summer Games. We've put the dollars that . . . designated for this project up, and I think that only enhances our opportunity to get other funding from the other partners.

Mr. Brkich: — So have you been . . . I take it you've been in contact with the city and federal government. Are they . . . Have they indicated that they're willing to put up their shares?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Very receptive on the initial discussions, but nothing definite yet.

Mr. Brkich: — Have you contacted . . . Are you also looking at some private businesses for contributions? Are you pursuing that?

A Member: — In kind.

Mr. Brkich: — In kind.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Being this is within the Wascana Park, we have been sticking to our public partners, municipal government and the federal government.

Mr. Brkich: — Have you started any of the work yet or are

these just funds for starting, for start-up in, I would say, probably April, March?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — The planning has begun and we wanted to get started as soon as we could. That's part of the reason why we have put up the 470,000, is that we need to get moving on the planning and the initial stages of the project, to make sure that it's all completed before the Summer Games start next summer.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you. That's all the questions I've got.

The Chair: — I have Mr. Elhard.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Canada Games Committee has indicated that they're seeking tripartite funding for the entire venue operation and all the costs associated with putting on the games. So in view of the fact that there is a fair amount of financial requirement for the actual games themselves, is the department prepared to pick up the cost of doing this project if the other partners do not come forward with their share of funding?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Depending on the outcomes of discussions, that's something that we would have to look at.

Mr. Elhard: — You would consider it however?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — If the partners ended up backing out and not coming forward with any funding, I would say yes, we would.

Mr. Elhard: — I know the estimates we are dealing with today are fairly specific in terms of amount and project designation. But since the Canada Summer Games are an important part of the 2005 Centennial celebrations, I might ask, in connection with that, what else is SPMC undertaking to help the celebratory activities of that particular occasion? What other areas does SPMC expect to play a part?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — When you're talking about centennial celebrations, probably the biggest thing that SPMC has contributed to the celebrations is accommodations for the centennial office, and also to the Lieutenant Governor for the work that she's doing in planning for the centennial — that's the big contribution.

And then other contributions to the summer games would be some donations in kind — vehicles that may be needed during the games themselves and trailers, those type of things — things that we would already have on hand.

Mr. Elhard: — SPMC also markets a number of items that identify Saskatchewan, and I was wondering if there are plans to make product available to community groups; people who want help with promoting the centennial; poor, starving MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) offices that might need special discounts on Saskatchewan paraphernalia. What are the plans in terms of SPMC's offerings in those areas?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Some of the Saskatchewan items that we order for our MLA offices — and I don't know why I'm telling you this — come through SPMC. I mean they act as the

distributor to our offices. That's where we order them from. But the centennial merchandise is different; it will all be done through the centennial office.

Mr. Elhard: — If I remember correctly, SPMC has been the source of provincial flags, though, and pins, Saskatchewan pins. Will SPMC offer us a discount so we can make those readily available to our constituents?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — I think as a poor, starving MLA, you already get a discount so . . .

Mr. Elhard: — I guess fair is fair. You know, I think that SPMC's contribution to the Canada Summer Games in donations in kind is particularly important to the organizing committee. From what we've heard, they're going to be in big need of vehicles. And if, through our vehicle pool, we can help underwrite some of the expense of that particular cost through donations in kind, I think that's an important contribution and I appreciate SPMC doing that.

Are there plans by SPMC to undertake the establishment of gift shops or that type of operation as part of the centennial and/or Canada games celebration. Are we getting into that type of exercise at all?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — No, no gift shops that, I mean, have been contemplated — not by SPMC. I'd actually like to just comment when you talked about the things that SPMC does and the contribution to the centennial.

I think in the short time that I have been responsible for SPMC it never ceases to amaze me the amount of work and behind the scenes work that SPMC does to make sure that everything runs smoothly. They deal with the logistics of many moves, of support for . . . I mean it's just a mind boggling amount of services that they provide quite quietly and without much recognition. So I want to thank you very much for your acknowledgment of the work that we do and that the people — I keep saying that — that the people at SPMC provide to all government departments. And it makes a big impact on the success of many events, but it's quite quiet and quite often in the background and not recognized for it. So thank you for that.

The Chair: — From one starving MLA to another, I recognize Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Since the minister was talking about alluvium in her comment just now, Pine Island is, I believe, the remnants of the dig this past summer. It's not? Okay, I know that there was a whole lot of dirt disappeared out of the bottom of the lake anyways. And so I'm just wondering about the trees and shrubs that are being planted there and on the Albert Street and the Broad Street pedestrian ways there. Are those shrubs and trees natural to Saskatchewan?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — We have . . . Just to clarify this, Pine Island is actually the old Broad Street bridge abutment, so really it has always been there. It's just been cut off from the shores to make it into an island. There has been a landscape architect that has been retained. It's the same architect that was working on the Wascana Lake revitalization project, and he is the one that is

planning the landscaping for this project also. And of course there has to be consideration for plants that are suitable to the island and to Saskatchewan, in the variety of climate changes that we can . . . any plant can survive through. So there will be consideration for Saskatchewan plants and what's the best to put on Pine Island and in the project.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Saskatoons.

You talked about the Summer Games and the provisions that SPMC is providing in assisting in that area. Will SPMC CVA (Central Vehicle Agency) vehicles . . . will you be providing any hybrid vehicles for use during the Summer Games?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — The hybrid vehicles that CVA has within its fleet have already been designated and are designated to certain areas of government and in use already. So it would be highly unlikely for any to be offered during the Summer Games.

Mr. D'Autremont: — How many hybrid vehicles would the CVA have?

The Chair: — Order. I think it's been made quite clear that the item before the committee is the 2005 Summer Games, and the member quite rightly asked whether or not they were being utilized for the Summer Games. And I think he's now gone beyond the intent of what is here today. And I have Mr. Chisholm; I recognize Mr. Chisholm.

Mr. Chisholm: — I guess what my question is that we're in receipt of this — it's been referred to as one-time money, windfall, lottery, whatever we want to call it — this additional money that came into the coffers in the last part of the year. I guess my question is, had not this additional money come available, would you be here today with the same request to add \$400,000 to SPMC's budget? Or is it because there is more money available?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Absolutely we would be here requesting the \$470,000 because there is a commitment to enhance the park and to finish off the park and the pieces that are there for the sites for the Summer Games. It's something that we feel needs to be done — has to be done I think — when we have national attention focused on Saskatchewan and on Regina. As I said previously we want to put our best foot forward.

Mr. Chisholm: — Second question. Why was that not anticipated then at budget time some months ago? We knew that the games were coming, we knew. Obviously you must have known you wanted to do these things. Why was that not part of the initial budget?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Well when you look at a national event such as the Canada Summer Games and you're looking at the various sites and the work that needs to be done at each of the sites, you look at the costs and project out what your costs will be and the funds that need to be set aside.

SPMC has always done the work within the park. Any of the capital projects, it's something that, while it may be under the authority of the Wascana Authority and it is there for the enjoyment and pleasure of all of us, SPMC has always done the

capital projects and any large projects that need to be done within the park.

So when we look at the bicycling, cycling that will be done through the park, when we look at the boating that will be done on the lake, when we look at the tennis courts that are here, there has been a fair bit of disruption in the park. And with the Wascana Lake deepening project there needs to be finishing of that project around the landscaping and the enhancements that are all — most of them I believe are — contained within Wascana Authority's 100-year plan. So we'll complete those off, and it would fall to SPMC to do those, and that's what we're doing.

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you.

Mr. Chair: — Mr. Brkich.

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Chairman. Just a follow up question on the gift shops that were talked about. I know that some of the centennial organization is talking about setting up a gift shop next year starting in January. There's just talk of it. It's been bantered around. I've heard it at one or two other committees. Since you didn't, I don't think there's any extra budget money for you to start it in January which you probably would be. Then you would have no objection if the centennial committee either tendered it out for a private gift shop that could be set up here in the legislature or a non-profit organization to run one. There is no money to set up for a gift shop here starting January.

The Chair: — This item before the committee is related to the Summer Games and the site preparation in Wascana park. I don't see how a gift shop relates to that. So I would rule that question out of order. Does the member have another question that's related to the topic at hand?

Mr. Brkich: — With the organization with the Summer Games, they also want it in conjunction with the gift shop here. So that would be this summer, setting up a gift shop here if it goes ahead. There was talk in another committee organization that they were looking at it. And I was wondering, did SPMC set any money aside to set up a gift shop in the legislature here, then, to deal with the Summer Games?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Now as the member may be aware that the centennial committee has set up two kiosks — one in Regina; one in Saskatoon — that are in major malls that offer centennial stuff . . . the word's gone, but anyway, centennial stuff. And they've been very well received that as . . . all the reports that I've heard back.

If there was a gift shop to be set up within the legislature, the member should realize that while SPMC may have responsibility when it comes to capital projects and maintenance within this building, it is really under the direction of the Legislative Assembly. So that's really where the question should be directed, that if it would be the Legislative Assembly that is looking at establishing a gift shop.

And I know there has always been . . . Ever since the Cumberland Gallery has been opened, there has always been rumours around that it would be nice to have a gift shop there.

And it kind of goes up and down, the comments and the interest. So it wouldn't be the appropriate place to direct it at us, and we don't have money set aside for a gift shop within the Legislative Assembly building.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, Madam Minister, that's the answer I was looking for. And I just want to make one comment before I turn it over to the member from Cannington there. I probably, as have all the MLAs here, I've had probably in the hundreds of requests for next year for pins and flags to celebrate the centennial celebration.

And I know you've said that SPMC gives us a discount, but I don't think even with the discount and a little bit of extra money we're getting, I don't think we're going to be able to keep up with the demand for the 100-year celebration. And I would like to see SPMC work some of this \$400,000 into possibly sending even some boxes of pins free to MLAs because the requests I've gotten already has eaten up the budget I've got for next year, and I'm not even into next year yet.

So with that, I will . . . I don't know if you want to, care to answer that. There's really no question there, just some comments. And I imagine your offices are getting the same amount of requests, but we're dealing with . . . I'm dealing with 40 towns, not just one city, like some of you MLAs are dealing with. And every town wants to throw a celebration, and every town wants to have flags, wants to have pins, wants to have things for the people that are coming. It's going to be a huge, huge event; the 100-year celebration. And I would like you to take some consideration into the demands — that are especially onto the rural constituencies — of our offices for flags and pins and any paraphernalia . . .

The Chair: — Order. Order. I would suggest that that member direct that question to the legislative secretary in charge of the centenary, Mr. Hagel. So I would recognize Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The 470,000 in the supplementary estimate is for capital projects in Wascana Park for the Summer Games and for the centennial. Are there any other . . . And you're in discussion with the federal government and the city to further enhance that for the completion of the projects.

Is there any other discussion going on with the federal government for federal capital projects for the Summer Games or the centennial?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — No, there isn't.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. I'd asked a question about CVA, if CVA vehicles are being made available for use during the Summer Games. And since CVA does have some hybrid vehicles, if the potential was there to have some hybrid vehicles that are already allocated for use during the Summer Games, what number of hybrid vehicles could potentially be available?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — SPMC has 11 hybrid trucks within the fleet. And those currently are designated to, I believe the Crown corporations are using them because of the nature of the work they do. And so far, the test run with these hybrid vehicles has been very positive. So hypothetically, there could be 11.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. That's my questions.

The Chair: — Any further questions by any members? I recognize Mr. Elhard.

Mr. Elhard: — I'd like to assure the minister that even though we've had some humorous moments this afternoon, we take this job quite seriously. And I want to thank the minister and her officials for obliging us for the last 35 minutes. Thanks very much.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — I would like to thank the members of the committee for the questions. And while some of them may have been wandering somewhat from estimates, I will say to the members opposite, next year is going to be a very busy year for Saskatchewan.

The centennial is going to be a huge amount of projects, both within the urban and rural areas. And the member is right; I mean, there's been a number of requests for centennial stuff and when you talk about flags, Saskatchewan flags and pins, we'll take it under consideration and have a look into it because we appreciate that there will be more requests for next year. Thank you.

The Chair: — Any further questions by anybody that would like to ask the minister any further questions? (SP02) for the amount of \$470,000. Is that agreed? That is carried.

Subvote (SP02) agreed to.

The Chair: —

Therefore resolved that be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2005, the following sums for Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation, \$470,000.

Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That is carried. Could I have a member move that? Mr. McCall. Is that agreed? That is carried.

Vote 53 agreed to.

The Chair: — Also we require a motion:

That the draft first report of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies be adopted and presented to the Assembly on November 25, 2004.

Would a member care to move that motion? Mr. Belanger. Is that agreed? That is carried.

That concludes our business today. If I could have a motion to adjourn? Moved by Mr. D'Autremont. Is that agreed? That is carried. This committee stands adjourned. Thank you members.

The committee adjourned at 16:38.

