

The Chair: — Welcome, committee members of the Standing Committee on Estimates. We have before us the estimates of the Legislative Assembly. What we will do is . . . by our orders in reference from the Legislative Assembly on April 23 say that, the estimates for the Legislative Assembly, subvotes LG01 to LG06; estimates for the Ombudsman and the Children's Advocate, subvotes LG07; and the supplementary estimates for the Legislative Assembly, subvotes LG01 and LG03, being vote 21; and the estimates for the Provincial Auditor, being vote 28, be withdrawn from the Committee of Finance and referred to the Standing Committee on Estimates for our deliberation. And we would report back to the Legislative Assembly.

**General Revenue Fund
Legislation
Vote 21**

The Chair: — So this morning I would like to welcome Mr. Speaker and his supports to the committee. And I would call the first item of business, the legislation estimates, that being item 1 of vote 21 on page 94 of the main *Estimates* book.

I'd ask Mr. Speaker to please introduce his officials and we can begin discussions on this item.

The Speaker: — Thank you very much, Madam Chair. First of all what I'd like to do is to introduce the officials who will be assisting in the presentation regarding items 1 through 6, which is the Legislative Assembly operations. And I think everyone, all of the officials here, will be familiar to the members of the committee but let me ensure that you are familiar with them.

To my right is Clerk of the Assembly, Gwenn Ronyk; and to my left is Marilyn Borowski, director of financial services; and to her left is Linda Kaminski, director of personnel and administration. The Legislative Librarian, Marian Powell, is here. And along the wall is Gary Ward, director of broadcast services; Bob Cosman, the Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk; and my assistant, Debbie Saum. So those are the officials who will be assisting me in the first portion of this review.

What I thought I'd like to do, Madam Chair, if it's okay with you, is to make some general comments about Legislative Assembly operations and then very briefly walk through the blue book items to explain to you the differences between last year and this year. So I'm not concentrating on the services, but concentrating on the changes from the status quo of last year.

Before getting into those, if I can just perhaps give a bit of a heads-up to the committee in an area that is a bit of an uncertainty to us over the course of the next fiscal year, and that will be the implications of the restoration project that will be taking place in the building here.

You're all aware that we're going to be having major renovations and restoration taking place, and that will have implications on the use of the building; and therefore on things like space and storage, which are significant factors to us which at this point in time we're just not able to predict what the implications those might have. But they will impact on the, obviously on the operations of the Legislative Assembly and the

staff who serve. So I just, without being able to predict something specific, give you heads-up on that.

Since we last met in the committee a couple of . . . I guess really three things of significance that have been changes to the operations of the Legislative Assembly, all of which are positive in my view.

This is the portion of the spending of the province of Saskatchewan that relates to our functioning — the legislative process, the parliamentary process. And the resources in items 1 through 6 make it possible for us to do our job in service of the people of Saskatchewan. And three significant things, I think, have occurred in the big picture.

One is that, as you will know, for the first time ever, when we came on March 6 to the opening of the legislative session, every single member of the legislature had television coverage in his or her own constituency in at least one community — for the first time ever — giving us television coverage of the legislative proceedings that would potentially go into the homes of cable subscribers and would cover over half of the homes in Saskatchewan, who can follow the proceedings of the legislature without even having to set foot inside the building.

All of that as well, I think it's worth noting in the context that Saskatchewan has the most comprehensive presentation of the legislative coverage in the nation; that our coverage occurs, as you know, from the call to order to adjournment on a daily basis.

And in my view, this is a very significant change and an improvement which makes it possible for the citizens of Saskatchewan to have the opportunity to draw their own conclusions based on their own observations of what you are doing in the Assembly on a day-to-day basis in the service of the people of Saskatchewan.

And I think in the context of a healthy public environment for parliamentary democracy, that that's certainly worth noting. And I also want to acknowledge the work that Gary Ward, our director of broadcast services, has done with cable companies across the province to facilitate that.

And I'll let you know as well, that neither the Speaker nor Gary Ward are resting comfortably, that this is where we should stop, and that we will continue to keep our eye on this with the hopes that someday we're not restricted from any of the homes of Saskatchewan, I think is a worthwhile objective for us.

Secondly, it's worth noting that when we came to the legislature on March 6, from that point forward the Legislative Assembly is on the Internet. We've had a fair amount of positive observation and comment, particularly I think, of interest to schools in Saskatchewan who can now pick up *Hansard* and a whole host of other kinds of information, including the possibility of booking a visit to the Legislative Assembly through the use of the Internet.

We've had some positive comments from within the province as well as beyond the province. And as some of you will know, I commented some days ago, one of your colleagues who is not

able to attend the legislature because he's hospitalized is still able to follow what you're doing from another province because of the fact that we are on the Internet, and again have done something to significantly increase the accessibility of the people of Saskatchewan to know in written form what's going on in the legislature here and what you're doing.

So I again in the interest of an informed public, which in my view is one of the essential ingredients in effective parliamentary democracy, it's another step that we've made within the last year for which I commend you and the Legislative Assembly.

Finally, as I look around the room, several of you have had a chance to be a part of the parliamentary outreach that we've initiated over the course of the past year. And in that time, since the month of October, I've had the opportunity to make presentations to about a hundred groups on our system of parliamentary democracy — the bulk of those being young people, having gotten to 60 schools and I think about 79 presentation in those 60 schools to over 3,000 Saskatchewan teenagers in 35 constituencies and about 85 per cent of that with the local member of the legislature being there and a part of that exercise.

In my judgement it has been a very positive expenditure of time and resources that has stimulated some thinking, particularly among the young people and the future generation of Saskatchewan, as well as I think some positive reflections in a number of our weekly newspapers around the province about our institution. And again I think a good investment of our resources to assist in the understanding of the system of parliamentary democracy that we're a part of here.

So those are three things that have happened in the past year since this committee has met. We made some reference to them last year when I reviewed the *Hansard* and report to you satisfaction that I think all are effectively serving us.

Now as we go through the financial information that you requested to be reviewed under the legislation category, I'd like to deal then first of all with items 1 through 6. I won't repeat what you already have — and I know that on Tuesday you were all provided a fairly substantial package of the standard questions that go to ministers in departments and that we provided the answers related to the Legislative Assembly operations and we'll be happy to respond to those — but I won't go through that. You've already got that and I won't waste your time by repeating what you already know.

Now if I can walk through items 1 through 6 together with you and point out the differences in the budget to explain where the . . . some items are up, some are down. In grand total, items 1 through 6, if you add them all up, you will see that it represents an increase in expenditure of \$364,000 which in percentage terms is an increase of 2.51 per cent.

The budget for legislation is made up in really two categories. One is budgetary, about which we have some discretion; and the other is statutory, which by law must be done. Our budgetary increases are \$241,000 and the statutory increases are 123,000, and that's where the total of 364,000 comes from.

First of all, in item 1, administration. This is the category that includes the Clerk's salary, it includes the Speaker's office, as well as financial services and administration services. And these are all things, as you can readily see, that are . . . they exist to serve, essentially, to serve the institution and much of that is to serve you in your carrying out of your duties as members of the legislature.

There is \$107,000 increase in the category and where it comes from is basically from three items. One is personal services. There's a personal services increase of \$166,000. That occurs because of several things that have changed in the last year.

One is member services has had an increase of one person. You will recognize that Iris Lang has been, for some time, serving member services and has probably been a regular contact with your constituency assistants. She had been seconded from security services. That position has actually moved there and she's serving there in that position now, not in a seconded way, so that represents an increase in a position.

We've also added a computer systems analyst, and this also includes the benefits that your constituency assistants have received, that has been improved for them within the past year. So those are items that have increased.

As well, there has been a secretarial position that has been added to the Speaker's office related to the substantially increased activity in the Speaker's office related to outreach, advance approval for communications expenditures, protocol activities, and increased MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) contacts.

There also is included in that an increase in expenditure that occurs because of the by-election. The by-election changed the formula for provision of members' secretaries to the official opposition caucus and so that's reflected in here as well. So those are the factors there.

The Board of Internal Economy has increased by \$1,000, largely because of a fair amount of activity that's been related to the implementation of the McDowell report and items that have flowed out of that, largely which have involved the focus of the Speaker actually, who serves as the Chair of the Board of Internal Economy.

At the same time, there's been a reduction of \$60,000 and that's been in information technology expenditures for hardware and software. So an increase of 167,000, a reduction of 60,000, gives us a total effect on the administration of \$107,000.

Secondly, accommodation and central services. This is to provide basically for our space here, and appears to be a \$1,000 increase. In fact if you go back and you look at last year's budget item, you will find that in fact it is a \$50,000 increase because one of the things that occurred in the last year is that some of the storage space for the library has transferred from the Provincial Secretary to the Legislative Assembly. However, because it's restated in your budget it appears to be just the simple \$1,000 increase which is just normal and I guess inflationary.

Now moving along to Legislative Assembly services, these will be many of the things that you will . . .

The Chair: — Mr. Speaker, as beforehand I neglected to say, in each category if I see some hands I'll stop you and ask the member to contribute while we're on that item.

The Speaker: — Sure.

The Chair: — All right. So we have Mr. Whitmore.

Mr. Whitmore: — Mr. Speaker, just going back to the accommodation and central supply and you're making reference to the case in point of the increase. Being also a member of the Board of Internal Economy, we have an opportunity to — a few of us — have an opportunity to see the budget before the estimates. And there was a sizeable increase from Property Management Corporation in terms of the rentals that the library faces in terms of, I think in Walter Scott.

Are you saying that is what is in here in 2 or is that in 3 in terms of the Legislative Library budget? Because it was a sizeable increase.

The Speaker: — It's in here, in 2, in a combination of central services.

Mr. Whitmore: — Okay.

The Speaker: — And while you're on the subject, I think I again seize the opportunity to alert the committee members to the fact that this, the storage space for the library, is a continuing challenge for us which we must address.

At this point in time we have, I think would be considered the best temporary solution to our storage needs, which in effect is wasting money. And somewhere along the line, and I would recommend sooner rather than later, we need to make the investment to meet our long-term library storage needs that we're . . . We've got it done and can make that information available to the library as well.

The library, as you know, will have as its first priority the service to members. But it is also a provincial library and holds some documents that have significant historical value. And this is just simply an item that we're going to — I know the members of the Board of Internal Economy are aware of — that we're going to have to address sometime soon.

Mr. Whitmore: — And I agree with that too, that it needs to be addressed sooner than later in light of . . . Sorry, Madam Chairperson. It needs to be addressed sooner than later in terms of dealing with the problem, particularly now with some of the changes that may be going on in the Legislative Building.

Does that accelerate the situation, in terms of some of those renovations, that we will require storage for some of those books and materials — just to deal with the restoration side?

The Speaker: — You know, you're quite right. Because some of our storage that we have here will have to be moved out

while . . . That's some of the area that just becomes unusable for some period of years. And we do have . . . part of our storage right now is things in boxes.

That's why I say this is wasted storage money because we're storing things in boxes because we're not making the expenditure we need to get them into the kind of shelving and space that makes them usable. Somewhere along the line we're going to have to do that, and this will be made worse while we're doing the restoration because it's one of the pressure points in the library.

We'll continue. And that's why I was saying at the beginning, I kind of forecast for you that we're going to have some complications that we're not quite sure of yet, related to the restoration. Because when some spaces in the building will become unusable for a period of time, obviously that's going to mean Legislative Assembly storage space and/or staff are going to have to be moved somewhere else. So that'll have some cost implications but will also have some service implications, I think, for us.

Mr. Whitmore: — Well I think, and again going back to the discussion and Board of Internal Economy too, I think there's a need for a very early discussion with Sask Property Management to deal with a long-term solution there.

Because it's not just storing books in boxes in terms of accessibility, some of those materials have historic value. And it will cost considerably more money for the storage of those items, if it's not protected properly, in order to bring them up to a usable condition. And we were lucky that Wascana Creek didn't flood this year.

The Speaker: — That's a good thing. And I would also offer on behalf of Marian Powell, our Legislative Librarian, if any of you want a guided tour of our library storage space, Marian would be most enthusiastic about taking you on a tour so that you can see for yourself. So you can go and see them there boxes sitting in a pile.

A Member: — If you're worried about flooding, you should put them in wooden boxes maybe.

The Speaker: — Okay. Is there anything else, Madam Chair, in that category?

Mr. Whitmore: — It moved a little quicker. If I could, Madam Chairman, in the area of administration too, and you referred to McDowell and the costs, and I know that we haven't had a full year yet to really analyse that, but the best estimates now are looking at the year in terms of what those costs will be. And I guess looking at terms of the budgets and what's gone on, I think it's important to note that McDowell, in terms of the view of the general public, is not something that has been a cost saving. It has been something that has increased the accountability of members, and in some circles maybe had increased the amount of paperwork and things like this involved by members and staff and legislative staff.

But it's important to note that McDowell was never implemented and is proving to be not . . . not to be a cost

saving. And I think that's important to note too, to the general public.

The Speaker: — No, you're exactly correct. No, I don't think anyone would reasonably ever assume that McDowell was intended to, nor achieved, a cost saving. It was accountability, and accountability ain't cheap. And the board has recognized that somewhat, in the increase in staffing that — part of which has been the implications, not entirely all of which — that you're seeing in the budget here as well.

Quite frankly, I think what we'll want to do, in terms of the responsible expenditure of public dollars, is to do an assessment sometime in this calendar year to look at the relationship between the requirements of accountability and their actual effectiveness compared to the mountain of paperwork that that involves for members of the legislature and the constituency assistants, and their ability to do other jobs.

We're all aware this is no 40-hour-a-week job — far from it. And I think members will, through their members of the Board of Internal Economy, want to ask that this be responsibly reviewed, and considerations be made for changes that don't reduce accountability but do help to improve the effectiveness of members being able to do their jobs for the people that they were elected to represent.

Mr. Whitmore: — No, I have questions in clause 3 but I'll wait.

Ms. Draude: — I was just wondering if anything . . . it had been any costing for a permanent library? Has there been anything looked at at all?

The Speaker: — We have a proposal which was presented to the Board of Internal Economy this year, and the board considered very seriously, and has directed that consultations be made with Property Management Corporation. And I have strong reason to believe that the Board of Internal Economy will very seriously be considering that when we do our budgetary review for 1998-99. I don't happen to have that here right now, but that has been developed and I think it's fair to say it's before the board at this point in time.

And also I think fair to say, it's not as expensive as it might seem because we do need more space but what, more to the point, we need is more usable shelving to make better use of space that we have as well. We can reduce our space costs by spending some money on shelving.

I do have the figure here for you, Ms. Draude. The proposal to the board this year was for expenditures over three fiscal years in the amounts of \$114,505; 57,655; and then 57,655 again. So about \$230,000 over three years is what we're forecasting is necessary under current costs to solve our problems. But right now we're paying for space that we would then no longer need. Some of our costs would be reduced. And also in that space we have materials that are just housed in boxes and really for all practical sakes and purposes is not available.

Ms. Draude: — Can I ask another question? Does that mean you're paying for space to Sask Property Management, for

space right here in this building?

The Speaker: — Well some space is here in the building but we're also in the Walter Scott, so some stuff is housed here.

Ms. Draude: — And you pay for rent here?

The Speaker: — No, no. That we don't, but we are paying additional rent in Walter Scott Building, the old Health building, and in Gemini storage. So and that's . . . it's \$49,000.

Ms. Draude: — So we would only take a 115 for this year to do it, something that it is starting permanent, and we're paying 52 for temporary.

The Speaker: — That's right. So that's why, as you can see, I recommend that just in terms of responsible management of public dollars, it's a larger amount up front, but what we provide is then an ongoing solution which will pay for itself over, you know, over what would that . . . over about six or seven years. Yes.

Ms. Draude: — And at the same time by doing that then the records would not only be seized but they would be more accessible.

The Speaker: — That's right. Yes.

The Chair: — On the speaking order I have Mr. Trew, Mr. Sonntag, Mr. Whitmore.

Mr. Trew: — Thanks, Madam Chair. I will try and be brief. I appreciated your comments, Mr. Speaker, about the mountains of paper that have resulted subsequent to the implementation of McDowell. I'm not trying to throw rocks at anybody but I do want to say that I very much appreciate the work that financial services do and the way they try and help members stay on the straight and narrow or however else you want to describe it, but to get through the literal maze of paper.

Did I understand you to say that the point of change is through the Board of Internal Economy? I see you nodding yes. I just think it's absurd that as a member I have to sign for every time we get 500 sheets of paper, for example, or pens. As members here can appreciate, I'm not in my constituency office right now. I know, for example, that yesterday or today there's a filing cabinet coming. But I'm not there to receive the darn thing and I have to sign for it. And I'm just frustrated beyond belief at some of the extra accountability.

Like it seems . . . I'm not frustrated by accountability. I'm frustrated by the extra steps. It seems to have added just an enormous burden of having to sign, it seems to me, numerous times for the same thing. And anyway I'll deal with it through the board. I appreciated your comments on it, and I do want to point out, so nobody in financial services thinks that I'm at all frustrated with them, like they're doing the very best they can with what they have to do with.

The Speaker: — Yes, and I appreciate your acknowledgement of that, Mr. Trew, and I know the people in financial services

do. They've been working full bore for a long time, and there has been with the budget item no. 1 here and as well as last year, some improvements from the Board of Internal Economy in terms of the resources to manage that are very, very welcome, because I appreciate your acknowledgement of financial services to that. And again as you say, the objective I think we all want to achieve is that responsible, healthy balance between accountability and effectiveness.

We should ought not to find ourselves so busy doing paperwork that we're jeopardizing our ability to do our political work for people. We were elected to do political work, but at the same time must be accountable for the tax dollars we're using in order to do it. And the board is faced with the ongoing challenge of finding the right balance.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you.

Mr. Sonntag: — Yes, I just wanted to ask a couple of questions as well on that issue. In financial services, what is this practically meant in terms of numbers of people, or at least an estimate in terms of numbers of people, and also what does it cost us roughly as a direct result of the implementation of McDowell?

The Speaker: — In response to your question, Mr. Sonntag, in terms of personnel directly related to the McDowell recommendations, one and one-half people but probably, more accurately, indirectly somewhere between three and three and a half people has been the implications. Because you obviously don't have somebody who is assigned just to do that when that's part of a grand picture.

And directly cost related to the implementation of McDowell recommendations, \$51,898 per year. Indirectly, it would be something larger than that which I don't know that I'm able to be more specific about.

So that indirectly, with the information I'm provided here, adding another approximately \$23,452. So directly and indirectly we're talking in the neighbourhood of \$75,000 a year.

Mr. Sonntag: — Okay. Do staff feel relatively comfortable now with the changes that have been made or are we still ironing out quite a few glitches there?

The Speaker: — I think it's fair to say that MLAs, our operations do produce on a regular basis new glitches but . . .

Mr. Sonntag: — True. Tread cautiously.

The Speaker: — . . . but I think we've probably seen most of them by now and are, as you say, "ironing some of them out."

When the Board of Internal Economy reviews this whole matter, which I will recommend to the board, have recommended to the board, be done in this calendar year, then there will be some advice that I'll want to recommend to the board based on concerns and recommendations brought to me by members, but also based on our management of the implications from within.

Mr. Sonntag: — Also one last question on that, and I have a couple of other questions yet. Is there any one area, as it pertains to McDowell, that staff found particular difficulty with or didn't anticipate?

The Speaker: — The one that rises on top of everyone's list is travel. I know that's a constant irritation and item of some confusion for members. And whenever that's true for members, it will be equally true if not more so for financial services who have to deal with or fix confusions after the fact.

I suppose on the other side of the coin, it's been kind of nice that some of the staff in financial services and your constituency assistants have developed closer working relationships because they're in contact with one another on a much more frequent basis than they used to be. And I think SaskTel probably appreciates that activity as well.

Mr. Sonntag: — Well from one who does a fair bit of travelling and has experienced some of this frustration, it's nice to know there's a bit of company in the misery that I have as well.

My other question is unrelated to that entirely. I'm just wondering also with respect to the building here itself, do we have any — maybe I've not paid close enough attention to this — but do we have any rough, approximately, of when they will be actually starting to do some work, or are we just trying to analyse the situation right now?

The Speaker: — I think you'll start to see things physically happening in September or October of this year, and then over the course of the next three to four years before the restoration is completed.

Mr. Sonntag: — Okay. I have several other questions as it pertains to the numbers that we were given here. Am I ahead of myself in asking that?

The Chair: — Which box item?

Mr. Sonntag: — Well that's not clear to me. I don't know whether that's 1 or 3.

The Chair: — All right. How about then what we're doing is right now we're going to move on to box item 3. We have speakers still on the no. 2, quickly, and then we'll move to item 3. We'll leave those questions, Mr. Sonntag, until we're done all of the items and then we'll do a general questioning of the two pages.

Mr. Whitmore: — Yes, returning back to 2 and the comment that was made by Ms. Draude in terms of costing and, I think, the initial cost of \$115,000 for the initial capital costs for the library. This would not create, for the information of the members, would not create the saving of the 49,000 if we initiate this, because the space that's being looked at by the library is a single spot, but is SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) property. So there'll still be rental paid to SPMC.

What it would do though is eliminate two other storage

properties, one not being SPMC's. There would be a decrease in the rent to SPMC but it would not be to the degree of the decrease of \$49,000.

I don't want to venture a guess but there would still be a substantial cost that SPMC would pay to the library. But it's still important that the project using the single space would eliminate the space requirement, that you could with proper management only use half the space. So there would be room for expansion in the future in terms of using that space in a single facility.

The Speaker: — And the end result would be the Walter Scott site, which is the closest to the Legislative Building here, of course then would be the one that we would end up having all of our storage done within.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you. My concern, or my question is, Mr. Speaker, regarding SPMC's relationship to the building and to rent. Does SPMC control the building space? Really, like this is not intended to be a trick question; I'm just having difficulty knowing how to ask it. Does the Legislative Assembly pay SPMC for office space in this building as the line departments pay SPMC for office space in downtown Regina or downtown Wadena?

And I guess just a further thing. How is the caucus . . . respective caucus office spaces, where does that funding come from? And I guess the same could be asked of ministers' offices, that sort . . . I think you have a general idea of what I'm asking.

The Speaker: — This building is kind of the exception to the rule, Mr. Trew. There isn't a direct charge to SPMC for space within this building. Our charges to SPMC are for spaces outside of this building. And when I say our charges, Legislative Assembly, which includes then all of the functions that take place within here.

Mr. Trew: — Thanks.

The Chair: — All right, we'll move along to Legislative Assembly services, item 3.

The Speaker: — This is where we blaze through item 3?

The Chair: — Yes.

The Speaker: — Okay. As you can see, Legislative Assembly services will be things that will be familiar to you. When you just look at the summary in the top of the item there, for operations of the House and its committees, including procedural activities, protocol, sessional activities when we're sitting, our security year round, our legal counsel, our public information, and visitor services would be included in that, and our parliamentary library services.

Here we have \$164,000 increase in spending and it's broken down in these ways: 20,000 of that is dedicated to an air conditioner for the broadcasting room, so that when you're giving those stimulating pearls of wisdom on the floor of the Assembly that the people of Saskatchewan are not deprived of

them by the system breaking down on some occasion, and keeping sensitive technical equipment under proper conditions.

We're also installing some . . . or replacing some outdated security equipment in the amount of \$68,000. We have some increased printing costs for legislative papers — this is largely *Hansard* — in the amount of \$16,000. That's for printing that's done outside. We've had some normal staff increments and cost-of-living adjustments in the amount of 11,000.

And there's been a \$6,000 increase to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. And I point out to you as well, as you will . . . I think most of you will, if not all of you will know that this year our branch of the CPA (Commonwealth Parliamentary Association) is hosting the Canadian regional conference in July. And your representatives on the executive are working hard to make that one of the . . . I think potentially one of the best conferences ever without going hog-wild on expenditure.

One of the things that I think is worth noting about the conference as well, is that it'll be the first time that CPAC (cable public affairs channel) will have some coverage of a CPA conference, and that's been largely because of the initiative of your executive.

The Legislative Library, that's \$121,000 from the Legislative Assembly Office. Related to the library itself, there's a new reference librarian position included here and some reclasses and cost of living of other library staff to a total of 37,000. And we are increasing book purchases, I'm happy to report, by the amount of \$5,000, which brings us kicking and screaming back to the 1985 expenditure level. So in the library we're spending an additional \$42,000.

And in the Law Clerk's office, with some cost of living adjustments and so on, a \$1,000 increase. All of that totals \$164,000 increase in this budget over last. Any questions there, Madam Chair?

Mr. Whitmore: — I guess after the incident we had, Mr. Speaker, regarding security recently in the building and the question of accessibility — and I know this was a discussion also in terms of the budget during Board of Internal Economy — what things do you see changing in light of that incident and what steps are being taken in light of that incident in terms of security? And I understand that it's difficult to talk about some of those things, due to the public and also the question of accessibility of the building. But I'd like to hear a few of your comments on that, after this specific incident.

The Speaker: — That specific question is quite easy to answer quite forthrightly on the public record. The answer is nothing. I don't see any changes being necessary, in my view. The incident that was in the news some three or four weeks ago verified that our procedures are proper, and that in my judgement, the situation was very well handled. Now having said that . . . and that's why I conclude that what changes would come as a result of that, none. So that's not difficult to implement.

However, what did occur at that time, as occurs any time there

is a security incident of any sort, is that we do a review of our procedures. Security review is an ongoing activity; you never conclude that.

And as I have said to some members in the past, I think probably the greatest concern of any Speaker in Canada is in the area of security. It's one of those things that you're always hesitant to speak about. And that we know, in our democracy, security is an issue that poses a sensitive and complex kind of challenge for which, at the end of the day, the Speaker must be responsible.

What must occur simultaneously is that in this seat of government in the province, the people of Saskatchewan must always feel that they have access and that they're welcome. That is extremely important, and important to no one more than the elected members, that that's how the people of Saskatchewan feel. And I think we do a good job of that, not only through the way we manage our security personnel, but also other ways, visitor services and the like.

That must be balanced with the awareness that potentially people who work within this building, who are high profile public figures and rightly or wrongly may be seen as the sources of irritation to people, could be seen as the targets of harm brought to them. And so what you constantly do, every time an incident occurs here or elsewhere in the country or sometimes outside the country is review, together with our Sergeant-at-Arms who is a highly qualified security person. He's not just a good looking guy with a beard and a funny looking hat who marches in with the mace to begin the session each day, but heads up our security services and has a great deal of experience and qualifications in doing that.

And every time an incident occurs we will actively review here, how would we have handled that incident in our legislature. And sometimes we'll have minor adjustments as to what we see as proper procedure based on somebody else's experience. So we try to learn from experience and as much as possible, and always hope it's not from our own. And that's an ongoing consideration.

And in this budget there is some money to replace what I consider some outdated security equipment, about which I won't be specific. But that will, in my view, be done consistent with those two balancing objectives as being of public accessibility and security to the elected members, and in many ways I think even more vulnerable than elected members, are the people who work in our offices in this building.

Mr. Sonntag: — The sheet that you provided us, the detail sheet that you provided us — what is the connection between the numbers here, or is there a connection I can draw between those numbers and the subvotes that we're dealing with?

The Speaker: — Subvotes, well these are ... are you talking about personnel?

Mr. Sonntag: — Well I'm looking at for instance, March 31 of '97, \$4.144 million. Can I ...

The Speaker: — What page on you on, Mr. Sonntag. Oh, okay.

If you take all of the personnel in items 1 through 6 and you put them together as they flow out of them, then they will arrive at the totals on your summary.

Mr. Sonntag: — Okay, good. There is an increase of 11 staff. I see they're all in casual ... they're all out of scope and temporary casual I should say. Where are most of those?

The Speaker: — The out of scope and temporary casual? Most of them are in your office. Sorry, did you say increases or did you say total numbers?

Mr. Sonntag: — There's an increase of 11, I see.

The Speaker: — Oh, I'm sorry. Okay. No, most of those ... the increase are in *Hansard*. As you will recognize, our *Hansard* people, the large bulk, we will have about 30 ... we will have 35 non-permanent people who work in *Hansard* and we've had a fair turnover this year in that.

And of the total number ... of the 11, two are in Legislative Assembly Office, 9 of the increase are in *Hansard*. These will largely be people who are doing *Hansard* in the evenings.

And also when I misunderstood your question before, a good number of the out-of-scope personnel will be constituency assistants of whom there are 90 of this total. So when we're looking at the resources here, a good number of these people don't happen to do their jobs within this building.

Mr. Sonntag: — Just so it's on the record then, there are no increases in my staff.

The Speaker: — There's no increases in your staff — I make that very clear. And your staff will be happy to note that that's on the record as well when they look around the room.

Mr. Sonntag: — I'm again referring to the information that was provided by your office, I'm assuming. I note there are four pages listed, and we've always had five. How come there's only four pages there?

The Speaker: — Because one of our pages was, before becoming a page, was a guide in visitor services, and so therefore she's not a new — she's not a new staff person to the Legislative Assembly. She's moved within the Legislative Assembly. It's a new position but she's not a new person.

Mr. Sonntag: — Is it inappropriate if I ask who was that?

The Speaker: — Claire.

Mr. Sonntag: — This was to March 31 of '97? Oh. Okay.

The Speaker: — Yes, that's why she would look familiar to you is because you've seen her in another capacity before serving as a page in the Assembly.

Mr. Sonntag: — I have one more question. Oh, there's Madam Chair over there. I guess then the other question I would have is, should there not be in this list then nine pages listed? Because this would include part of last year. Okay.

The Chair: — While they are looking for the answer, I just want to mention to committee members, we have an impressive line-up of people here today from the ombudsperson's office and the Provincial Auditor. I know that people from the child's advocate have travelled from Saskatoon, so it would be helpful probably to get their portion done today if we could. And I guess I'm just looking for some wisdom and guidance from committee members.

The Provincial Auditor also is here with support. And do we feel, with our time constraints, we'll be able to get to his portion just for an overview if we can? Or should we suggest the next meeting date, May 8 at 9? I'm looking to you for wisdom because you're the ones with the questions.

Mr. Whitmore: — Yes, I would suggest, due to time constraints today, Madam Chair, that it would be best I think for all in terms of the Provincial Auditor to allow him to make his presentation, because I know it's very detailed, and an opportunity to have questions after, to do that at the next meeting if it's convenient for the auditor. Because I don't think it's fair to his staff and himself to go through this for 15 minutes and come back a week later and then in a sense we'd have to start all over again. I think it would be better to start it fresh, if that's acceptable to . . . yes, I would recommend we do the Children's Advocate today and try and finish it off, because those people have travelled from the great, glorious city of Saskatoon and it's a long drive and I know their desire to get back to Saskatoon. So we could deal with that today.

The Chair: — If that's all right with Mr. Gantefer and Ms. Draude then — Ms. Draude is our Vice-Chair — so if we can have agreement, I would then, with apologies to the auditor because I had tried to get the Clerks to call you before you left your office and we didn't quite make that time frame, knowing that we were getting quite constrained. And so we apologize that you had to make the trip, but I think it would be good to say that you would be up first thing next Thursday at 9 a.m.

Thank you very much for your time today. That'll also save you sitting here for an hour and then say goodbye, so it will save you another hour.

The Speaker: — Thanks for popping by.

Mr. Sonntag, in response to your question, I think if you . . . these aren't numbered unfortunately, but you will find the new pages on the 7th page in . . . make sure we keep our pages straight . . . and then if you go 1, 2, 3 . . . oh sorry, then when you go to terminations, 7th page there, you will find the terminations from the previous session. Okay.

Mr. Sonntag: — One last question is with respect then to advertising communications, the object code 306, placement legal tender notice, 10,323 — what is that? What sorts of things does that include?

The Speaker: — That would cover the *Gazette* advertising that flows out of the legislative process. And it includes the SaskTel advertising, the blue pages of all of the services including MLAs. Okay.

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Draude: — I'm not sure if I am in the right place to ask this question or not, but I'm wondering if this is where the decision is made as to who looks after the cafeteria — the manager and the staff?

The Speaker: — That is through SPMC and is not part of what's in review before us here.

Ms. Draude: — So you can't take credit for them. Too bad.

The Speaker: — No. Well we don't want to be necessarily totally definitive on them. No, I can't assume, I'm afraid I can't assume any credit for the good services of the people in the cafeteria, and I'm sure they'll appreciate you passing them along directly.

The Chair: — All right. Thank you.

The Speaker: — Move to item 4?

The Chair: — Yes.

The Speaker: — This is committees of the Legislative Assembly, and you'll see that this represents a reduction of \$39,000 in expenditure. This a reduction of committee support services of \$31,000, which is directly related to the implementation of the web site on the Internet. Because the Board of Internal Economy decided to no longer send out for printing of committee *Hansards*. Although there are copies made — written copies made available to committee members — we're saving \$31,000 this year. I do point out as well that there are, I think there are hard copies of that that are kept in the library. So there is a continuing copy, all of which have to be stored of course.

But there will also be a reduction of \$8,000 that flow out of the McDowell recommendations because members of the legislature quite simply are receiving lower honorariums for . . . honoraria for doing committee work. And so those two things combined result in a reduction of \$39,000.

It's for this reason that one of the things that the board will be considering is doing a similar thing related to our actual legislative *Hansard*. As you will know, *Hansard* is on the Internet now, and in fact is most cases in practical terms is available to you on your computers in your offices prior to getting your printed copy each day.

And the board will be considering taking a similar approach to the actual sending out of printing of *Hansard*, doing it internally and realizing some additional savings because of technology.

So McDowell and technology result in the reduction of \$39,000 in committees.

Any questions there, Madam Chair?

The Chair: — I see none. We'll proceed.

The Speaker: — Okay. They never want to ask questions when the numbers go down — why is this?

The Chair: — Makes us stand back a little.

The Speaker: — Okay, this next one is authorized by law here. This is a large bulk of the statutory expenditures. The payments and allowances to individual members represent an increase in different ways.

One is for indemnity and allowances of \$105,000, which is made up of two items: one is a 1.5 per cent cost of living into the calculations for your salaries and allowances, and in the amount of 56,000; and 49,000 in the amount of travel allowances as a result of the kilometre rate change there. That's the large bulk of it.

In the additional duties for members, there is an additional \$2,000 budgeted. I do point out that the actuals were slightly higher than they budgeted here. The actuals were 1.84 per cent, and we'll simply have to absorb the difference in our operations of our budget this year.

You know that — and before I go on to our next item are there any questions there? — that's statutory and really it's not much involvement in deliberations. The board can deal with that.

The Chair: — I see none. Item no. 6.

The Speaker: — Item no. 6 is caucus operation grants, and there two factors: increase is \$24,000 because of the 1.75 per cent cost of living formula being applied to the grants to each of the caucuses — each of your own caucuses — and then also, because of the additional private member flowing out of the by-election held within the last year, to a grand total of \$24,000.

If I can just make, in summary then, Madam Chair ... (inaudible interjection) ... Oh sure, okay.

Mr. Whitmore: — In the area of 6, and I don't know if we can entertain a motion here or not since it's authorized by law, but due to the fact that we're still practising financial restraint, I would certainly recommend that we went back in terms of caucus operations to the previous number of '96-97 and held our budget to 962,000 rather than \$986,000. But I know that that's authorized by law, and it can't be done.

The Chair: — Well thank you for that comment, but it is authorized by law and therefore we are not authorized to be able to change it. We can ask questions about it, perhaps speculate on what we might do with it, but we're not going to be able to have an impact on that.

Mr. Whitmore: — It would come from the opposition party. You haven't woke up yet this morning, Rod.

Mr. Gantefer: — No, no snivelling because you lost the vote. And if I may, I would think that our caucus grant did increase because of another member in the by-election. And the

government's did not increase because they lost it. So it wasn't a 59th member in the Assembly; it was just one on the right side of the House.

Mr. Whitmore: — We simply only ... it was Executive Council budget.

The Speaker: — There was a cost of living adjustment and then the change as a result of the by-election.

The Chair: — I'll call order, and ask the Speaker to give us an overview before we move into the motions.

The Speaker: — Just in summary if I may then, Madam Chair, it seems to me, as I said in the beginning, that a measure of the effectiveness of this expenditure of taxpayer dollars has to do with our provision of service to the people of Saskatchewan in the context of the practice of parliamentary democracy. This is the tax dollars that provide the resources to make parliamentary democracy take place. And in that context, again I just want to reiterate that I think progress has been substantially made and will continue.

I speak not in terms of individual decisions made within the legislature — that's for people to draw their own conclusions — but in the context of the two main ingredients that I think are involved in making democracy work, one of which is information or knowledge, and the other of which is participation. I think we will all recognize that the two greatest enemies of democracy are ignorance and apathy.

And what I want to commend the Legislative Assembly and yourselves collectively, is over the course of the past year having made significant strides in the area of providing for the people of Saskatchewan to increase their knowledge. Their access to the workings of democracy have substantially increased through the television coverage of the Legislative Assembly, through the introduction of the legislative home page on the Internet, and through the parliamentary outreach.

And hopefully, what that will do as well is to influence the element, the degree, of apathy that exists in Saskatchewan. Because an informed public who cares makes for a very effective democracy. That's what makes the things work and I am pleased to say that I think the resources are here to ensure that we are doing our job to exercise that responsibility to the people of Saskatchewan.

Just for your information, on the area of parliamentary outreach, one change that I do see taking place is to provide to you as members, the opportunity to facilitate schools from your constituencies coming to the Legislative Assembly, and part of the parliamentary outreach taking place within the chambers here in the Legislative Assembly, and making available through the use of broadcast services, the production of educational parliamentary democracy tapes that can be used over and over again by schools as resource materials for dealing with our system of parliamentary democracy in largely grade 7 through 12 in our schools here in Saskatchewan.

So that's something we intend to do, to take responsibility for making it easier to increase the information that is available to

and hopefully will be used by Saskatchewan people to do their job in this exercise of parliamentary democracy. So with that, Madam Chair, I think summarizes my view of the operation and if there are any more questions, I'm happy to answer them. And if not, then we can happily move along to the Ombudsman and the Children's Advocate.

The Chair: — Before we move along then, we have . . . Ms. Draude, did you have your hand up?

Ms. Draude: — Thanks. I have one question and then make a comment. It can be a quick question. Have you had many comments from the public on the legislative channel now with the increased viewers? Number of viewers?

The Speaker: — I haven't personally. We do have . . . Now there is a way of getting comments on the home page, and we are getting those, which suggests that it's being followed and considered to be high quality in the comments we get. I think probably, the best read on the expansion of the legislative channel will be the members who are in those ridings in which it is there for the first time.

I represent a constituency in which it's been in place for several years — for many years — from the very beginning, I guess it would be. And I know in my own constituency I can't hazard a percentage, but it is a substantial number of my own constituents that will see bits and pieces. And in fact there are some who are regular watchers of the legislative channel. And so I just can't give you any scientific feedback but I suspect that the members of the legislature will. When the session is over and they get home and have a chance to rub shoulders more often, we'll recognize that they were watched more closely by their constituents than they were before.

Ms. Draude: — Then just on behalf of our caucus, and I imagine everyone here, I really do want to thank the staff in financial services and the library staff and the Legislative Assembly staff and Mr. Ward. Everyone does an excellent job. I know it's totally non-partisan and we just . . . As a new member, I can't thank everyone enough for the opportunity we had to become part of the system. We wouldn't have done it without the help of everyone here. And I don't know how you can really say thank you in the right way, but we really do appreciate it.

The Speaker: — I think you have, and we'll . . . Although a *Hansard* copy of this proceedings, of course, will not be sent out to the printer, I think we will make a point of distributing this portion of it at least to the staff of the Legislative Assembly to ensure that that message gets passed on. And as you point out, Ms. Draude, Legislative Assembly is no different from most effective organizations; its strength is its people. And that is something about which I personally, and I suspect all of us personally, feel some pride here in Saskatchewan, and justifiably so. Thank you very much.

The Chair: — It's been pointed out to me that the verbatim of the minutes of our meeting are on the Internet, so are available on the web site for all to read. And on behalf of all committee members as well, I would echo the comments of our Vice-Chair.

The operations of all of the staff members here to support the members of the legislature is not something that I think the public is aware of, for many of them not at all. And it's the one thing that keeps parliamentary democracy working and strong, and the accountability there as well. Which now, as we move through all of the motions needed to give the monies requested, you will see is also another indication of the work that needs to be done.

We're going to go through each item. I'll call for the numbers and ask for agreement on those. And then we'll move into a motion for supply; then a motion on ways and means, which will be the number minus the amount we've already given in interim supply; and then into the *Supplementary Estimates* where the motions apply there as well.

Items 1 to 6 inclusive agreed to.

The Speaker: — Madam Chair, just before we move on, I want to thank the members of the committee for your questions and your interest in the operations of the Legislative Assembly. And also to express my personal thanks to the officials for their assistance in providing you the answers that you've asked for the questions that you asked.

The Chair: — The resolution now before the committee:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the twelve months ending March 31, 1998 the following sums, General Revenue Fund budgetary expenses:

For Legislation — Legislative Assembly \$5,156,000

Is that agreed? Mr. Trew has moved that, so is that agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Trew, for the ways and means.

Mr. Trew: — No. 1:

Resolved that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain expenses to the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1998, the sum of \$4,297,000 be granted out of General Revenue Fund.

I so move.

The Chair: — Is that agreed? Agreed.

Now to the *Supplementary Estimates*.

Supplementary Estimates 1996-97
General Revenue Fund
Legislation
Vote 21

Items 1 and 2 agreed to.

The Chair: — Resolution before the committee:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the

twelve months ending March 31, 1997, the following sums from the General Revenue Fund budgetary expenses:

For Legislation — Legislative Assembly\$113,000

That is moved by Mr. Gantefer. Is that agreed? Agreed.

And now the ways and means, Mr. Gantefer.

Mr. Gantefer: — I move that be:

Resolved that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1997, the sum of \$113,000 be granted out of the General Revenue Fund.

The Chair: — That's all the required motions, and we'll now move into the ombudsperson's office.

Ombudsman and Children's Advocate

The Speaker: — Madam Chair, on the . . . This is dealing with item 7, and item 7 you may want to deal with separately. It includes really two offices; there's the Ombudsman and then the Children's Advocate. You want to give me some guidance as to how you prefer . . . Do you want to deal with them simultaneously or to deal first of all with the Ombudsman and then the Children's Advocate?

The Chair: — I think we would reverse the order in case we are rushed for time, and knowing that the child's advocate supports have come from Saskatoon. So if it's all right with the committee, we'll deal with the child's advocate office first, then the Ombudsman, and then the vote as a whole.

The Speaker: — Okay. And I would encourage, if it's possible, that we deal with both. I'd like to introduce from the Children's Advocate office — the Children's Advocate herself, Deborah Parker-Loewen, is not able to be here because she's out of province today — but if I may introduce to you officials from her office.

To my immediate right, John Brandt, who's the acting associate children's advocate. And with Mr. Brandt is Berny Rodier, who's the executive secretary in the Children's Advocate office. And while I'm doing introductions, then to introduce as well the Provincial Ombudsman, Barbara Tomkins.

And if you want to deal . . . I think on these I'll make very, very brief comment and will most likely ask the officials to respond to your questions directly. These are both offices that exist to serve the people of Saskatchewan, and they're offices that report on officers who report to the Legislative Assembly. So they don't report to me, they report to the Legislative Assembly. They come before this committee because their budgets are now approved by the Board of Internal Economy, and that's what brings them here. And so in many ways it's most appropriate that you have opportunity to interact with them directly as opposed to through the Speaker.

The Children's Advocate office has been in existence for . . . since 1994, so we're in our third year, and as you know, is

present to provide an element of protection to children of Saskatchewan, particularly those who are under care of the province. And in some ways to serve as a conscience both for the — for the province — both for the government as well as the people of Saskatchewan, in the area of protection concerns related to children.

So having said that, Madam Chair, I'll turn it over to members of the committee who may want to address questions to our officials.

The Chair: — Well thank you, and we do welcome your officials and we are encouraged by their patience as we went through the first 6 items. Questions?

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, and welcome. We're glad to see you here today. I'm just wondering — we'll start with the Children's Advocate — I'm just wondering if you can give me a general overview of how . . . if anything has changed from last year. Are you getting an increased number of calls and requests for your services?

Mr. Brandt: — I think since the past year until now, as people become more . . . the province becomes more aware of our existence, our numbers have been increasing. Our number of calls to the office have increased, I would say substantially, from when we first started in '94 to '95 to now.

Ms. Draude: — By substantial, you mean like 10 per cent or 15 per cent?

Mr. Brandt: — It would be a guesstimate percentage. I would say that our calls to our office have probably increased between 10 to 20 per cent from last year.

Ms. Draude: — I don't know if you can . . . I'm not asking for details, but I'm just wondering, is there one area specifically that is causing more concern overall.

Mr. Brandt: — I think we've had . . . our number of calls have increased more from the young people that we have within our custody institutions. In Saskatchewan they seem to be well aware of our existence and certainly contact our office on a regular basis. And also the youth that are in care with the Department of Social Services have been. That's probably where the majority of our calls are coming from. That's where the increase has been.

Ms. Draude: — I notice there is an increase in monies given to you this year compared to last year. Can you give me a general idea of what you're . . . where the increase will go to?

Mr. Brandt: — Well the increase for the monies are to fill a vacant child advocate position. That's part of the increase. The other increase is in the . . . Part of our mandate of our office is to become involved in public education and we're in the process right now of hiring a half-time information officer, public education officer, with a communications plan. And some of the other increase is around in-scope and out-of-scope salary increases and also some office support increases as well.

The Speaker: — Let me add to that as well, Ms. Draude. When

this item came before the Board of Internal Economy, it's really quite appropriate to think in this area of rather than being increases, it's finally arriving at the status quo, but bringing the Children's Advocate office close to what was thought to be its appropriate, necessary resources but hadn't been achieved in previous years.

Ms. Draude: — I guess that was my next question. I don't know, when you arrive at a budget, if you think . . . or do you ask for more and get cut back to . . . I'm wondering if the amount of money you're getting, compared to the requests that you're getting, if it's sufficient, or you feel that you're just plain not able to do everything you could do if you had more money or staff.

How is it . . . are you able to do it . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well then take the politics out and answer it. That's what I'm wondering. Did they ask for . . .

Mr. Brandt: — Our budget request was approved less another position that we had asked for, which was around \$34,000.

Ms. Draude: — So when you were trying to determine your budget, you felt that in order to do the job that you're mandated to do, it would have required another position?

Mr. Brandt: — Yes.

Mr. Whitmore: — Yes. Regarding your budget and I think when you speak about the increase in calls, I think that's where's the public education area becomes more apparent, is that more people need to know what's going on in terms of the child advocate and the role. I give credit to the Children's Advocate because I know she has spent a great deal of time travelling the province just letting people know what her office does and yourself as staff. I think that's very important.

I think too that being one who looked at the budget of the Children's Advocate, we certainly understood the need for an increase. Because just from that standpoint as we review all budgets in the Board of Internal Economy, we try to look at them and see, you know our best guess to deal with the dollars that we have. But we certainly . . . I know that members of Board of Internal Economy recognize the importance of not your office but also that of the Ombudsman in terms of where you're going.

And I think next year we will probably see after the public education program, and more people using that in terms of children, that we'll probably be reviewing it again, because as the Speaker has said, we've reached status quo. So from there on it will probably be a growth industry because there is not a tool out there for children at risk, or who have difficulty, or those who can speak on their behalf. They have no other vehicle.

And so I certainly support, and as I speak as a member of the Board of Internal Economy, we certainly support, the actions that you have been undertaking.

Mr. Brandt: — We appreciate that. Thank you.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you. I appreciate the tone of the questions thus far and certainly a 45 per cent increase in the Children's Advocate budget sounds big until you realize it just bounces it to a half a million dollars. And so it sort of puts it into context. It's very clearly a worthwhile area.

I'm wondering if you could share with us what you see as the biggest benefit to children that use your office, that access it. What's the biggest benefit? Because children are after all, that's our entire future, and I don't think there's anybody that deserves better treatment than children and fairer treatment, and I'm wondering how the Children's Advocate's office sees the long-term benefit to the province of Saskatchewan, to our entire population.

Mr. Brandt: — Well I can make comment on just some of the comments that we've had back from youth that we've had some involvement with. They certainly have expressed a great deal of pleasure, I guess would be the word, that they finally had someone who they saw in some type of an official status that would listen to their view and take their view forward to a table when they had some conflict with, you know, with possibly their worker or the institution that they were residing in.

So I think hearing back from what the youth are saying to us, is that the biggest benefit that they're getting from it is that they're finding someone actually listening and taking their voice forward. And certainly I think that's the benefit for the children in Saskatchewan, is that their voices are beginning to be respected and they are seen, you know, in a different light.

Mr. Trew: — I think the key . . . I was waiting for the word respect and their voices being respected and of course that's one of the most important measures of a society, is the respect we hold for each other regardless of age. So yes, appreciate the answer, thanks.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. I have a tremendous amount of respect as well for the work that you're doing. And I guess I'm trying to understand how with the . . . you had asked for a certain amount of money and I understand that public education is so important to make sure you can do your job. If you do actually get out to educate people so that they can understand what you can do, you're not going to have enough staff to do it then, right?

Mr. Brandt: — Well I think part of the public education plan that we have been discussing is not so much going out and explaining what our office is and what our office can do for this group, but it's also out there educating people on how that they can advocate for themselves, providing them with some strategies, providing them with some ideas on how that they can become their own advocates. So there probably will be an increase, but at the same time we're hoping that we're . . . part of our education is a general education on what children's rights are and also some advocacy principles that people can use for themselves.

Ms. Draude: — Because we are on . . . this verbatim is going to be on Internet, is it . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Okay, maybe just for the general public out there, could you give us a clarification on what you actually do do then? So you give

people an opportunity to see how they can work with your office.

Mr. Brandt: — Well generally what the advocate's office does is that we do engage in some public education, we're involved in resolving disputes, and conducting independent investigations regarding children and youth, through out receiving services from government, let's say agencies. And certainly to make recommendations you know, to improvements for children's programs through government.

The Chair: — Just to add to that, the reports and information from both the Ombudsman's office and the child advocate are also on the information site, the web site, with the Legislative Assembly's offering; so that that is also accessible.

Ms. Draude: — I thought at sometime during this year there was some information given to us that the Children's Advocate office would . . . with who they deal with or who they report to directly. There was some concern as to who they were going be reporting to. Am I off base asking that question? The member from Humboldt had told me that there was actually some concern about reporting directly to the Legislative Assembly. Is that correct?

The Speaker: — Perhaps I can respond to that, Ms. Draude. Because the Children's Advocate is an officer reporting to the Legislative Assembly, I think there has been an increased level of comfort that we're doing what we're doing right now, and that's that we're reviewing the budgetary allocations of the Children's Advocate office in the Estimates Committee where the elected person who is accountable then is the Speaker, as opposed to reviewing it in the Finance committee in the chambers where I think last year it was the Minister of Justice that was there.

And I think this has been a change that's taken place this year that gives a higher level of comfort, because it more appropriately, in the view of both the Children's Advocate and the Ombudsman, makes the reality more apparent. That they're not accountable to the minister — to a minister, but they are accountable to the Legislative Assembly. And you're seeing the result of that decision by the fact that this is the first time this committee is looking at these estimates.

Ms. Tomkins: — I think I have to add something to that. In the same position, vis-a-vis the legislature and Dr. Parker-Loewen, and I also talk to her regularly and I know from these times she certainly has no difficulty at all with the fact that her position is established as an officer of the legislature, reports to the legislature, as the Speaker alluded. That is by far, in her view and in mine, the preferable way for a position like that to operate, and in fact the only way in which it can operate effectively, because without that then the independence is gone. And if the independence is gone, then the effectiveness is challenged.

I think the Speaker is correct that the concern of Dr. Parker-Loewen and myself is that because we are two of very few people who don't report through a minister and through a line department, we're an anomaly in government in certain ways. And as the Speaker alluded, we don't report to the

Speaker either. And so we get fit into existing processes, which works well administratively for the people who are trying to administer government, but it doesn't work well for us. Because as soon as we get fit into those processes, we're now reporting to —or not reporting to in the sense of a subservient relationship — but we're accounting to people who we are not accountable to.

And I think it's in that context that there are concerns, and those exist in any ombudsman-like or officer of the legislature-like institution across the country, because all governments struggle with what to do with us officers administratively. And we make loud noises about it constantly.

Ms. Draude: — Well thank you for clarifying that and I didn't want to . . . if this is the best way to do it, well then I'm very happy that this is the way that this . . .

Ms. Tomkins: — This is certainly an improvement. It's something we had asked for for many, many years.

Ms. Draude: — Great. Great.

Mr. Sonntag: — That just actually raises a question that I actually had earlier and forgot. This would apply to both the Children's Advocate and to the ombudsperson. The appointments — are they finite or are they . . .

Ms. Tomkins: — We're each appointed for a term of five years — excuse me — which is renewable for a further five years but no more.

The Speaker: — And that's by motion in the . . .

Ms. Tomkins: — We're appointed and renewed by resolution of the legislature, and the term is legislated in the legislation.

The Speaker: — Which for obvious reasons is most appropriate because that's to whom the officers report, is the Legislative Assembly.

Ms. Tomkins: — You hired us.

Mr. Sonntag: — That's good.

The Chair: — If I could be permitted from the chair is to ask of the child's advocate office, I too believe that this is probably the best reporting way in trying to fit into the structures that are there that sometimes don't necessarily fit the accommodation. But with that in mind, does it free up also departments to approach the child's advocate office on their policies, or in dealing with, say for example in justice, a very difficult case, to approach you and ask for advice? Is that something that happens as a matter of course or not as much as I would assume it might?

Mr. Brandt: — I can only comment on my experience with calls, and we do have calls from different government agencies and departments who ask for comment on a new policy that they may be developing that may have . . . in regard to some children or youth. So yes, there is that.

The Chair: — Good. Thank you very much. Further questions of the child's advocate, if they have some comment they want to make or, Mr. Speaker, in summary.

The Speaker: — Perhaps just in summary then to make the transition then to the Ombudsman, if that's okay, Madam Chair?

It's kind of interesting that we have two officers and two offices but a single vote that occurs partially because of the practical reality that both of these offices physically exist together. And also because the officers do collaborate with one another, whether that is, you know, in the long term appropriate to consider in the same vote or not is another question to be asked. But it does reflect part of the operating reality of both of the offices.

I know that if Dr. Parker-Loewen was here that she would express, as she did to the Board of Internal Economy, appreciation for the recognition of the resources necessary to do the job. And a reminder has been done here that there is felt to be a need for some increase in resources. And Mr. Whitmore and others in the Board of Internal Economy will deal with that in the coming year.

I just want to acknowledge that in my view one of the great strengths of the Children's Advocate office has been the sensitivity with which it operates. It not only I think does an effective job but it, in what you might . . . you know, in the context of administration but in the staffing.

I would want to particularly acknowledge as well in the person of Dr. Parker-Loewen, is a relatively unique individual in the nation as well, there being five provinces who currently have someone who is parallel, and a sixth that's considering it. And I think the province of Saskatchewan is well served both in the effectiveness as well as sensitivity by which the task is done.

If I can then just briefly introduce the Ombudsman portion of this item, Madam Chair, and everyone will recognize Barbara Tompkins, our Provincial Ombudsman

And if I may also just alert the members of the committee to the fact that this year, Saskatchewan celebrates the silver anniversary of the introduction of the Ombudsman's office. And in fact, next week is Ombudsman's Week and I believe that you will see on Monday in the Speaker's gallery, the Ombudsman and some good number of current personnel, as well as some former people . . . people who have formerly been involved with that office, when the Legislative Assembly will acknowledge that in a more formal kind of way.

You have the description in your item. The Ombudsman is a friendly and firm irritant to government, to be there to serve as a resource to the people of Saskatchewan, to ensure that there is a vehicle to have their grievances reviewed and considered, and that the exercise of conscience in the operation of government is formally carried out through the office of the Ombudsman.

Perhaps the Ombudsman would like to make some brief comment before we have questions then, as we have the

Ombudsman here.

Ms. Tompkins: — I would just like to confirm that yes, we're having our 25th anniversary this year. Technically it's 25 years in February since the legislation passed, and today in fact is the beginning of the 25th year of the office itself being in operation. And so we have the debate of which do we acknowledge, and decided we could combine the two into one. And so we're using next week as sort of the week on which all of our activities will focus.

And you may have noticed that you've each probably received more communication from our office in the last month than you have in the last five years. And I hope that will not change after the anniversary's over.

I've often said that our office works quietly, and it works more effectively because it works quietly. And I firmly believe that's a philosophical approach. There are Ombudsmen who take the approach they work more effectively when they talk to *Leader-Post* every morning. I'm not one of those.

But I think we've worked far too quietly in terms of letting you know, letting the staff, the public service, government know, and letting the public know that we're there and what we do.

And so we're using the anniversary as sort of a kick-off or an impetus for some further and far more extensive efforts at public education about the office and about what we do, and similarly to what Mr. Brandt was alluding to, about what people can do themselves when they have problems with government before they involve us.

As to a very general description of my office, there are a total of 14 staff counting myself. We have two offices — one in Regina and one in Saskatoon. We travel extensively to get to people who . . . and too, as necessary, for purposes of investigations.

We received last year — I can't give you an exact number, but it was very close — I think within 50 of 2,000 in-jurisdiction complaints last year, which is the second highest by a few short of the record.

We also closed a record number last year, which I'm very pleased about. Because one of our concerns is that as numbers have increased, we are getting further and further behind. In the last 18 months especially, we are making real progress at improving the backlog.

It's still much larger than I'd like it to be, and you may have heard from constituents that things don't move as fast through . . . as quickly through our office as they would like. That situation is improving. It will never improve to the point that the people who come would like because of the simple fact that what we do is extremely time-consuming. We can't deal with something in a day if we had nothing else to do. We can't do what we have to do with an individual's complaint in a day. But we certainly can do it more quickly than we do, and we're making a real effort.

We're in fact right now in the process of re-examining everything we do and how we do it and whether, within the

context of the legislation, we can do it differently, whether we can do it better, whether we can do it more effectively. And perhaps more important — what is more effective? It's not simply a function of time.

So I think . . . I hope that over the next number of years you're going to see some changes in our office and I hope you're going to hear a great deal more about our office . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, I'm sorry — a good point. As part of the 25th anniversary celebrations, next week we have a number of things going on, one of which is that you all have been or will be invited to an open house, and I hope you're able to come. I'm going to be making a number of informational media appearances.

And the highlight of the year, or a highlight of the year, is that I'm hosting the national Ombudsman convention in September. It's normally rotated among the eight Canadian Ombudsmen but it's been since 1981 since we did it, so it's well our turn, and it seemed a good year to do that. And in fact that accounts for some of the increase in our budget that you may have noticed.

The Chair: — We are in the process of approaching the whips to see who is going to get to come and celebrate with you. But certainly I know that every member will be there in spirit.

Ms. Tomkins: — I hope so.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you. I very much appreciated your comments, Ms. Tomkins, about the office looking at how it is doing things. And this is not a . . . don't for a second think this is a criticism. I have a tremendous respect for the Ombudsman's office.

I just think back to, for example, the Workers' Compensation Board which had been — and I mean people can fairly argue still is — very problematic by the very nature of the people it deals with. But when the current board came on, there was a six- to eight-month delay in getting appeals heard, that sort of thing, and I know that they have remarkably shortened that.

I think the board itself, the three members on the board, would be the first to say it's still not short enough, but I take my hat off to them because they worked at it in two flows. One, very diligently working with the backlog of appeals, but probably more importantly they dealt with the whole policy area to try and prevent more of the same things coming in.

And I hope that's what I'm catching from you is that you want the Ombudsman's office to work where appropriate to try and help, again probably government offices, set policies that will preclude these problems from ever getting — well ever becoming problems I guess is the best way to prevent them from coming to the Ombudsman's office.

Ms. Tomkins: — That's exactly what I would like to do. And the Speaker alluded to the fact that we were a friendly . . .

The Speaker: — Irritant.

Ms. Tomkins: — . . . a friendly irritant. We are, and I think

have been seen for many years to be a friendly irritant, and sometimes a not so friendly irritant.

I think times change and people change and attitudes change. And I would like to hope, and I think it's true, that now, yes, we are sometimes an irritant. And if we weren't sometimes, we wouldn't be doing what we're supposed to do.

But I think that we are seen — and I like to say, and I believe this — that we are a partner of government in what we do. That we are hopefully all working toward the same end, which is to ensure that people are treated respectfully and fairly and reasonably by government and government personnel.

And it's where, I think — with no disrespect to my predecessors — I think we haven't placed enough emphasis. We are doing more and more in the three years I've been there — almost three years — of sitting down with government groups who are developing, for example, harassment policy and going through it with them and saying we think that we would have problems with this, that, or the other part.

We're also finding more and more, we're having government staff referring people to our office saying look, I've done what I can. It may or may not be fair but it's what I'm able to do. Let the Ombudsman have a look at it. And that gives us another route to . . . gives the complainant and the staff person another route to have a policy considered. And I'd like to see that become a far larger proportion of the origin of our work. I'd like to see far more of our work come from government, because I firmly believe we are partners in what we do.

And I don't know that that's necessarily a philosophical change so much as I don't think it's been said or perceived as much as I would like it to be. And that's where I would like to see us focus a lot of our attention, is on working with government staff and with legislature staff in explaining who we are and what we do and what a resource we offer to them and to others.

Mr. Trew: — Yes. I just want to comment. I see the budget for the Ombudsman's office is increased by 9 per cent this year. I think that speaks to your office being a friendly irritant and viewed as such. And I just wish you all the best in what I'm hearing you're moving increasingly towards. I think that that is bang-on the direction you should be moving your office in. And I just want to wish you the very best as that universe unfolds for you and the people of Saskatchewan.

Ms. Tomkins: — Thank you. We'll do what we can.

Ms. Draude: — Just a couple of short questions. I think the Speaker mentioned . . . do you share a staff in Saskatoon with the child's advocate? Share space?

Ms. Tomkins: — We share space. We're a most unusual configuration and it's legislated. And we're not aware of anything else in Saskatchewan or in Canada like us. We are two separate officers of the legislature. We hire our own staff. We administer our own programs. Now certainly we consult. But theoretically we do this completely independently of each other.

But we are administered through legislation, and in fact as one

office. So administratively we're one, but in every other respect we're two. That's why we're one subvote.

There are tremendous advantages to this, and Dr. Parker-Loewen will agree with me on that. It gives us a lot of flexibility just in terms of little things like cars. If we've got the advocate car in the parking lot and ours is in use, our staff can jump in their car, and that saves us from having to requisition another car for next year because we have that flexibility between the offices. And in bigger areas in the same way.

But it's a very odd little arrangement. And as long as the two incumbents are willing to talk and consult, it seems to work quite well. It would be interesting to see how it works if we couldn't. But we haven't come to that bridge yet.

Ms. Draude: — I just congratulate you because I can't imagine anything a better use of taxpayers' dollars when you're using cost efficiencies when it comes to the administration and still able to do your jobs independently.

Ms. Tomkins: — It's economically quite efficient.

Ms. Draude: — So I think it's a fabulous situation.

Ms. Tomkins: — Perhaps to expand on that. Some of the economic advantages, aside from the little conveniences, is for example my office has a full-time general counsel — has had for 20 years. Because of that, the advocate's office also uses the services of general counsel in my office and didn't therefore have to hire a lawyer. She also uses the administrative support through my office.

In that sense, anything an administrator requires we administratively we share. And it saved staffing positions and a number of other expenses.

Ms. Draude: — I know that they wanted to vote this off. I just have one quick question. You'd talked about your . . . the backlog is becoming less, which is great, and I think you probably call it resolving or closing a case. Does that mean that everybody, that people are then going away happy?

Ms. Tomkins: — Well I wish I could say yes.

No. A number of people come to our office assuming . . . and government people assume this too; it's another public ed problem we have that we have to work on. We're perceived by many as a citizen's advocate, and there's a difference between an advocate and an Ombudsman.

We're not the citizen's advocate. An advocate is presumed to advance or promote or ensure that a position is heard. An Ombudsman starts off, at least, in an objective position so that what I have is someone come to me and say, I've been treated unfairly by government; this is what happened.

And without judging, we then investigate, look at the government's side, talk to government people, look at their files and their documentation, talk to our person, talk to whoever else has information, and look at that information, and from that determine if we think — based on legislative criterias, not my personal whim of the day — if we think they've been treated

unfairly.

So the result of that is of course that many people who come to our office we will conclude were not treated unfairly. And this isn't exact, but it's around 75 per cent that we conclude were treated fairly.

Now most of them, I think I can say in fairness . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes. And I think most of them, I can say in fairness, do not leave the office unhappy. They may not have achieved what they wanted but they understand, and certainly will if we've done our job properly, that someone independent has looked at their problem. And we're able to explain to them what happened and why. And like so many things in this world, it's often a communications thing.

So even though they haven't got what they wanted when they came in the door, they go away understanding how they got where they are and that it's been independently scrutinized and that it is reasonable. But no, there are people — and you deal with some of them too — who will never accept that. And no, they don't go away happy.

Mr. Sonntag: — Well this is almost *déjà vu* all over again. She asked the same question I was going to roughly. I'm curious on . . . You talked about the number — your numbers — going up. How many of those indeed are, the percentage roughly, are inquiries versus actual cases? Or the numbers that you're referring to are actual cases?

Ms. Tomkins: — It's difficult to distinguish those. We count, when we . . . what we count technically is complaints. So if you call and say, I have a problem with whatever, you do have a problem with whatever and you have a complaint. Now it may be that we refer you through an appeal process that's available within that organization, but you none the less had a complaint with that organization, so it still counts.

Mr. Sonntag: — You would deem that to be a closed case then, once you've referred them on to the more appropriate body?

Ms. Tomkins: — Except it's not normally that simple. It's not simply very often you're phoning and I say, oh you need to do this. It's a matter of you're phoning, provide information, our gathering background information, talking to the agency involved. It will be a smaller investigation than if we say, yes you've been through their appeals and now we're taking it. But there is work done in, I can't say every case, but virtually every case. Yes, there is.

And that's why I say it's difficult to draw that line. I have complaints that were never in a sense formally investigated where we have files this thick. I can't dismiss those as not counting or not being an important part of our work. Some investigations are less work than the background work leading up to them. So no, we count them all.

It's consistent among Ombudsmen around the world, basically, that about 75 per cent of your complaints will be resolved or not substantiated. And it's the 25 per cent where we're making recommendations and so on. And it's fairly consistent in this

province that about 80 per cent of the time the recommendations will be implemented.

The Chair: — And just as a point of information from some of the comments that were made, the offices are also able to receive support from Legislative Assembly for the payroll services and those kinds of things. And when we're looking at our voting procedures, this is the first year that they're coming before us in this way, so it's . . . the Treasury Board is dealt with, their item, in *Supplementary Estimates*, and that's why we won't be voting that one off. In next year's procedures we will, for the first full year of operation in that way.

We thank you very much for coming and letting members of the committee know how you are operating; what are your goals for the next year of operation. And today we wish you happy anniversary or happy birthday for the Ombudsman's office.

Seeing no further . . .

The Speaker: — Are you saying, Madam Chair, that the Ombudsman is 25 years old today?

The Chair: — Well it will be up to her to determine whether those are the number of candles she wants on her cake. We won't prevent her from using it; 29 has been a number I've used often.

So what we have before us then, on page 96 of the large *Estimates* book, item no. 7, the Ombudsman and Children's Advocate subvote. The item 7 — \$1.496 million? Agreed.

Move to the resolution that is now before the committee:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the twelve months ending March 31, 1998, the following sums:

For Legislation —
Ombudsman and Children's Advocate.....\$1,496,000

Moved by Ms. Draude. Everyone agree? Agreed.

And the ways and means, which you all know will be different because of the interim supply that had happened.

Ms. Draude: —

Resolved that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1998, the sum of \$1,246,000 to be granted out of the General Revenue Fund.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: — Madam Chair, is it appropriate to make a final comment before we adjourn . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I didn't ask Mr. Whitmore.

The Chair: — On behalf of the committee I would allow you some summary comments before we adjourn.

The Speaker: — Not summary, but final. Madam Chair, I just want to commend two things: one, the Legislative Assembly for making the move to have the estimates reviewed through this committee. I think that adds a level of comfort which is more than a philosophical curiosity, but does in fact establish the independence which is very important for both offices.

And I also want to commend the officers, the Ombudsman and the Children's Advocate, and their offices for working together cooperatively, using resources mutually in the best interest of the people of Saskatchewan.

And also, too, I thank them for their assistance in responding to your questions here today.

Ms Tomkins: — Thank you for . . . (inaudible) . . . and your attention and your questions.

The Chair: — Thank you. I would now then entertain a motion for adjournment. Moved by Mr. Whitmore. Agreed?

We will see the committee members next Thursday morning, 9 a.m. First up, the Provincial Auditor.

The committee adjourned at 10:13 a.m.