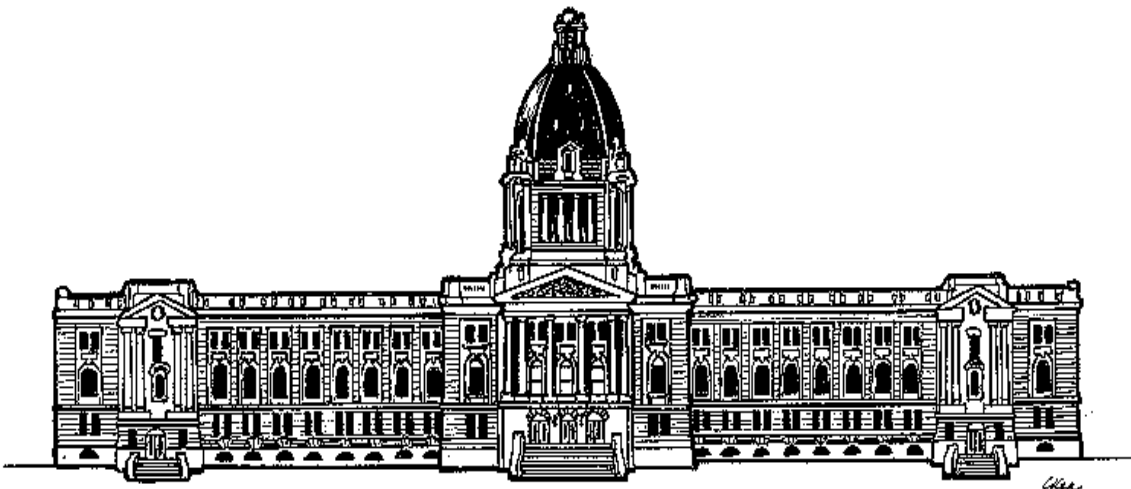




STANDING COMMITTEE ON CROWN AND CENTRAL AGENCIES

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON CROWN AND CENTRAL AGENCIES

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Mr. Jim Reiter
Rosetown-Elrose

Mr. Randy Weekes
Biggar

Mr. Kevin Yates
Regina Dewdney

[The committee met at 18:19.]

The Chair: — Good evening committee members. I'll call this committee meeting to order. We have two items before us for this evening. Before we get to those, I will just make committee members aware that a number of documents have been tabled with the committee. These include a number of the Crown annual reports. We also have a letter that has been submitted by Minister Gantefoer clarifying a comment that he made in committee regarding Bill No. 1. And so those will be tabled with the committee members.

**General Revenue Fund
Office of the Provincial Secretary
Vote 80**

Subvote (OP01)

The Chair: — This evening we have consideration of estimates for the Office of the Provincial Secretary, and Minister Elhard has joined us with a number of officials. And at this time I would ask him to introduce his officials, and if he has any opening comments, he could make those at this time.

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and it's a pleasure to be with the committee this evening. I'm joined today by several officials from the Provincial Secretary's office. To my immediate right is Rick Mantey, the deputy provincial secretary. To his right is Wanda Lamberti, executive director of central management services. To my left is Deborah Saum, executive director, protocol and honours. And behind us is Mr. René Boudreau, director, Office of French-Language Co-ordination.

Mr. Chair, I'm pleased to have this opportunity to provide this committee with a brief overview of the Office of the Provincial Secretary and the related details in the 2008-2009 provincial budget. The Provincial Secretary includes four key areas: the office of the Lieutenant Governor, protocol and honours, Government House, and the Office of French-Language Co-ordination.

The office of the Lieutenant Governor is charged with representing the Crown within Saskatchewan, delivering the Speech from the Throne, opening legislative sessions, approving legislation, and bestowing honours.

Protocol and honours is responsible for official visits, events, emblems and symbols, the Legislative Building art collections, and the Saskatchewan honours and awards program which recognizes individuals for their contributions to the well-being of this province.

Government House is a key tourist attraction in Saskatchewan that strives to provide educational programs to schools and the community at large, managing a government hospitality facility and accommodating the office of the Lieutenant Governor.

And finally, the Office of French-Language Co-ordination serves as liaison between the provincial government and the province's French-speaking population and supports ministries and government agencies in offering and improving French

language services. This branch also guides and monitors the implementation of the Government of Saskatchewan French language services policy and provides translation services for executive government.

All branches within the Office of the Provincial Secretary frequently interact with members of local, federal, and international communities who have an interest in Saskatchewan's identity and diversity.

Now let me talk specifically about the 2008-09 budget. The budget for the Office of the Provincial Secretary includes an overall increase of \$668,000. This is due in part to an allotment of \$157,000 for the logistical planning of the Western Premiers' Conference, which we are proud to be hosting with the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs later this month.

This conference is an opportunity for premiers to discuss shared interests and concerns in order to better work together for the benefit of the people we serve. It is also an opportunity to show the other Western premiers that Saskatchewan is growing, more confident and prosperous and prepared to be a leader in the new West and in Canada.

Another reason for the increase is the allotment of \$288,000 to host the national coordination function of the Ministerial Conference on the Canadian Francophonie. Since 2001 the MCCF national function has been funded through bilateral federal-provincial agreements with host provincial governments. Saskatchewan was chosen to act as host for 2007-08 and again in 2008-09 fiscal years. The Office of the Provincial Secretary also requires two FTEs [full-time equivalent] in order to fulfill our role as host.

It is important to note that these expenditures will be fully reimbursed through an agreement with the province of New Brunswick which is presently acting as a signatory provincial-territorial government for the shared funding agreement with the Government of Canada.

The Office of the Provincial Secretary works to provide opportunities that engage the hearts and minds of our citizens and showcases Saskatchewan as a province that has much to offer, encouraging others to make their home right here. We are committed to promoting Saskatchewan's identity and honouring the great achievements of our people.

And we would be pleased now to answer any questions you or committee members may have on the activities of the Office of the Provincial Secretary and its budget. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister, and thank you to your officials for being here this evening. Committee members the estimate for Office of the Provincial Secretary is vote 80. It's found on page 119 of the Estimates book. Ms. Higgins.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I just have a few questions, Mr. Minister, tonight. So I first want to thank you very much for being here on the evening and also to your officials for being here this evening.

When will the Western Premiers' Conference be?

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — I was just checking with the deputy to make sure we weren't scooping the official announcement, but I believe the dates are 28th, 29th, and 30th of this month.

Ms. Higgins: — Okay. When you talked about two . . . I mean the increase in budget for the Office of Provincial Secretary is pretty minimal when you look at the scale of things in the provincial government. So you know just by looking at it that there is a couple of events that need planning or at least one big event that needs planning. So I guess most of your comments really answered my questions.

I guess first and foremost though, there is the executive management. You've got an increase of 93,000. What exactly is that for?

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — Yes \$93,000 — it's indicated in the estimates — include the cost for one full-time equivalent for the minister's and the deputy minister's office, as follows, 57,000; and one FTE for an administrative assistant, which will go to the deputy provincial's secretary office.

And there's also \$36,000 charged to our ministry for executive air charges related to this minister's office. And that's an obligation that exec air charges to each of the ministries.

Ms. Higgins: — So you said this covers a staff for your office that I would assume . . . to the minister's office or covers one staff member in the minister's office, also an assistant to . . .

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — It's one FTE, and that's an executive assistant to our deputy, but it's charged to the minister's office.

Ms. Higgins: — Okay thank you. Have we always had a deputy minister in the office of protocol? I don't recall this position being there before. This is new?

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — I don't know the history of the Office of the Provincial Secretary in detail, so I couldn't answer you equivocally one way or the other what the situation has been historically. To my knowledge, it was not a position that required a deputy in recent history anyway, but when the Ministry of the Provincial Secretary was split off from the role that it had assumed previously as part as Intergovernmental Affairs, a deputy was assigned to this particular ministry.

The bonus, I would add at this point, is that we get him at no extra charge. The salary for the deputy is paid by Executive Council. There's no additional money charged to our ministry for the role of our deputy.

Ms. Higgins: — So then he works here in the building. He doesn't work at the office of protocol.

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — He works here in the building.

Ms. Higgins: — So that would be a full-time position for the Provincial Secretary, the Office of the Provincial Secretary.

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — Madam Member, I'm going to let the deputy explain it because he has all the details at his fingertips.

Mr. Mantey: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. In addition to being deputy provincial secretary, I'm also deputy cabinet secretary and Clerk of the Executive Council. So it's no different than what my predecessor, Lily Stonehouse, had when she was deputy minister of Government Relations, and she was also deputy provincial secretary as well. So it's a similar situation.

Ms. Higgins: — No, thank you very much. I guess I've never heard anyone referred to as the deputy minister of the Office of the Provincial Secretary. So that was a new one for me. Thank you very much for the explanation.

Also you've got a small increase in accommodation services. Is this to accommodate the two extra staff for planning, or is there been a move for the office, or just increased in prices?

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — My understanding is the increased cost in that particular category is for a rather significant increase that Government Services has levied against our ministry for maintenance costs at Government House. And we've had some discussions with them about these kinds of costs. We thought that it was fairly substantial, but the argument has not been entirely resolved to our satisfaction, and therefore we're paying it.

Ms. Higgins: — Okay. We won't say whoever won or lost that argument, but I'm sure it'll go on for a while.

So Government Services just took over maintenance at Government House, or they've always looked after maintenance at Government House? Is this something new?

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — No, it's my understanding that Government Services has had long-standing responsibility for that type of maintenance. They are responsible generally for maintenance of all government-owned buildings, and they just seem to think their work is more valuable today than it was last year.

Ms. Higgins: — Okay. We won't go any farther on that one because I don't want the argument to get on the record here with Government Services.

The only other question that I have . . . the two FTEs that were increased this year for the two conferences that are being planned here in Saskatchewan, are those contract or will they be on permanent?

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — That's an interesting arrangement, frankly, and it's part of an agreement at the federal-provincial level that whichever province is identified as the home of the people who are best able to provide the coordination and organizational skills for the conference, that province picks up the cost of those two individuals. But it's a fully refundable cost. There's no net cost to the General Revenue Fund. We have to show it on our books because we're paying it, but the province will be reimbursed by the province of New Brunswick, by agreement, fully for that amount.

The money flows through the federal government to New Brunswick and New Brunswick sends it to us. Now if the two people that were selected to coordinate the conference had lived in Manitoba or Ontario, a similar arrangement would have been

made with those provinces. So it's the home province where the selected individuals live that bears the initial cost and then is reimbursed.

Ms. Higgins: — . . . reimbursed. So then the answer is, it's basically a contract.

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — I guess we could characterize it as a contract. It's a short-term position. It will last for up to two years. And I think it's . . . we're going to call them term employees, not contractual employees, I'm told now. Yes.

Ms. Higgins: — So then how long is the term?

Mr. Mantey: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The term is until, it is up for renewal at the end of this fiscal year, and then we will enter into a new agreement with the MCCF if that is their desire during the course of this fiscal year. But the term finishes at the end of this fiscal year. It was for two years, for last fiscal and for this fiscal coming up.

Ms. Higgins: — So the MCCF is . . . and what this is put in place for is to coordinate a conference, the Francophonie Conference. So I don't quite understand why it's a two-year term then because when's the conference and how does this all fit together? Sorry, now you've piqued interest here.

Mr. Mantey: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The original . . . It was a two-year agreement that the province of Saskatchewan signed with the Government of Nova Scotia, sorry, with the Government of New Brunswick, in order to facilitate the hiring of a staff person for the MCCF secretariat and the individual supplies secretariat support to the MCCF. And because they resided in Saskatchewan, the MCCF did not want to move them to New Brunswick or to any other province, so they entered into an agreement for two years here.

Ms. Higgins: — Understood. No, thank you very much. I think that really about does it for any of the questions that I have, not unless my colleagues have anything else.

The Chair: — Okay thank you, Ms. Higgins. At this time, seeing no further questions, I will thank the minister and his officials for attending. I believe we are going to move on to the next item of business and . . . Minister Elhard.

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Before we do that, I just want to say my appreciation publicly for the support and the work that the officials around me provide in this endeavour. I think the Office of the Provincial Secretary will have a higher profile certainly because it's an independent office now. We're going to use it to best advantage to promote the province, to raise our profile both within the province and outside of the province, and it will be largely because of the good work of the people in this ministry who support that objective. And so I'd like to thank each of them for their time and their support and I appreciate it very much.

Bill No. 18 — The Public Service Amendment Act, 2008

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister. We will now move on to consideration of Bill . . . Seeing that it's the same minister that's going to remain with us for Bill No. 18, we'll just give a

moment while his officials leave, and we will move on to consideration of Bill No. 18.

Minister Elhard, seeing that we've already had this Bill in front of us, I take it you don't need to make any further comments on this at this time?

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — No, it's my understanding that the questions were satisfied. The members of the opposition took some time to ask questions on this previously, and by agreement we're here to attend to voting off this particular Bill.

The Chair: — Okay. Seeing no questions at this time, we'll move on to Bill 18, An Act to amend the Public Service Amendment Act, 1998. The short title, clause 1, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

[Clauses 1 to 5 inclusive agreed to.]

The Chair: — That's carried. Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: The Public Service Amendment Act, 2008. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That is carried. I would ask a member to move that this Bill be moved without amendment.

Mr. Weekes: — I so move.

The Chair: — It's been moved by Mr. Weekes. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That is carried. Okay. Seeing that that takes us to the end of our adjournment, I want to thank the minister for being here this evening and committee members. And at this time I would ask a member to move an adjournment motion. It's been moved by Mr. Reiter that this committee adjourn. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — And that's carried. This committee stands adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 18:38.]