

Standing Committee on Estimates

Hansard Verbatim Report

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES
1998**

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Saskatoon Northwest

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The Chair: — It's time to call the meeting to order. Okay, we are continuing in the committee of estimates, the Standing Committee on Estimates, the work that we began on Tuesday regarding the Legislative Assembly, which we voted off. We had a discussion with the Ombudsman on Tuesday. We'll continue that in the area of vote (LG07) today, which is on page 90 of the *Estimates*. Many members participated in the discussion that day.

I want to just outline to some of those members who weren't here on Tuesday, the procedure of what takes place within the standing committee . . . board of estimates. The Standing Committee on Estimates deals with those items that have generally been approved by the Board of Internal Economy through their all-party budget approval of items like the Legislative Assembly, Ombudsman, and child advocate, and the Provincial Auditor.

Then those items, because of their independent nature, are not treated the same as other items of having the . . . acting through the Committee of Finance, through the . . . on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. And that is why this committee is struck, to allow members to ask questions, as we do with estimates in Committee of Finance, but in a different structure because of the independent nature. So I just wanted to bring that to the attention of the members today in terms of the procedure.

**General Revenue Fund
Legislation — Vote 21
Ombudsman and Children's Advocate**

Subvote (LG07)

The Chair: — And as I said, we will be dealing with the child advocate and I will be calling on Mr. Speaker to introduce the officials that are here today. But I just I want to bring to your attention again, we will be dealing with the segment of legislation in the book of *Estimates*, page 90, the vote (LG07). And I would call on the Speaker to introduce the officials that are here today.

The Speaker: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee. I'm pleased to introduce two people today who are here from the Children's Advocate's office. The first of course, and I think everyone will know, the Children's Advocate herself, Dr. Deborah Parker-Loewen. And she's assisted today by the executive secretary, Bernie Rodier.

And as members will be aware, this is really the second time that Dr. Parker-Loewen's expenditures in the advocate's office, Children's Advocate's office, are undergoing public scrutiny, having been in actually in this room some months ago, presenting her case for the budget that you have before you, to the Board of Internal Economy.

What I'd recommend, Mr. Chairman, is that Dr. Parker-Loewen begin with a brief description of the activities of the office and then proceed from there to respond to the questions of the members of the committee.

The Chair: — I think that is a good suggestion and we'll let you then, Ms. Parker-Loewen, give us a presentation, please.

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — Thank you. Good morning, and I appreciate the opportunity to be here with you today. It's a real privilege for me to have an opportunity to share information about our office and talk with you about our budget.

Just to give you a brief overview, the Children's Advocate office was established in November 1994; I was appointed in 1995. Originally, our budget was \$350,000 in total with the expectation that a number of administrative functions, including legal counsel, would be shared with the Provincial Ombudsman, and that has continued to this day. Many of the administrative elements of our office continue to be shared jointly with the Ombudsman's office.

We have now grown to an office of a deputy children's advocate, three advocates, an executive secretary, a clerk typist-receptionist, and a half-time public education coordinator. So in three years our office has responded to a number of demands and we've very much appreciated the support of the members in that area.

In 1998-99 our budget request is for \$782,785, which is a significant increase from our '97-98 budget of \$501,000. The estimate request for this year represents a 200 and . . . approximately 200,000 annualized requested increase which is to maintain and enhance the services that we're currently providing. And included in that annualized request are funds for salary adjustments which are just in accordance with the regulations and the legislation.

Also we requested funds for a full-time child advocate assistant. What this person had been doing on a temporary basis in our office during last year was taking all of the calls at the front end and assisting callers where we may not as an office have formal jurisdiction. That person's responsibility was to assist the caller in finding the most appropriate place to find assistance or help, or providing them with other information. And we find that many of the callers can be assisted in that way right at the front end and in a very prompt manner. So we've requested funds for a permanent person to do that work.

We've also requested some additional administrative and computer systems costs. We've recently started a three-times-a-year publication, *One More Voice For Children's Rights*, which we're wanting to continue to publish on a three-times-a-year basis. So there's funds requested for publishing and distributing, throughout the province, that publication.

Also an increase in our communications staff. We've found that the public education component of the Children's Advocate legislation is really an important part of the work that we're doing, assisting human service providers, other community members, and children and young people themselves, to understand some of the concerns that are related to the well-being and interests of children in our province.

So we've asked for some communications dollars to continue that, and in particular to direct our communications more to young people themselves.

Also annualized, a new request, as I have established on an ad

hoc basis for the past year, and during this year we want to formalize more, a multi-sectoral child death advisory committee which I'm chairing in conjunction with the provincial coroner. What we've done is invite a broad section of people from throughout the province who have involvement in reviewing deaths of children to come together to look at how we can better protect children from deaths.

We've also requested funds to investigate within our office, as an independent office, deaths of children who were receiving services from Social Services. This is an emerging concern right across Canada — the issues of child deaths where children have been in care of government — and it's really an evolving area of demand. And our initial request for this year's budget, I think, is reflective of what we see as a developing area and an exploratory area in some ways.

I must say that I have some concern already that the \$40,000 we requested for that activity may not be adequate, given the demands that we're already experiencing. However, we're looking at adjusting our work in order to respond as effectively as we can to the concerns that are raised. We have over 40 files open in this area at this time.

We've also requested some funds to develop a youth participation round table. This is really in response to concerns that young people have raised with us that they would like to have an increased opportunity to participate and share in decision-making, not just in their own individual decision-making, but in terms of policy development and service delivery planning.

And so with the support of a broad base of community and government people, we've decided to go forward with developing a round table of young people who could begin to develop an advisory kind of body who would be available to provide feedback and consultation from a young person's perspective around many of the concerns that are impacting on young people.

We've also, just in to finalize the annualized funds that we've asked for, and again just in terms of the developing needs of the office, we've asked for funds to develop a computerized information-tracking system.

Up until now we've been piggybacking on the Ombudsman's information tracking system, and it wasn't really designed to track information related to children and families. It's designed for a different purpose. And so we want to develop a tracking system which will help us understand the needs of the children that we're serving over time and into the future.

And we've also asked for one-time funds which would provide us with the opportunity to conduct a comprehensive review of the needs of children who are living in foster care. And we're just beginning to develop the terms of reference for that project, and our hope is to begin the actual work on that in the fall. This again is in response to concerns raised about how we can best serve children who live in care of government.

Perhaps just in finally of interest, which may be of interest to you and certainly of an emerging expense in our office which we hadn't originally anticipated, are national consultations

regarding children and the well-being of children.

An example is, I've had the very humbling experience of attending a summit of sexually exploited young people in Victoria in March. And it was very important I think, to have representation there from across Canada and of a Children's Advocate office and of young people from our province, who themselves have been sexually exploited, who had an opportunity to work with young people from across North America in developing kind of an agenda that they think would help prevent young people becoming involved in prostitution or other sexually exploited behaviours. And so that kind of an activity from Saskatchewan is an important contribution and an emerging expense which we hadn't built into our budget.

So just for your interest, and the reason I requested to speak with you today rather than Tuesday, was I was at a western Canadian conference on youth violence. And certainly some of the emerging concerns and long-standing concerns about youth involving crime were very much a part of that consultation. So this is just as an example.

So in summary, we're certainly experiencing increased demands in our office and I'm very optimistic that one of the things we can do from our office is to continue to profile the interests and issues of children, as that is our objective, clearly.

So with that, I'd welcome any questions you have and any other comments you may have about the work we're doing. I'd certainly be open to hearing that or answering any questions you have.

The Chair: — Well thank you very much. You stimulated quite a bit of interest already. Before that, something I'd forgotten to do just from a technical standpoint in terms of the meeting today — Mr. Speaker has a commitment at 11:30, or I think around quarter to 12, and needs to leave at 11:30, and so we'll be dealing with the advocate and the auditor.

And I'm not saying that we come and finish that today by 11:30. If we don't complete those segments by 11:30, we'll reconvene next week. Because I certainly don't want to cut off any member's questions regarding any of these areas. So if that's an agreement for today, we'll do that, and if we don't get through it, we'll continue next week.

So I have Mr. Toth and Ms. Stanger and Mr. Gantefoer. Mr. Toth.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Ms. Loewen. First time I've had the privilege of being at committee and talking about the child's advocate.

I guess the first question I would have, and I think you've explained the fact of the increase in your budget, part of that staffing increases components that you recognized or feel there's a need for, as well as the incremental changes in some of the salaries and what have you.

I guess the question I would ask first of all is, when you became the child's advocate, when your office was first created, did you perceive that your office in this — what is it? — two, three years now, would mushroom to this size as quickly as it has?

It seems to me that it's grown a fair bit. And I guess the question would be, are we at the point where maybe we're starting to build another administrative level of a service versus what was originally thought might be needed? Maybe I could get some thoughts from you in regards to that.

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — Yes, thank you for the question. I think that's a very thoughtful question.

When the Children's Advocate was first considered, there was a task force on child and youth advocacy established. And that task force, which was made up of about 25 community people, went around the province and obtained submissions from the public. There were several submissions, both verbally and written. And the recommendation at that time was actually a much larger office than what we even have at this point in time, with regional offices throughout the province and greater links into the community.

And I think at that time, which is, you know, four or five years ago, government did not decide to accept the recommendations that were in that report in total. There were a number of recommendations in principle which were certainly incorporated into the legislation that I operate under.

So I think the original picture of the office was an even larger office than what we currently operate under, and that was certainly the need that was expressed by members of the community.

I personally share your concern. I think it's important that an office such as ours not become so large that we're setting up another layer of service, if you will.

And what we see our objective being is to advocate with government to ensure that citizens, including children, are treated with fairness and have access to appeal processes such that our office wouldn't need to be involved in a number of the complaints that we currently are.

So one of our objectives is to advocate for government to increase the appeal procedures available within government in some way so that some of the individual advocacy issues that come to us would be dealt with internally to government rather than externally in this manner.

So it's certainly a thoughtful question — one I've personally struggled with in some ways. And I think at this point, I don't think we're at building of new administrative structure. We've built on the Ombudsman's administration to a great extent.

This year, Ms. Rodier's been assuming increased administrative responsibilities so we're taking more charge of our own administration over time, and our goal in this upcoming year is to assume more and more of that. But up till now most of it's been done through the Ombudsman.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you. How many cases would you have come . . . I'm using the word cases now; maybe that's not the appropriate word — but how many cases would be brought to your attention in a year, or let's say the last few years? You're just nicely getting into this.

And also as far as a case-load, is it larger in your two large urban centres, or is it fairly broad based as far as across the province?

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — Last year we closed 545 files, which was an increase from the previous year. I'm just looking at the total number of new files opened. In 1996 we opened 309, and in 1997 we opened 622 new files.

In terms of geographic distribution, it's a little difficult for us to do a breakdown, and this is the issue around the tracking system. Because a child, for example, might be in a young offenders secure facility, which would be in a major centre, but may actually reside in a different community as a permanent resident. But most of our calls come from Saskatoon, secondly from Regina.

But we haven't done a thorough analysis of that. And part of that is this tracking system which we're hoping to update in the next year.

Mr. Toth: — So when calls come to your office, who do calls come from? Do they come from children themselves or do they come from, say concerned adults, neighbours, or whatever? Who do you receive most of your calls from as far as files that you're asked to look into?

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — We provided a breakdown of that in our 1997 annual report. In 1997, 47 per cent of the calls came from parents. And the next largest number of calls came from children themselves — 17 per cent came from children.

And the remainder was a breakdown — extended family members, which would include grandparents, aunts, uncles, others directly related to a child; and then health professionals, social workers, foster parents, teachers; and then we have a group of "others" which includes MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) offices, coaches, church leaders, just a kind of variety of community advocates who are concerned about some particular issue related to children.

Mr. Toth: — And you mentioned before, I think, I believe you said 47 per cent were parents?

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — Yes.

Mr. Toth: — I guess the question . . . I would have thought it might be the other way around, simply because there seems to be a lot of exposure out there if you will, and your . . . more children. Even just recently, a situation where a teacher resigned, just got frustrated, because of the lack of ability to discipline, and without that, the class becoming very unruly and just threw his hands up in the air and said, I'm out of here.

And it seems to me that we tend to hear more of the children complaining about the fact that the parents are putting rigid rules, because we've almost like loosened the reins a bit. So I'm surprised here it's from 47 per cent.

When you're talking of calls from parents, is it parents frustrated themselves as to dealing with problems their children are running into; just feeling they've lost control, or what . . .

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — What do parents mostly call about? Well there's a wide variety of issues that parents come to us with. Probably most frequently, it's that they don't understand where they can best get assistance. And so we're in a position to help them move through government services and understand the system in a kind of a broader way.

So an example might be a parent with a child, a young child, who has got multiple handicaps or is medically fragile in some way. That parent may be receiving some services from Health, from their health district, from the Department of Health, from Social Services under community living, from Education in terms of a special needs program through the school. And they're confused, they're tired, they're frustrated. Occasionally they're very angry.

And so one of the things they do is call us and say, we just need some help. We don't understand. We've been denied this or we've been offered this but this isn't what we really need. We need this over here.

So our legislation provides that we can give information. Also says that we shall, where appropriate, try to resolve issues through non-adversarial means. So one of the things that we offer is mediation between all of these bits, with the family, to try to help them sort out a somewhat confusing system at times.

The other kind of concern we have is where parents are distressed about something that has occurred either within government service or often outside of government service. A school call, for example, is not something that this office has jurisdiction to deal with. However, parents are often concerned about the kind of discipline that their children have received, the type of school placement that has been provided to their son or daughter, and they're frustrated. They've tried to resolve it with the director of education, with the school board, and they're not sure where to go next.

So often the concern is that they don't have access to some kind of an appeal process or an independent review process that they are confident is actually independent and neutral of whatever the system is that's providing them with the service.

And so we assist the parent in kind of walking through what's available to them, help them understand how they can be an advocate for their own child.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you. Just one more question, and some other members I know want in. In regards to just your last comment, two questions here actually; I'll make it into one though.

So basically what you're saying then . . . And these come from questions that have come to my office that, to be very honest with you, I never even thought of the fact that maybe the child's advocate is an area to go or send people for some assistance.

One call was to do with the . . . coming from a family with an autistic child and really frustrated as to the type of services or access to some of the services they were able to get in dealing with the situation that they had. So this is the type of thing that your office would give some assistance, or give some direction as to where you could go if what you're looking for is maybe

not necessarily available?

And I guess the other question I'll just throw out to you, whether or not it's part of your office, but just one that's recently come up is a concern from a parent regarding supervision on playgrounds. And this comes back to the educational system. Now I've suggested, I think you made the comment, about going through a director of education on that process as well. But if they arrived at a point where that wasn't resolved locally, that's the type of thing that might come to your office?

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — Well the first question, the services to a child who may have some kind of a learning problem or autism, we would certainly make every effort to be helpful to that family in terms of providing them with information, assisting them in understanding the kind of hierarchy of appeals that they could access. If they're not satisfied here, then this would be the next step. We would also offer to try to bring all the players together to the table if that would be helpful from the perspective of the interests of the child.

Now there's competing interests, I'm sure you're well aware. Sometimes the parents have different interests. If the parents aren't together they may have competing interests as well. Our involvement in this would be to bring folks together to look at the issue, whatever it is, from the point of view of the interests of the child.

The second question you raised around the playground supervision is much more complicated for us, because the jurisdiction for our office to become directly involved in that kind of concern is certainly not there in the legislation.

The members of the school . . . the school trustees are duly elected on their own and have the authority to make the final decision, as do you. I mean the Children's Advocate only has an ability, when it comes down to a final determination, to make a recommendation to you as elected members and you still make the final decision. That's the case with the school boards.

However, there isn't a Children's Advocate, an Ombudsman, a commissioner, whatever, who works directly with the schools in an independent fashion such as I do with the provincial government. And it has been an issue which we've raised with the Department of Education officials. There has been some change in the last year with regards to parents' access to appeal, particularly if the student has a disability.

But, I mean, I think that's an excellent question. It's certainly an area of concern, you know, just back to your very first question. The issue of jurisdiction regarding schools and school boards was discussed when my office was first established, and the decision again was not to provide that jurisdiction in the legislation; although I think that there may be opportunities in the future to revisit that.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you.

Ms. Stanger: — Welcome to Estimates Committee. This is the first time that I've served on it. It's my second meeting but I'm finding it extremely interesting. And I just want to thank you for the work that you do in your office. It seems to me it was a

much needed service to our children of the province.

You talk about one of your mandates being fairness to children. I'm wondering if you could comment on my concepts of, what it might be is also prevention. Prevention in areas where children, by having you intercede on their behalf, we might prevent some of the situations that arise that cause problems to the children and to society as a whole. So I'd just like you to comment on the prevention.

There's a couple of areas I'm specifically interested in. One is the death of children receiving services from Social Services. I'm really happy to see that we have seen fit to move that to your jurisdiction, because people do perceive you as being neutral and they do perceive you as working on behalf of the children of the province. And if you could just expand a little bit on your work in this area and what processes you go through, that would be very interesting for me.

The other thing that I think is really commendable is the youth participation and the round table. I believe, being a mother and a grandmother now and having four young grandchildren . . . I cannot believe their ability to assimilate knowledge, and what they know at six is more than their parents knew at six and seven and ten. And I believe that youth can participate in a meaningful way, and I would laud that initiative.

The other thing that really interests me and makes my heart sad, as many people in the legislature, is the sexual exploitation of children. I would see maybe some of the work that you are able to do would prevent this.

I believe that there are no simple solutions to this. I believe this intergenerational problem — often a grandmother having been in prostitution, a mother, and then a child — I believe there's no simple answers.

I'd like you to expand more on some of the things that you have learnt in the past year or two on this topic, and what you would perceive how community groups, and legislators working with them, can come to — I know this isn't going to be an easy answer to this problem — but to come to some solutions that we're actually helping children to get off this treadmill.

So I'd like you to comment on the prevention aspect of your job, and the processes and the deaths of children where Social Services is involved — because that's the state that takes care of those children — and the prevention of sexual exploitation of children. I'd really like to hear your comments.

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — Well thank you for your question. Just to comment on prevention, I think you've hit on a key point: that efforts in the area of prevention actually touch on all of these other areas that you spoke about — child deaths, children being sexually exploited, children having an opportunity to participate — all of those things can be included in any kind of a prevention program.

What we see our office doing is a kind of twofold thing. One is the individual case advocacy, which we've just talked about, in terms of when we get specific concern raised with us about a particular child or group of children. The legislation we operate under also has some sections which say that I shall, "become

involved in public education respecting the interests and well-being of children;" and that I shall make recommendations to "any minister responsible to services to children on any matter . . . (regarding) the interests and well-being of children . . ."

So the legislation provides very clearly for this office to become involved in what we see as systemic advocacy. Advocating at the front end for government practices, policies, and legislation that will improve the well-being of children in total, not just children receiving service from government.

I'm also of the belief that this isn't just a government responsibility. That community advocates, community members, also play a very important role in advocating on behalf of the well-being of children, and in particular with regards to prevention programming.

So I think that we're certainly involved in a variety of different kinds of activities which we think affect prevention in a broad way. And I think we're hoping that our newsletter is going to be one small input into that and other activities that we do, which I could enumerate on if you like.

Just in terms of the child deaths and what specifically we're doing there. Last January, so January 1997, we entered into a different kind of an agreement with the minister and the Department of Social Services where they are now routinely notifying us of all children that die while in the care of government, or receiving certain enumerated services such as a parent support person in the home who was there because of concerns about child abuse or neglect, or where the child was receiving services in the preceding 12 months.

So we have an agreement now that the Children's Advocate is routinely notified whenever any child dies under that policy. And we are in various stages of reviewing and in some cases investigating those deaths.

Where the child was for example medically fragile and in care because the prognosis was that they were going to die and they needed some special kinds of supports, those deaths, what we're doing in our office is we review the file and review the internal report on the child's death which is prepared by the Department of Social Services. And unless there's some specific concern identified from that, we would simply close it with no further action.

Where there are concerns arising from a review, we will proceed with a more formal comprehensive review of the child's death which includes at that point not just reviewing the file, but interviews with professionals that have been involved with the child, with family members, with other community people, and as a result of that preparing a report and making formal recommendations where necessary. And the legislation provides that I can also bring those recommendations to the Assembly as a whole when I think that's deemed necessary.

So there's sort of a range of options with regards to those deaths. And we're, to be quite frank with you, still learning how to proceed. But I think we're moving along very well. And when we've looked across Canada at what's happening in terms of review of child deaths, Saskatchewan is in the foreground,

and we're being much more publicly accountable and more open with regards to these deaths than some of the other jurisdictions.

So I think we're moving in a direction that ensures public accountability; ensures that the deaths are looked at with an independent second look; and that where we can we'll make . . . and where we see a need we'll make recommendations which we think will prevent deaths of children under certain circumstances.

The multi-sectorial committee that's been established is looking more broadly at patterns of deaths, at how child deaths in the province are reviewed, and what processes we might need to strengthen in order to ensure that all deaths are looked at in a more comprehensive manner.

So that committee is not looking at individual deaths of children but rather at the process that our province uses which includes police, the coroner, other legal services, Health, Social Services, Justice. So we're looking at a more comprehensive sort of process than we would be within our office where we're looking specifically at deaths of children who were receiving services from government.

And just with regards to the sexual exploitation of children and the youth participation, I think those can be kind of combined in a way. The young people themselves who have been sexually exploited have some very important messages, I think, to give to decision makers.

And at the summit in Victoria for example, they created an agenda for action with some very specific recommendations around how to prevent young people from becoming involved in sexually exploitive activities. They've made recommendations with regards to rehabilitation, to treatment, and to legislation. And I could certainly share those with you or with all of the members if you're interested. I think you'd find it to be a very compelling document.

Ms. Stanger: — I'd certainly appreciate if you'd send me a copy of that document.

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — I'd be pleased to.

Ms. Stanger: — I'd really be interested in that.

Just one short follow-up question. You mentioned the multi-sectorial committee on children's death. Who is that set up by? Is that set up by the Department of Social Services, Justice, or . . .

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — No, I've established the committee and I'm chairing it. So part of the funding request here is we're not actually paying the committee members, but some of the funding request is to cover travel and incidental costs for some of the members who aren't government officials, such as there are two representatives from the Indian child and family services agencies; representative from the Institute on Prevention of Handicaps. So those members wouldn't have government funding to participate in such a committee. So part of the funding request here was to just cover their travel and accommodation costs.

Ms. Stanger: — This committee that's been set up was an initiative from your office.

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — In conjunction with the provincial coroner. He and I chatted a few times and realized this is an area of need. And as a result of that we called together in a somewhat ad hoc way at first, a group of people we knew, including the police commissioner, a senior representative from RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police), Justice, Social Services, the provincial epidemiologist, some other community people, first nations representatives, to come together to just begin discussion. And as a result of that we formed this committee.

Ms. Stanger: — Well I just want to thank you for your work in this area. I feel much better having been able to hear the answers to these things this morning. And it would seem to me that people in the general public would feel much better.

Is there any way for your office to get some of this information out. Because it seems so logical to me to have all the people together, like the police, like the coroner, like yourself, community people, the aboriginal folks, all of these people, to tackle some of these problems. It seems so logical. And I don't think that people in general have enough information on what is being done.

And like you say, this is just beginning in many provinces in Canada, and if we can do some good work for our children, it certainly makes me feel better, I can tell you that, hearing these things. Because I was a teacher for 23 years, children are of concern to me. Well thank you very much for your answers.

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — Okay. And we did request, and again as part of this budget request, significant increase in our communications allocation. And part of the reason for that is to have opportunities to more publicly communicate some of these activities that we're involved in, so thank you for that.

The Chair: — Mr. Gantefer, and I apologize, Mr. Gantefer, we do not have the same atmosphere that you're used to in this committee room that you've been sitting in for many days.

Mr. Gantefer: — I much appreciate an atmosphere where we don't have to swear in our guests.

The Speaker: — So do I.

Mr. Gantefer: — Good morning, Dr. Loewen. Just a couple of things from the information that you gave us this morning. I believe, and I'm not interested in the exact numbers, but I think you said that the new files have almost doubled this year over the previous year, and I'm interested to know how you assess that. Is that a reflection of the fact that your office is becoming more visible to the public and so that the calls represent just increased accessibility? Or is there an underlying increased need?

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — Thank you for that question. Again, it's a very thoughtful question which we examined in our office. We're hopeful that it's because we have increased accessibility and an increased visibility in terms of the kinds of assistance that we might be able to provide callers.

The other area that I think has created increased concern is with regards to youth involvement in crime. There's been a lot of public debate and a lot of public concern around young people's involvement in crime, and young people themselves contact us as do other community members. And so I think that there may be an increase related to that.

Again it's somewhat difficult for us, now that our files have gotten more. We were tracking our information on a fairly basic kind of information system, which was okay when you don't have very much information. But when the information starts to build like it has, and we're trying to be as prompt as we can in responding to files, we haven't been able to keep track of the kinds of detailed information that we'd like to.

So hopefully — you know I've already commented on that — hopefully we'll be able to give you a better answer in the future. It's difficult to say. I mean it's not dissimilar to other questions, you know — is the child abuse rate rising or are we just being less tolerant of certain kinds of behaviours towards children? And more people are feeling more comfortable reporting that information. You know, it's the same kind of question I think.

I think people are more and more concerned about being treated fairly by government. Not just children, but clearly we have parents and other adults contacting us who are wanting to understand what services they're receiving and why and what avenues they have to become more involved in the decision making. So it's difficult to answer that with any firmness.

Mr. Gantefer: — I appreciate the fact that it would be difficult. Do you have a definition of a child, in terms of age, or how does it define?

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — The Act, The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Act, defines a child as a person under the age of 18, unless they're receiving services under the Young Offenders Act or The Young Offenders' Services Act. So a 19-year-old, for example, who is serving their disposition in a secure custody facility could contact our office and we would still provide them with services.

We're interested in expanding the age definition in one area and we're having some discussions with the Department of Justice about that, which is children in the care of government can receive an extension to their care agreement up to the age of 21. So these are permanent wards of the Minister of Social Services who at age 18 can still remain in the care of the minister under an extended agreement for education purposes to the age of 21.

And those children would sort of more naturally be served by our office. So we do actually assist those young people even though technically our age ends at 18. It just seems to fit better. So the Ombudsman and I have kind of made an agreement around that, which I don't think is ... it's consistent with the spirit of the work that we're doing.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you. Turning briefly to again, more of a technical thing. I think when you — and I maybe misunderstood — you said that one of your functions is to investigate child deaths.

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — Yes.

Mr. Gantefer: — And I heard you mention that you had 40 files. And I wasn't sure if that was government custodial files or if that's the total files that you'd investigate.

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — The child death files we have, there are two or three that did not come to us from government, but the rest have. And I don't know the exact count today, but I know it's well over 40.

Mr. Gantefer: — Turning also to the issue of violence, which seems to be an increasing concern in perhaps society in general, and certainly the issue of family violence is one area where there seems to be a heightened awareness about all the issues surrounding family violence.

From either your experience as your work in Saskatchewan or from conferences that you attend, what's the status on that? I mean, have we had a lower threshold of acceptability, or what's happening with family violence right now? And it is trending upward, downward, or ... I would like your comments in that general area.

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — I think it's again the kind of question that's difficult to capture the ... What I'm understanding is that many of the problems that young people are facing today — for example, youth involved in crime — stem from family violence or violent situations within the community in some manner. And so whether we're less tolerant as a society of certain kinds of violence, whether it's actually increasing, whether there's a shift in how we display violent behaviour, those are all very deep questions.

What we know is that, for example, of the repeat serious violent young offenders that we know of, between 70 and 85 per cent of them have experienced some kind of abuse in their early childhood. So these are children of violence, who are becoming violent. And that's clearly an area of grave concern for all of us. And the concerns around prevention and helping families raise children in a less violent way are critical.

One of the issues I've repeatedly raised in the three years I've been in this office is the concern about the corporal punishment of children. What we're doing in society is giving permission to adults to hit children who are misbehaving, which is a way that we're teaching children that hitting is an answer or a solution to problem solving. And it's, in my view, not appropriate, not effective, and there needs to be a dramatic change in how we assist parents to raise their children in a way that helps them learn problem-solving skills, responsible behaviour, appropriate behaviour, in a way that doesn't include any kind of violent acts.

Mr. Gantefer: — One of the — and I really appreciate your comments because I think they're very much on the mark — one of the concerns that I have and perhaps from your experience in that you deal across departmental lines in your advocacy for children, in your experience in dealing with the issues like violence, and I guess the same thing would go for sexual exploitation or any of those issues, is there any initiative that you could see or see should happen in terms of someone standing back and saying we need to have an interdepartmental initiative because Education is involved, Social Services are involved, Health potentially is involved, Justice could be

involved.

You know are each . . . is there anybody stepping back and sort of saying we need to bring all the players together and really focus on some of the issues like family violence or sexual exploitation in a multi-departmental type of initiative that's coordinated and planned and thoughtful. Is that happening anywhere, or is that a role that potentially your office or the Ombudsman's office or something of that nature could fill?

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — Well I don't want to speak for the government, but I will just answer what I understand they're doing, is that there is this Saskatchewan action plan for children which is an interdepartmental approach to proactively dealing with children's concerns. And the six departments that are directly involved in providing children's services do meet regularly and have established an interdepartmental funding mechanism.

The positive thing I see from that, sitting where I do, is that communities can apply for and do receive funding for community initiatives around children's programs within their own community. And they're often cross-sectors related to a concern that the community members have identified related to the children in their area. And so I think there some initiatives occurring in that; that action plan has certainly been highly regarded.

My understanding is that government is looking at revitalizing that in terms of some new objectives, and so this may be an opportunity to influence what is prioritized in some way. I get invited to participate in some of that.

At a different level the Saskatchewan Children's Council, which is made up of 25 community people appointed by order in council by the six ministers of the action plan, sit regularly, and they do make recommendations to government, again, from across all sectors; and that council also includes a number of young people. I attend those council meetings regularly as an ex officio member and I think there's some real benefits of that kind of broad-based community involvement through the council.

Mr. Gantefer: — Okay, thank you very much.

Mr. Renaud: — Well my first comment is that I'm going to send Mr. Gantefer a copy of the child's action plan. And I expect it is . . . (inaudible) . . . I guess my question is in regards to participation at the round table and who do you see as participants there, and if in fact, it's youth themselves and if youth are at the table, how do you involve rural youth?

I guess I often see these round tables, and somehow I feel — maybe it's just me because I don't understand — feel that sometimes the rural people are not included in those activities. I just want to hear your comments on that.

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — It's fun for me to share this information because we're just getting our invitation letters out this week. I have spoken with about 20 young people from across — well, I've talked to many more than that, but specifically about this round table — talked to about 20 young people from all over the province who have various interests in

a wide variety of areas, from the provincial president of Students Against Drinking and Driving to young people in CARE (Co-operative for American Relief Everywhere, Inc.) to young people involved in recreation programs in the far North to a couple of young women who live on farms in the south-east corner of the province.

So we're bringing together initially for our first . . . I guess for our development event in early June about 20 young folks that we've met with and who are themselves already interested in promoting an increased youth participation.

And then from there we'll see what those young people think is going to work in terms of spreading that more throughout the province in a meaningful, and hopefully, concrete way. Because I share your concern that any kind of a round table like this needs to have a broad base of representation; also needs young people who are comfortable with sharing and participating in that way; and we need to find balance between a variety of young folks who come from all kinds of different environmental backgrounds.

And so it's been an interesting challenge for us, but I think we're on the first leg of this journey now and we'll just see where we're going to head. But we certainly have some rural young people invited to participate and I think are pretty keen.

Mr. Renaud: — Good. The other question I guess is, and it's probably to do with the tracking system, but of 47 per cent of the people that use the child advocate system, how many are, I guess, aboriginal? And is there an age breakdown and is there an income breakdown of the parents that use the system?

My experience, and I grew up beside an aboriginal community, and what I found is that the parents may be very reluctant to use a system like that. And so I guess maybe I want to know if we're tracking that now, or if the new tracking system that we're sort of wanting would track that. And then I suppose that we would know if we have to do more in regards to the aboriginal community. I think I'm talking of the rural situation again here because I think urban, the urban situation might be much different.

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — We're not intending to track by ancestry or income. We'd like to have a better way of obtaining information on the age of the children who are either themselves calling or who adults are calling on behalf of, because we don't have a good picture of age.

In terms of race or other forms of ancestry or income, we have no intention of asking questions with regard to that. What we think we'll be able to do is capture information by municipality or possibly by band, but that would probably be the closest we'd get to that answer for you.

I am concerned that . . . I mean, it's the balance of not wanting to get too big and also wanting to serve the whole province in some meaningful way. Right now we have three advocates in the office who travel extensively, like on average 3 to 4,000 kilometres a month. Our travel budget is stretched every single month. And they need to move out into the rural parts of the province because these children can't come to us. They're not in a position to come to us; telephone contact or mail contact

isn't sufficient. And I'm absolutely committed to having real contact with people, so we do travel extensively.

One of our advocates is almost exclusively travelling in northern Saskatchewan. He grew up in the Athabasca Lake area and went to school in Ile-a-la-Crosse and La Ronge and he's very committed to being an advocate for children in the North.

So with the resources we have, which even though we have grown a lot in the last three years, are still limited for a provincial service. We're making an effort in that way.

Mr. Renaud: — And I think that's all.

Mr. Toth: — Yes just, pardon me, one comment. I think you made a comment a moment ago about hitting children, that there are other forms of discipline now; that that is not appropriate. I raise that coming from a background where people viewed discipline . . . And part of it may have been the strap or the wooden spoon on the wall. I guess the concern I have is that what we're saying is that is not an appropriate form of discipline any more.

I agree with you — there's a difference between abuse and between corrective discipline. And not every child or not every person reacts the same. Possibly administration through the strap might not apply to one child over . . . where another form might work.

But I guess what I would say I would hope we're not at the point that we're basically ruling out the fact that there may not be that place for that type of discipline. If there is, in most cases where I'm aware of it, if it's used well, it's where people, where parents, or even educators set guidelines in place and they say as a result of here's the consequences.

And I guess the fear I have is if we're going to say now that discipline by the use of the strap is inappropriate, then are we now putting your office in a situation where we have people frivolously calling because their parents may have disciplined their child, may have been disciplined by the use of the strap. I'll guarantee one thing — that they don't forget that very quickly. And in most cases, yes it does; it has a way of basically making a point that here's . . . there's a line here and that we expect something.

So I just want to get your response to that in regards to, I think if I heard you correctly. I'd just like to hear your explanation a little I guess.

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — Well we may not agree on this. I think that one person hitting another in any circumstance is not consistent with the kind of just and caring society that we want to live in, that is respectful of all human beings including children. So while hitting children has certainly been a traditional form of disciplining children — and I was spanked and including strapped by my own parents — at this point in time with the knowledge we have, I think that it's inappropriate in any circumstance.

Not dissimilar to several years ago . . . when I was a child, my parents never put me in a seat-belt and they certainly wouldn't have thought of putting us in a car seat. And as the years have

evolved and as we have greater understanding of the risks related to riding in a care without a seat-belt, most parents today would think it was wrong to ride in a car without a seat-belt and would feel that we've changed our opinion on that.

And I think we are in a time in our society and in our nation and in the world where an understanding of how hitting children affects children is increasing. And from a point of view of respecting one human being to another, hitting is inappropriate in any circumstance, in my view. And there's also lots of research literature to support alternative ways of helping children grow to be responsible citizens.

I'm certainly not advocating that children don't need discipline, that children don't need structure, and that children don't need love and compassion. But that can all be afforded to our children without them being struck.

Mr. Toth: — Well I guess we'll have to agree to disagree on that.

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — Sure.

Mr. Toth: — But I hope we don't reach the point that if a parent has chosen, if there is some guidelines set down to the point that we say basically . . . we start sending officials, authorities, whether it's Social Services or the law, against parents because they have had a problem with the child and they've administered some form of corrective discipline that may have been a use of, say, the strap.

Because I believe that when we start doing that in . . . take a look at some of the . . . Yet you're saying some of the violence in our society can go back to abuse of children.

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — Yes.

Mr. Toth: — I agree with you on that. I agree with you on that.

But at the same time, I think there are a lot of parents that are really trying hard as well. And they mean well and if it's used constructively — I don't say you use the strap all the time. There are all kinds of methods for discipline. But I guess I'm just hoping that we don't get to the point where because the strap may have been administered, all of sudden a parent finds himself with an assault charge on their hands over something that was really meant as a corrective measure, which at the end of the day may have been a corrective measure as well and worked well for the child.

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — I think you'd find it very interesting to look at some of the information from other countries where the use of corporal punishment has been banned. Because that has been a concern everywhere when this whole topic becomes an area of priority. And what has happened is that there is no increase in the assault charges towards parents, because as you have pointed out, what is deemed abusive in our society is fairly well understood.

What has happened is an increase in coaching for parents around alternatives and options. And most countries that have banned corporal punishment have introduced this over time with significant prevention programs, significant parenting

education. So that like with seat-belts, it's phased in over time so that parents aren't left one day with one option that they feel they can use and the next day with nothing.

This needs to be introduced through education and through alternatives so that parents don't feel left not knowing how to deal with behaviours that they know, as good and caring parents, they want to guide their children away from.

I'd be happy to send you this research if you're interested in seeing it, or have a more in-depth discussion with you at any time.

Ms. Stanger: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, just one short little comment. I think we worry about things like the subject that Mr. Toth brought up. But I think what happens is that it's also a generational thing. My two daughters, who are parents now — and I just consulted with my colleague, his two daughters feel the same way — it's zero tolerance in the way they are raising the children.

So I think it is a manner of the way the young people today do not believe — I may have believed it — giving them a slap. My daughters just don't. I consulted with Andy. He says the same thing. I think as our society evolves and as they get different methods of discipline, it may have been acceptable to me as a teacher and as a parent, but my . . . and I can tell you my grandchildren are disciplined, but never, never with a slap.

I'll tell you my instinct is still to that, but not daughters or my sons-in-law. So I think generationally this is going to move on.

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — I'll just briefly answer that. There's a national longitudinal study of children and youth being conducted in Canada right now. And the first cohort of information has been released, and we've pulled out the data for Saskatchewan which is available publicly if anyone is interested.

But of parents of children under 10, 83 per cent of the parents say that they do not use any form of physical punishment with their children. And a further — I forget what the exact number is — but a further number of those rarely use any form of physical punishment with their children.

So of the age group of parents of children under 10 years of age, 83 per cent in Saskatchewan — these are Saskatchewan statistics — are saying that they do not use any form of physical punishment with their children.

Ms. Stanger: — That's my point.

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — Those same parents would not tolerate teachers hitting their child.

Ms. Stanger: — Things change from generation to generation.

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — They do. And I could see that we could have a great debate about this for quite a while. I'm not sure if that's what you want to do. I'd love to enter into it.

The Chair: — We certainly have opened a new avenue and it has certainly been a discussion point that you have brought . . .

The Speaker: — But we are in Estimates Committee.

The Chair: — We are in Estimates Committee, but it has been brought up as part of the scope as the role in statements made by the Ombudsman — or I mean by the child advocate. And other members have participated in it. I'd be very reluctant not to have other members.

Mr. Johnson: — As you say, the studies indicate that it doesn't pay. And yet the society as a whole is shifting in the sense of youth punishment the opposite way in its laws. And I'm listening to what's coming . . .

I've lived through a period of time when the equipment that were used on the farm that I was raised on was horses, all the way to where the equipment is 300, 400 horsepower tractor. And that happens . . . that occurred for me because of the location where I live in the province of Saskatchewan. If you had lived other places and been the same age as me, you wouldn't have it.

The impact is that what is happening, you've indicated, that it's questionable whether the society is getting any worse or any better. In the area where I was raised from the '30s, '20s and '30s, about 20 per cent of the children died I think in the community. During the '40s and '50s and '60s, the status Indian community of the area, the death rate for children would have been approximately that — the same amount, maybe even greater.

So a lot of the things that occur really occur with the technology of the society that you're able to put together in the whole structure. When you push down one place, then the problems that come up some place else have an impact. And although I would very seldom want to say that I agree with Mr. Toth, a balance is what is going to have to be there.

And I say this because the situations will vary and . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I'm getting advice, but I'm stuck in the middle because I come out of an environment that says that the concept that you can have a zero tolerance everywhere doesn't fit with my concept of the world. In fact it doesn't fit with reality.

The idea that you can have a society with no deaths until everybody reaches 85, like, I mean you look anywhere, it isn't there. You can limit it, you can make it more positive, but you have to accept that there are . . . there is a percentage of things that are just not going to work. And whether now that's . . . that leaves us in a situation that you do the best you can and accept that there's some, that there just is going to be some cases, situations, that don't fit. And that's where I want to leave what I have to say.

The Chair: — Okay.

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — I think we recognize that the child death work isn't going to prevent every child from dying. I guess our hope, both as a committee and as an office, is that our work will prevent some deaths of children from occurring. So I think I agree with you that while that might be an ideal, it's probably not going to . . . I mean people die and that's the reality we live in.

The Chair: — Thank you very much for your presentation today. I think it has stimulated very interesting discussion by the members who have participated in the discussion.

And the vote then before the committee today is the Ombudsman and child advocate vote (LG07). And as I had stated earlier, the Ombudsman was dealt with on Tuesday but we didn't vote it through.

The sum that we're voting on today is \$2.045 million. Those in agreement? Carried.

Subvote (LG07) agreed to.

The Chair: — The resolution then that will go to the legislature:

Be it resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 1999 the following sum:

For Legislation, Ombudsman,
and Child Advocate \$2,045,000.

Do I have agreement? Oh sorry, I apologize for that. Mr. Van Mulligen moves. Those in agreement?

Dr. Parker-Loewen: — I just want to thank you very much for your input and your very thoughtful and excellent questions. And I want to thank Bernie Rodier for assisting me and thank you very much.

The Chair: — Thank you for coming down from Saskatoon today.

The other resolution deals with interim supply, main estimates, less:

Be it resolved that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on the account of certain expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1999, the sum of \$1,533,000 to be granted out of the General Revenue Fund.

Do I have a mover? Ms. Stanger. All those in agreement? Carried.

The Chair: — We will have a break for 10 minutes and then reconvene with the Provincial Auditor. And as I said, we'll be adjourning today at 11:30, and we'll reconvene next week. Because as I say, I don't wish to rush members in terms of the discussion with the Provincial Auditor at all or to cut off any questions. So we'll probably reconvene next week when we can find a time that's appropriate. So we'll adjourn for 10 minutes.

The committee recessed for a period of time.

**General Revenue Fund
Provincial Auditor
Vote 28**

Subvote (PA01)

The Chair: — We're moving on to another segment that falls

under this area of Standing Committee of Estimates, that being the Provincial Auditor. This section is on page 102 of the *Estimates* book, and it is under vote 28 and referring to administration of The Provincial Auditor Act, (PA01).

As I'd outlined to members before, this budget has been reviewed and approved by the all-party committee of Board of Internal Economy and then through the budget process comes to this committee for further review. So I would ask Mr. Speaker to introduce the officials from the Public ... or from the Provincial Auditor's department here today.

The Speaker: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. With the Provincial Auditor being here today this completes the committee's review of budgets for all of the officials — officers, I should say, of the Legislative Assembly, and in this forum, which provides for the ability to bring scrutiny to the spending of public funds and the performance of those duties and obligations to the Assembly and ultimately to the people of Saskatchewan.

And I think it's as you said as well, Mr. Chairman, worthy of note that not only are the offices of the Assembly's budgets held with the same scrutiny as line departments, but in fact a strong argument can be made to say that it is doubly so, because the first scrutiny was in the granting of the funds for the budget itself, which was also done in the public forum.

And the participants today are fourfold from the Provincial Auditor's office. I'd like to introduce to you, first of all, I think someone who all the members of the committee will be familiar with personally and recognize, and that's the Provincial Auditor himself, Mr. Wayne Strelieff. And to his right is the assistant provincial auditor, Mr. Fred Wendel.

And seated, two other officials from the auditor's office, seated in the chairs behind the table, are the manager of administrations, Sandy Walker, and also the assistant to the manager of administration, Ms. Heather Tomlin.

Mr. Chairman, those are the officials for the Provincial Auditor's office, and similarly I would recommend to the committee that we ask the Provincial Auditor to outline the big picture in terms of services from the auditor's office to the Assembly and any other matters that he would consider of significant importance. And then ask ... then invite committee members to put their questions directly to the auditor himself.

The Chair: — Okay, I'll turn it over to you, Mr. Strelieff, to take us through the budget and the review and what you see in the future in terms of the Provincial Auditor's office.

Mr. Strelieff: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, Mr. Speaker, members, and good morning. Once again, thank you for the opportunity to meet with you this morning. I have provided you our '98-99 business and financial plan. If you need ... if you haven't got a copy with you, Sandy or Heather have extra copies.

We also have provided you our annual report for March 31, '97, which was published last June. We expect our March 31, '98 report to be published next month; that is our report on our own operations.

In our '98-99 business plan we have three components in it. The first begins on page 5 in which we describe what we do and why, as well as our financial proposal for the year, next year, and the past three years.

The second component begins on page 37 in which we provide more detailed information — a five-year summary of our spending as well as more detailed information about the costs of the work that we carry out.

The third component begins on page 51, in which we provide answers to questions that were previously posed by the Board of Internal Economy or this committee in prior periods.

This morning I plan to provide you an overview of our proposals in terms of three sections. First I'll review our funding request; second, the work of our office and what we do and why; and then third, to answer your questions.

On page 5 it says that we request an appropriation of \$4.314 million for 1998-99. This request is about 2 per cent more than our appropriation for '97-98. And the '97-98 appropriation was about 2 per cent less than our appropriation for '96-97. The proposed 2 per cent increase relates primarily to more government organizations being created during the year, which relates to 2 per cent, the 2 per cent of our appropriation.

In general though, we know that our costs are going up by about 5 per cent and that we plan to eat the other 3 per cent, which is primarily related to inflation — inflation due to extended health care plans, and dental plans, and CPP (Canadian Pension Plan), and telecommunications, travels, and supplies. So the proposal for the appropriation is 4.314 million.

In exhibit 1 on page 7, it provides an overview of what we do in terms of inputs, outputs, and intermediate outcomes and final outcomes. It's the jargon of the day, I guess, in terms of inputs, outputs. But the first part just provides a good overview of what we do, what we bring to the table. Our inputs is our . . . is the people, the knowledge, skills, and experience and abilities of our people. The outputs, being the specific products, are all the different kinds of audit reports that we provide in terms of assurances on government organizations, reliability of financial statements, on compliance with legislative authorities, and on their management systems and practices. We also provide advice to government officials and legislators in terms of our management letters, our reports to the Assembly, our recommendations, and our work with standing committees.

We also . . . a third element of what we . . . our outputs are, we train people. We train people for work elsewhere — a major part of what we do and I'll explain a little bit more of that later.

The intermediate outcomes of our work are set out on this page — the things that we're trying to achieve, and ultimately trying to ensure better parliamentary control. So better information going to the Assembly, better program performance, and the ultimate outcome is better or improved public confidence in our institutions of government.

On page 8 we explain the nature of our examinations and our reports to the Assembly which many of you have worked with in terms of standing committees, with us. Our organization is

set out on page 12. We have a staff of about 60 people organized into 5 working groups. At any one time we have probably 15 to 20 articling students that are training for usually their chartered accountancy, and about 35 other professionals — mainly professional accountants; although we also have a senior health administrator, and a lawyer, and a librarian, and some of our accountants are former teachers. And the last time I checked, our average age was about 35, and we have 50 per cent men and 50 per cent women in our office.

On page 14, 14 to 19, we set out what we plan to do in terms of our goals, objectives, strategies, action plans, and performance indicators. A good overview of what we're trying to achieve. In our annual report on operations that comes out each year, we set out how we actually did perform. As you know, I often suggest to legislators that they ask officials questions related to their goals and objectives. And these pages provide a framework for our office to address such questions.

For example, I often ask or suggest that you ask organizations what an organization is trying to achieve in terms of their goals and objectives; and what performance indicators does the organization use to monitor its success, its performance; what strategies, action plans are set in place to manage the risks and issues that an organization face when it's trying to successfully achieve its objectives; and what are the plans for the future.

So on these pages from 14 to 19, we set out information to help us answer those kinds of questions as well as the costs of each of the underlying services that we provide in pursuing these goals and objectives. As you can see in page 14 to 19, we have three goals — two external ones and one internal one.

The first two goals — fostering well-managed government and encouraging good reporting by government, then, with objectives, strategies, action plans and performance indicators. The more internal goal relates to the third one, managing our own business effectively, and again objectives, strategies, action plans, and performance indicators.

On page 20 we set out the values that we have established for our office that we try to hold on to regardless of the challenges and criticisms and issues that we face. Page 20 also provides a review of several factors that affect our work plan: the number of government organizations, the professional standards, the cooperation we receive when we carry out our work.

We also set out some of the key forces and trends that we think are out there that affect legislators, affect government officials, and therefore has an impact on the work of our office.

Page 23 sets out and describes some of the systems and practices that we use internally to make sure that we're able to get our job done, to achieve our goals and objectives. And they primarily relate to ensuring the quality of our own work — a well-trained staff; the supervision; making sure that performance standards are met; and that when we come out with assurances or reports to the Assembly, that we can stand behind them knowing that we've done our homework.

Page 25 sets out in more detail how we measure our performance. And then 27 begins with a little bit more on our financial plan. On table 1 on page 28 we report that the costs of

our work is now at 4.394 million; and on page 30 we show the spending trends of our office and how we finance our spending for a five-year period.

On page 31 we say, well if the Assembly chooses not to provide us our request of funding, here's the work that we will not do. And then appendix 1, as I stated earlier, provides you more detailed information about our spending and work plans. And appendix 2 sets out answers to questions that were previously posed by this committee and the Board of Internal Economy.

Chair, that ends my opening comments and I'd be pleased to answer questions.

The Chair: — Well thank you very much. Certainly appreciate your detailed business and financial plan to the committee. I know it is distributed to all members of the legislature too.

Mr. Strelloff: — Yes.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I don't have any specific questions with respect to the business and financial plan as such. And I might, by way of compliment, express my appreciation for a system that now means that you, Mr. Chairman, and the Speaker and others who are members of the Board of Internal Economy, are able to do this work for the Estimates Committee. We greatly appreciate this. I can remember some time spent on the Estimates Committee in the past and we appreciate the assistance that you provide for us.

I've read with interest the verbatims from the Board of Internal Economy and therefore I don't have specific questions as such about the business and financial plan. I do have . . . and I didn't see this covered in the questioning in the Board of Internal Economy — and it's a minor thing and it's probably something I've overlooked and haven't read right in the legislation that governs your office.

The Act is quite specific and quite clear that when you communicate reports or something of significance, it's to go to the Legislative Assembly. And following that, if any of those reports are to be tabled publicly, then that's the duty of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: to not only “ . . . cause copies of the report to be delivered to all members of the Legislative Assembly; (but to) . . . make the reports available for public inspection . . . ”

And now I've gone through this and again, like I stand to be corrected on this; your financial plan indicates that one of your stakeholders is the public, in addition to legislators, and for that matter, that one of your stakeholders is government officials. Now I don't know about that.

And you go on later on to say that one of your action plans is to: complete our work within established deadlines while completing with professional standards and getting the support of MLAs, and then you say the public, and the government for advice and recommendations.

Later you talk about forces and trends affecting our work plan, and you say you have to be aware of the public's interest. In your opening comment you stated that one of — I'm not sure whether it's an objective — but one of the things that you

hoped to do was to improve public confidence.

And I wonder, is there a shift in thinking about the traditional role of the Provincial Auditor as one who reports to the Legislative Assembly, who . . . and the members of which must concern themselves with questions such as public confidence and public interest and certainly who's . . . one of the significant, I would venture to say the only, stakeholder is the public, to where you see in addition to whatever duties and powers are prescribed in the Act that governs your office, that in addition thereto you now see some mandated or legislated link between you and the public interest.

And I didn't see the Board of Internal Economy cover that question, Mr. Speaker. And so I . . . But I just notice that this is a trend that I've seen in the last number of years and so I was just curious on that, where that comes from.

Mr. Strelloff: — So, Mr. Van Mulligen, the question relates to who our stakeholders are and how does the work . . . how do I see the work of our office impacting the public, the public interest, public confidence in our institutions of government. Right?

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Yes, and where the provision for that is in your legislation, when the legislation is actually quite specific and clear that all your reporting is to the Legislative Assembly. And that even when the legislation, in discussing terms such as public money, makes it quite clear that public money is revenues and money that belong to the Government of Saskatchewan — not the public but the Government of Saskatchewan.

Now maybe that's something that needs to be rethought, as to whether that's an appropriate definition. And furthermore say that public property means property held or administered by the Crown.

So again, like I'm not clear like how it is that, although the legislation is quite clear that your . . . I guess your stakeholders and the people that you serve are the Legislative Assembly as a body, your goals talk about also satisfying the public, and that the public is one of your stakeholders. And also that what the public is concerned about affects your work. Now I can certainly see what the public is concerned about affecting the Legislative Assembly; it better affect the Legislative Assembly, otherwise the members will be changed in the next election.

But I just wonder how it is that you've gone from the Act itself to interpreting this additional role of a relationship between you and the public.

Mr. Strelloff: — The exhibit 1 on page 7 is probably a good overview of those kinds of issues or questions. Certainly when we report to the Assembly, our reports are public reports. So knowing that our reports are public and that they're debated in a public forum, means that we have to recognize that they do have a public impact.

Our stakeholders are those who are impacted by our work. We have, I think, five stakeholder groups that we've identified. Our own employees are important in terms of carrying out our work. The officials of government who we work with, who we make

... we carry out examinations of their systems and practices, who we issue public reports to the Assembly on, they're an important stakeholder that we work with.

The many public accounting firms that we deal with during a year are also an important stakeholder group that we have to work with carefully, listen to, and respond. Of course all our reports go to the Assembly, as you've said, and we work with committees of the Assembly and here or in committees and in other kinds of forums to try to move practices along.

Of course all of us are ultimate stakeholders, which is the public. We work for the public. We know that issues that we bring to your attention are discussed in a public forum. We know that concerns that are brought forward to legislators from the public, impact the work of our office.

So in general, the issue of our relationship, or one of our key stakeholders being the public, is a recognition that we work in a broader community than one particular group.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Where would it say that in your Act?

Mr. Streliaff: — That we work in a broader world than legislators only? But that's a reflection of reality, isn't it?

Mr. Van Mulligen: — No, but I'm just saying that it doesn't say, for example, that when it talks about your annual report — shall identify any instances they consider to be of significance and of a nature that should be brought to the attention of the Legislative Assembly — there is no parenthetical inclusion after that: and which may be of interest to the public — as you say that you should be concerned about.

Like, I don't know. I'm just ... I'm trying to reconcile what you're saying, and not only now but in your plan, as to what should be your concerns as opposed to what's in the legislation. Now maybe the legislation is dated and you could change that. I don't know.

Mr. Streliaff: — Again, I think setting out the range of stakeholders that we work with and for ...

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Do you work with the public directly?

Mr. Streliaff: — We work for the legislators.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Right. But you don't ... so that one of your stakeholders then wouldn't be the public as such.

Mr. Streliaff: — I think all of us work for the public; I'm funded by public money. Ultimately, that's our ultimate stakeholder. I would ...

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Your stakeholder is the Legislative Assembly. I don't know, maybe I'm just getting in to semantics here, but I just couldn't understand this ... (inaudible) ... Thank you very much.

Mr. Johnson: — I believe in the report, and I haven't looked at it in that depth, but in the Department of Health you have for last year just slightly under half a million dollars worth of actual costs and hours of about 10 ... No, 1,000 hours; no — 6 ...

7,000 hours. Does that include the health districts?

Mr. Streliaff: — The cost of our work ...

Mr. Johnson: — That work under the Department of Health. I asked that question because I ...

Mr. Streliaff: — Oh, Department of Health.

Mr. Johnson: — Yes. I ask that question because I couldn't find health districts listed here as ...

Mr. Streliaff: — Which page are you on just so that we're on the ...

Mr. Johnson: — Oh, I'm on page 62.

Mr. Streliaff: — 62?

Mr. Johnson: — Yes.

Mr. Streliaff: — Yes, it is. It includes the Department of Health and the district health boards and all matters related to health, the work that we carry out.

Mr. Johnson: — Okay. Then the question that I have has to do with the division's work ... is on page 12: during '98-99 much of the division's work will continue to focus on examining the 32 district health boards recently created by the government.

Mr. Streliaff: — Yes.

Mr. Johnson: — In your, in the Act, how is it that you're responsible for the health district boards in the Act?

And the reason I ask the question is that as I under ... reading through the Crown agency, it's where the board or management or board of directors of which are appointed by an Act ... No. All the members of which, or all the board of management or the board of directors of which are appointed by an Act or by the Lieutenant Government in Council, which in the case of the health districts is not the case — it's not "all." The majority of them are elected. I was looking for the ... on the ... So there's no other area that carries through?

My question really relates ... is that if that's the case, then how many of the municipalities are you auditing, both urban or rural, because of the way the flow of money and funds and stuff would relate to it? I can see during a development period, of the transition, somebody had to do that.

So the question that I really have is, at what stage would you see the Provincial Auditor no longer auditing the health districts? First of all, where in the Act do you have the authority; and secondly — which I don't think is there, but I stand to be corrected because I haven't spent a month or so reading to double-check things, but just my initial read would say that that's the case — the second question is then following that. When do you expect that the transition period would be over and that the auditing would be the responsibility of the local boards, as is the case with municipal government throughout the province, school boards throughout the province?

Mr. Strelloff: — A number of questions. I would hope the Provincial Auditor is active in the district health board community for as long as the Provincial Auditor contributes to that process. So I think the Provincial Auditor should be active in the district health board community from now to, unless there's a significant organizational shift there, to the foreseeable future. There's one question.

Second question is, we don't examine any of the local governments or school boards directly.

The third relates to why are we ... what's our authority to examine district health boards. And that comes from our responsibility to examine how the government manages the public's money, and report on our findings to the Assembly. One of the key responsibilities of the Minister of Health relates to the health system. It also relates to the finances of the health system. And one of the mechanisms that the Minister of Health carries out his responsibilities is through district health boards.

So that one of the key elements of the state of finances of the health system relates to ... and how the Minister of Health carries out his responsibilities for the health system relates to district health boards.

And when they were formed, we came in to the various committees and suggested approaches on how we should carry out our responsibilities within district health boards, and were advised that members wanted us to examine the health districts directly.

Now you're right, there is a transition going on. We are changing our approach each year to the health districts. For the year ended March 31, '98, we are moving to more of a cyclical approach where we're going to be involved in the audits of 10 health districts directly. And that relates to the two large ones, two of the medium size ones, the two new ones, and four of the smaller ones.

We're tracing how we're carrying out our work, is trying to help the Assembly hold the government accountable, and in this case the Minister of Health accountable, for how he administers and manages our system of health. And of course one of the key parts of that system of health is district health boards.

And another part of our audit responsibilities is to report on the government's financial statements each year. And part of the government's financial statements includes health districts; they're in the financial statements of the province. To carry out an audit ... to carry out audit work and report on the financial statements of the province, which are even set out in The Financial Administration Act, we have to examine what goes on at district health boards.

Mr. Johnson: — So then I can interpret from what you're saying that the auditing of the health district boards, under your interpretation, is that it fell under a special assignment that the legislative committee of the Assembly on Public Accounts asked for?

Mr. Strelloff: — No, that's not the case.

Mr. Johnson: — Then that the Assembly asked for it?

Mr. Strelloff: — When you said ... you used the phrase, special assignment, which I think in our Act has a very specific meaning.

Mr. Johnson: — I'm very clear as to why ... because that's what you said. As I interpret what you just finished saying, is that you did it because a committee of the Assembly asked for you to follow it up, which quite frankly the standing committee on Legislative Assembly on Public Accounts could have asked ... could, quite frankly, ask you to audit the University of Regina.

Mr. Strelloff: — We do audit the University of Regina.

Mr. Johnson: — Okay, and in that sense, I was picking that as a special allocation. And once you ... special assignment — and you could do or not do it, because it says, if the Provincial Auditor feels it doesn't interfere with other duties prescribed in the Act, go ahead and do it. So that's why I asked the question. I interpret what you said is that you took this on as a special assignment.

Otherwise, how do you separate the health board from municipalities or from Saskferco, school boards?

Mr. Strelloff: — Where does ... Okay, I'm sorry. The key part of district health boards is that the Minister of Health is responsible for the system of health. The health districts get almost 99 per cent of their funding from the provincial government.

Mr. Johnson: — Just hold it, just hold it one second. The municipalities in this province are there at the pleasure of the province. There are only two levels of government in Canada under the BNA (British North America Act) Act, and that is the federal government and provincial governments. Municipalities are there at the pleasure of the province, the same way as the health district board. That's why I'm asking the question as to what separates the two?

What you said when I asked the question, basically said you took it on as a special assignment. And I agree that ... like I mean the standing committee on Legislative Assembly on Public Accounts I actually believe asked for it. Not in the direct sense of a motion and the rest of it, but they wanted to know what was going on. So I believe they actually did that. And your response indicated that that's been thought of. That's why I'm asking, in your Act, where would it indicate that you should do this? And if so, how does it reflect differently with the municipalities? Because as I interpret The Provincial Auditor Act, it says wherever ... all the board members ... or that are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

The Chair: — If I could just interject here, we're trying to deal with the budget directly of the Provincial Auditor, and I know that the auditor has answered the question on a couple of occasions already in terms of an answer to the question. I don't want to get into a debate back and forth whether ... how one interprets what, and try and focus directly on the question of the budget that we're dealing with.

Now I understand the questioning, but I don't want to see the question being asked several times and the same answer being

given several times too, because I'm not sure if that's helpful to the committee.

Mr. Johnson: — Mr. Chairman, there was one other question. The question I asked, where the authority came in the Act, and I think I'm agreed that there is, that authority has been provided at the present time. So you're saying that you expect the special duty or a special assignment should carry on, is what I . . . (inaudible) . . . from your remarks?

Mr. Strelieff: — Mr. Johnson, no. Where our work on the district health board isn't related to that provision or Act that allows for a special assignment. It relates to paragraph .11 where we say the Provincial Auditor is the auditor of the accounts of the Government of Saskatchewan. If you go into the financial statements of the province of Saskatchewan, the summary financial statements, you'll see that part of the accounts of the Government of Saskatchewan include district health boards. So there's the starting point as to why our office would be concerned with the public money moved through the accounts of the Government of Saskatchewan related to district health boards.

Mr. Johnson: — And that is not the case for the municipalities?

Mr. Strelieff: — That's true. The municipalities are not included in the financial statements, the accounts of the Government of Saskatchewan, nor are the school boards. They're separate entities that have the ability to raise taxes, and their financial results are not included in the accounts of the Government of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Johnson: — And the health district boards don't have that?

Mr. Strelieff: — The ability to raise taxes?

Mr. Johnson: — No, they collect funds . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well they collect funds directly, I would say very much the same as the workmen's compensation board.

Mr. Strelieff: — The Workers' Compensation Board is also in the accounts of the Government of Saskatchewan and that's why we're involved in the audit of that.

Mr. Johnson: — All of them appointed by order in council.

Mr. Strelieff: — The commissioners of the Workers' Compensation Board would have been. Yes, that's correct.

The Chair: — I think we should move on now.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome to the officials here this morning. Some of my questions a little later on I would ask, Mr. Chair, if I . . . or comments, however they'll end up being presented, I'd ask for some degree of latitude as well on. But it seems . . .

The Chair: — Well I've offered a little degree of latitude to Mr. Johnson, but I don't want to drift it too far out of . . .

Mr. Aldridge: — Understood. But it seems like a certain amount of the discussion here this morning centres on how you

define a government organization. And I know the auditor at the outset, in your introductory remarks, mentioned some additional costs related to government organizations that were created this past year, something in the order — you quantified it I think as a 2 per cent increase in costs related to additional government organizations created this year. I wonder if you could quantify the number of additional government organizations created this year.

Mr. Strelieff: — Mr. Aldridge, on page 43, I think it is, 43, we state, we list the government organizations created in the '97-98 and list the costs of the audits of those organizations. And then in the next page we list the organizations that are wound up during the year. So page 43.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Mr. Strelieff.

A couple of other questions that came to mind during your remarks that I'd like to . . . you mentioned in terms of staffing of your office the fact that there's a 50/50 complement of men, women. Just curious: is that by coincidence or was that very deliberate, and what sort of an employment equity sort of provisions you might have within your office, and also in terms of pay equity. I'd be interested in hearing some of your thoughts in that regard as it relates to your office because I certainly think those are laudable objectives.

Mr. Strelieff: — Mr. Aldridge the starting question related to the 50 per cent men, 50 per cent women — is that planned for our office. A couple perspectives on that. And that is, most of our people in our office are chartered accountants or training to be chartered accountants. And over the years the people going into that program has changed, that more and more women are going into those programs. So it's more likely for women to be coming into the articling world and being hired by places like our office. So the sources of people that we hire increasingly more are women.

Also in general, it is my belief, policy, that the office should reflect more of a balance of 50/50, that it should be men and women. So that I do go the extra step to make that happen.

In terms of pay equity, we do promote, hire on competence. So if there's a woman manager and a man manager carrying out the same type of responsibilities, they get paid the same. And that's what the market dictates as well.

And as I said, we do a lot of . . . one of the third elements of what we do is train people for work elsewhere. In the past six weeks we lost . . . four of our people were recruited from other places in the system and elsewhere — at the University of Saskatchewan, IPSCO, SaskTel, and the Department of Health. It's part of what we do, is train people for work elsewhere.

But the men/women balance, it's a reflection of the source of people. And people going through university programs, more and more they are women. They're reflected in who's coming into the professional accounting training programs, articling programs, and they are coming into our organization and are extremely valuable and talented.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Mr. Strelieff. If I could get you to refer to page 23, under .57, where you were

mentioning rules and procedures that you followed to ensure the quality aspects of your work and advice.

One of the points interested me towards the bottom of the page where it mentions that you routinely make inquiries of your staff to ensure they comply with your objectivity standards. And I wonder if you could just sort of, perhaps detail that a little bit more as to how you go about determining objectivity on the part of your staff.

Mr. Streliaff: — Mr. Aldridge, one of the key things that we do is ask people that work with our office annually to set out issues that might impact their ability to carry out their job in an objective manner. And the main issue is, do they have parents, or spouses, or relatives that work in organizations that we actually audit. And if they do, please make sure we know that and we'll make sure that the work that they carry out doesn't involve those particular organizations. And being a small province, there's always examples of where there's parents, or spouses, or other relations — close relations — that work in organizations that we audit. And so we just make sure that in assigning responsibilities, they're not examining organizations . . . those kinds of organizations.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Mr. Streliaff. Do you have anyone else on the order paper at this point . . .

The Chair: — Mr. Renaud.

Mr. Aldridge: — I think what I'll do then, I'll leave my questions and comments at that for this morning, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Renaud: — Okay, Mr. Streliaff, I guess your office comments on government policy in regards to financial accountability and effective management.

Now I know, financial accountability, you have accountants on staff and that sort of thing. Effective management, I guess I'm wondering who in your office comments on effective management. I mean is it economists? Is it lawyers, teachers? I know you mentioned some of those that you have on staff. But who is it that in fact comments on effective management?

Mr. Streliaff: — So, Mr. Renaud, to define or to operationalize what you mean by effective management, things like does an organization have a contingency plan in the case of its information technology systems failing. I mean if we . . . that's part of our routine examinations. We'll go to an organization and say, are . . . is your IT (information technology) . . . are you using IT systems extensively? Are they electronic ones? Do you have a contingency plan in case there is a computer failure? That's an example of good management.

Now who in our office would carry out that kind of examination. We do have a lot of knowledge, skills, and experience in our office and training that allows us to examine that kind of an issue. Another issue would be, does the organization provide good performance reporting information to the Assembly. We think that's a good management practice. We also think that the internal information going to boards and senior management should also be strong.

I guess in general, the issues that we examine and report on

publicly, we make sure that we have the knowledge, skills, and experience to stand behind what we report publicly. And there's a lot of challenges along the way to make sure that that is the case. Remember we work with one of our stakeholders, our government officials, to make sure that what we'll examine, report, and conclude is credible on whatever topic that we're dealing with, which all relate to the management systems and practices used in place to manage the organization.

Now at the end of the day the reports to the Assembly are my reports. That's who's reporting, but I do have access to a valuable staff that has a lot of experience, knowledge, and skills. And that where we need more — for example, when the government introduced its many . . . the gaming initiatives, we had to go and get additional training to be able to examine that new activity.

Or when insurance or pension standards and practices change or get more complex, we have to make sure that our people who are responsible for examining those areas know how that business works, which is just constant. The government is involved in many, diverse businesses that require a lot of industry expertise as well as general management and financial accountability issues.

Mr. Renaud: — So what you're saying, like when you say effective management in the book here, you're talking of management . . . or tools, not really the actual management. Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Streliaff: — One question that I often get from legislators is — maybe this might relate to what you're getting at — is, does your organization assess value for money? And to me that means, does your organization assess whether a program, activity, service, is worthwhile. Well we don't. That's the legislators' responsibility.

Now we'll try to make sure that the organization itself has systems and practices in place to make sure they know what they're doing and why. But at the end of the day, whether something is worthwhile, that's the responsibility of the legislator. That's not our responsibility. And you won't see our office making comments on whether a program, service, or activity is worthwhile. We just won't do that.

Mr. Renaud: — I think that's basically what my question was. So your office doesn't comment on the actual effective management, only the systems.

Mr. Streliaff: — Systems and processes put in place by management to make sure that they're doing their job well.

Mr. Renaud: — Okay.

Mr. Streliaff: — And like, do they have a plan in place at the beginning of the year that's approved, that sets out what they're planning to do? During the year, do they get reports back? Here's what we planned to do both in terms of financial and levels of activity, and here's what we actually did. And if there are variances, those variances are coming to the attention of senior management and that there is some sort of response, where they . . . I mentioned the IT side.

We also get involved in, to a great extent, the types of reports that government officials and government organizations provide legislators. Because we want you to be able to make those kinds . . . the difficult assessment of whether something is worthwhile. And we would like . . . we try to encourage organizations to provide you that information.

But again, at the end of the day, the assessment of whether a program, activity, a service, is worthwhile, that's the elected representatives' responsibility.

Mr. Renaud: — Okay. In the 60 employees that you talk about, are the 15 to 20 students and the 35 professionals, that makes up the 60. It's not in addition to the 60?

Mr. Streliaff: — No. That's the main component of the 60.

Mr. Renaud: — Makes up the 60, okay. You talk about 50 per cent women, 50 per cent men, and that's very commendable. Is there a policy in regards to visible minorities and physically challenged?

Mr. Streliaff: — Good question. We don't have a target policy. We do include people in our office are . . . if they choose to categorize themselves in those kinds of categories, could, but we don't ask them to and we haven't targeted.

Mr. Renaud: — You don't comment on, say the people you audit, on that kind of policy?

Mr. Streliaff: — We have not.

Mr. Renaud: — Okay. And I guess page 43, the only . . . the last question, page 43, highways and transportation partnership fund. I see that partnership fund is just beginning and the amount of \$9,239 seems quite high.

Mr. Streliaff: — The 9,000 that we have there was the information we were given back in September, and the actual results when we finish that work, will be the reality.

Mr. Renaud: — No further questions.

The Chair: — Okay, I have another speaker but I think, as indicated to me that the questions are fairly lengthy; so I think today that we will return and continue next week on this discussion with the Provincial Auditor.

And we will notify members as quickly as we can of time and place, but I assure you it won't be Tuesday. It will probably be Wednesday or Thursday, depending on the logistics. So if it's all right, I would like a motion to adjourn today's proceedings. Thank you very much for your participation.

Mr. Streliaff: — Just one comment about rescheduling next week. We're tabling our spring report on Wednesday; so it gets tabled around 1:30 to 2, right in our . . .

The Chair: — Are you having a news conference in the morning?

Mr. Streliaff: — If possible, Thursday morning would be . . .

The Chair: — Okay, we'll work . . .

Mr. Streliaff: — But I can . . . If Wednesday morning is the only one that you can agree on, that's fine as well. But we had to prepare for that.

The Chair: — We'll work on Thursday then. Yes, we'll work on Thursday. Yes, we'll set up Thursday, and Wednesday is only if we have to.

The committee adjourned at 11:23 a.m.