



Standing Committee on Estimates

Hansard Verbatim Report

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Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

Twenty-fourth Legislature

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES
2001**

Graham Addley, Chair
Saskatoon Sutherland

Donna Harpauer, Vice-Chair
Watrous

Ron Harper
Regina Northeast

Carolyn Jones
Saskatoon Meewasin

Ken Krawetz
Canora-Pelly

Peter Prebble
Saskatoon Greystone

Milton Wakefield
Lloydminster

Daryl Wiberg
Saskatchewan Rivers

Kevin Yates
Regina Dewdney

The committee met at 10 09.

The Chair: — I call this meeting to order, the Standing Committee on Estimates. The agenda has been distributed and the committee's order of reference was agreed to by the Legislative Assembly on May 11, quote:

That the estimates for the Legislative Assembly, vote no. 21; the Provincial Auditor, vote 28; the Chief Electoral Officer, vote 34; the Information and Privacy Commissioner, vote 55; the Ombudsman and Children's Advocate, vote 56; the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, vote 47; as well as the supplementary estimates for the Legislative Assembly, vote 21, be withdrawn from the committee.

Our agenda is as follows: the estimates for the Ombudsman, and then the Children's Advocate, then the Provincial Auditor, and the Legislative Assembly. The Chief Electoral Officer, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, and the Conflict of Interest Commissioner are not available today, but we will be likely having a meeting next Thursday to deal with those items.

The Chair: — I welcome Mr. Speaker, Myron Kowalsky, as well as the Ombudsman Barb Tomkins. And if Mr. Speaker could introduce your officials?

The Speaker: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee. What I'd like to do is just give a brief overview of the way I see this committee functioning.

I'm here representing the Board of Internal Economy which has gone through and prepared these recommendations that you have before you in the Estimates. The Board of Internal Economy acts as the governing body, as it were, for the Legislative Assembly because it's sort of a parallel to a ministerial office in government.

However, because the Legislative Assembly serves the members as opposed . . . members of both sides, the Board of Internal Economy is made up of members on both sides of the Assembly, we need a process, the public needs a process for these types of budgets to be passed.

So the Board of Internal Economy then recommends what you'll be hearing today to the Estimates Committee, which in turn then will bring it to the legislature for approval. Compare that with what the minister does — is the minister of any particular department brings it to the Finance committee in the Assembly.

So it's important to note that this budget is not set by any cabinet minister or any cabinet department, but instead is set by the Board of Internal Economy. And by going through this process then, there is an accountability from the board through this committee to the legislature to the people of Saskatchewan.

We're going to start with the Provincial Ombudsman, and I have sitting beside me Barbara Tomkins, who is the Provincial Ombudsman; and the deputy ombudsman, Murray Knoll, on her left. And I'll turn it over to Ms. Tomkins at this time.

**General Revenue Fund
Ombudsman and Children's Advocate
Vote 56**

Subvote (OC01)

The Chair: — Before we begin, the first item is vote 56, which is on page 133 of the main Estimates book. Ms. Tomkins.

Ms. Tomkins: — Thank you, and good morning. I'm just going to give you a very brief summary of the budget from my office as it was approved and recommended by the Board of Internal Economy earlier this year.

Our budget request, which was approved for the 2001-2002 fiscal year, is a total of \$1,533,000. It's an increase of 3.8 per cent over the budget from the previous fiscal year. All of the increased monies relate to required salary increases for staff and an increase in our accommodation costs as a result of a necessary move of our Saskatoon office and a re-tendering of the lease for our Regina office, and the rates went up.

Within the remaining funds, which would be the allocation for 1999 . . . 2000-2001 — I'm sorry. For the last year the operating budget essentially remains the same, although we have reallocated some of those monies from some codes into salary codes to enable us to create one new position, which was discussed at the Board of Internal Economy, which would be effectively an office manager for our office. But no new or additional funds were required, requested, or allocated for that purpose.

I think I'll leave it at that and take your questions.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you for that. When you say the required salary increases, is this just a cost of living increase or is it due to the reclassification of the jobs?

Ms. Tomkins: — Well there are no reclassifications involved this year. But government requires on July 1 an increase for all out-of-scope staff, of which the vast majority of our staff — all but two — are. At the time of our budget submission, we did not know what that amount would be, but we're advised by PSC (Public Service Commission) that we should use a figure of 3 per cent and that's what we used.

And in addition some of our staff are allowed merit increases. And that was effective April 1 and that was built in. And those are required increases.

Ms. Harpauer: — How many staff do you have right now?

Ms. Tomkins: — There are 18 people working in my office — some are not full-time positions — plus myself.

Ms. Harpauer: — And will there be any reclassification in your office or not that you can foresee? It'll just be usual annual increases?

Ms. Tomkins: — I'm not aware that anyone's intending to request a reclassification but obviously that's . . . I could if I thought it appropriate request reclassification for any of my

staff. I don't see that. However, any of my staff can ask for a reclassification. I don't . . . I'm not aware that any are anticipating doing that, but I can't say they are or they aren't.

Ms. Harpauer: — Okay, thank you very much.

Ms. Tomkins: — Okay, thank you.

The Chair: — Any other questions?

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Welcome, Ms. Tomkins, this morning. You mentioned that there was some moving costs involved with the acquisition of a different office space in Saskatoon. Who are you leasing space from now in this new office?

Ms. Tomkins: — I'm not sure I can give you that accurately. Our space requirements are handled through SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation). The tenders are issued by SPMC; they're assessed by SPMC with some input and consultation with us. The owner of the building in which we rent space, I think it's T & T holdings — it's the same landlord we previously rented from in Saskatoon.

In Regina we also had to re-tender last year and remained in the same space with the same landlord.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you very much.

Ms. Tomkins: — Thank you.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a quick question to follow up on the staff, the staff. You said you had 18 staff members, not all full time. Could you give me an idea of how many are full time? How many are part-time? Does that ratio change throughout the year? Is it a stable ratio?

Ms. Tomkins: — It's stable. We have . . . of the 18 people, 16 hold full-time positions, one being our communications coordinator's position is three-quarters time and one complaints analyst position in our Saskatoon office is half-time.

Mr. Wakefield: — How does that compare with . . . This is a projection. Will this projection exist for the 2001-2002 as well?

Ms. Tomkins: — Do I anticipate those positions becoming full time or changing during the year?

Mr. Wakefield: — No, any change of ratio there, between full time and part-time.

Ms. Tomkins: — No, I don't anticipate any change. If I understand the question.

Mr. Wakefield: — Yes, and was that the same as it was for last year as well, the 1999-2000?

Ms. Tomkins: — Staff complement last year and right now is identical.

Mr. Wakefield: — About the same.

Ms. Tomkins: — Now we do anticipate, and this was discussed

with the board — I just want to make this clear because I'm not sure I understand your question — we do anticipate during this fiscal year, 2001-2002, there being an additional full-time position added to our office. So that next year there'll be 20 staff when you ask that question.

Mr. Wakefield: — Yes. Well I guess that's . . . I was wondering . . . I was trying to get a trend as to the number of staff in place for the last two years and the upcoming one.

Ms. Tomkins: — It's fairly stable.

Mr. Wakefield: — Could I ask another question, Mr. Chair? You have the Saskatoon office. How many different locations or different offices are there? Is there two?

Ms. Tomkins: — You make that sound like we have lots and it makes me envious. We have two — Regina and Saskatoon. But there is sure good argument for having more.

Mr. Wakefield: — I guess I was going to ask about the accessibility of the public. Can you serve the public adequately from those two offices, the two central offices?

Ms. Tomkins: — Adequately, yes, with one exception — we could serve them better with other locations. But certainly adequately.

And I haven't suggested and I'm not suggesting that additional offices be added to serve, with this exception: we do not, in my view, adequately serve residents of the far northern communities. Because when you don't have local offices — and obviously we can't have local offices in every community, north or south — we communicate by mail, by phone, fundamentally; a little bit by fax, a little bit by e-mail, but fundamentally mail and phone. And generally, it's satisfactory.

In the southern communities we very commonly and, certainly, when necessary go to your home. If we need to look at the lay of the land — for example, complaints about water drainage — we go out and look at your land, we take pictures of your land and, you know, put on the rubber boots and go out there. We also do that for northern complaints, although obviously it's a more expensive and time-consuming process to do that.

But the problem is more fundamental in the northern communities. Many of the people we deal with don't have telephones, often don't have fixed addresses or are moving frequently. And we far more often, with northern residents than southern residents, lose contact and thereby lose the ability to deal with their complaints.

I was, in fact, last week — yes, last week — in Ile-a-la-Crosse. Earlier this year we were at Beauval and La Loche. We intend over the course of the next six months to go to about eight other northern communities. And the purpose of those visits is to talk to those communities a little bit about what we do. But more importantly, to have them talk to us about how we could do it differently that would better assist them.

And I can alert you, as I alerted the Board of Internal Economy, that after we finish those discussions, I would not be at all surprised to hear me asking for some kind of assistance to

create perhaps offices or contacts or something to assist us to work differently in the North.

Mr. Wakefield: — Could I follow up with another one? The workload then that you're experiencing, is there an increase in workload? And could you give me an idea of maybe where the workload comes from in terms of regions? Where is most of the problems? Where do they appear mostly?

Ms. Tomkins: — Workload generally increases every year. Although the last few years the percentage of increase has reduced over some years when it was going up at 16 or 20 per cent per year five years ago; it's nowhere near that. In fact, this year I know — we were just working on our annual report statistics; we do a calendar year annual report — the annual report statistics for the year 2000 are only marginally higher than those for 1999 on complaints against government.

On the other hand, we also receive many complaints about agencies which are not provincial government agencies and we dedicate resources to those. We don't simply say to people that it's not our jurisdiction and we're not going to help them.

So whether it's against government or not, we do consider those complaints part of our workload because they are.

Taking the totals combined, in the year 2000 — you'll be the first people to hear these numbers — the total complaints to the office in the year 2000 was 4,307, of which 2,327 were within our jurisdiction, complaints against provincial government agencies; 1,980 were complaints that were not against provincial government agencies. Those might be complaints about the federal government, municipal government, commercial businesses. People phone us because they don't know who else to phone and we do our best to help them.

Mr. Yates: — I'd like to refer my questions to the 1,980 complaints that are not about agencies of government. What type of services would you provide to the people making those complaints? Would it be your referral service or would it be an investigative service? And how do you choose whether or not you would refer it, say if it was a federal government complaint, to an appropriate federal government agency or whether you'd investigate it?

Ms. Tomkins: — What we do with the complaints that are not against government differs depending on the complaint and depending on the complainant. However, we would not investigate any of them because we have no jurisdiction to do so.

What we will do if it's a complaint . . . if, for example, it was a complaint about a federal government program for which there is an appeal process in place, like UIC (Unemployment Insurance Commission) or CPP (Canada Pension Plan), we will have — we are actually a very good resource for complaint resources — we would give the person the name, address, and contact, and bit of advice on that process.

If it were a complaint — I'll use again the federal government as an example — about something for which there is no appeal and no complaint process in place, and there are phenomenal numbers of those in the federal government, we might actually

make inquiries of federal government agencies to find out who that person could talk to who might be able to help them.

We might arrange a meeting if it was local. We might go that far; depends who calls us. If it's someone who appears unsophisticated in working their way through those kinds of systems, we will go much further than if it's someone who does appear to have the skills that, if we simply gave them a name, they could take care of it.

So I can't say definitively this is what we do or don't do. Some would be simply saying you could try calling so-and-so, and others might require us to do a substantial amount of work.

Mr. Wiberg: — Mr. Chair . . . (inaudible) . . . stay on the issue of your work and responsibilities. Do you find that at times when complaints are brought to the office that you have the opportunity, or do you take the opportunity to allow citizens to maybe be taking those complaints . . . could be easier dealt with through their local MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) office?

Ms. Tomkins: — Often people who bring complaints to us have already been to their MLA. Not infrequently the MLA has sent them to our office. We have a role which is compatible with that of an MLA but which is different than that of an MLA.

What we do is done objectively — no offence to the MLA — in the sense that we don't start as the citizen's advocate or the government's advocate. We don't start with any preconceived notion.

We have the ability, unlike an MLA, to walk into a government office, open the file cabinet, and take the file out, and photocopy it. We don't have to ask people for information; we don't have to accept what people tell us. We can go and get it.

We also have the ability to go outside of government and require people to tell us what they know that's relevant to the complaint and provides documents they have that are relevant to the complaint.

So we have the ability to do an investigation that is different than an MLA investigation. The MLAs have access to procedures that are sometimes more efficient or more effective than ours for certain kinds of complaints. But what we do . . . as I say it's compatible, but it's fundamentally different.

So getting back to the beginning of your question, would we refer someone to an MLA. Very commonly where they bring us complaints that are about government policy, because that's not my job. I'm not an MLA. Government and the legislature fix policy and determine what programs there will be, and it's not my place to deal with that. And I will always refer those people to their MLAs.

And there will be other cases where we will suggest to people that they might want to . . . as I said, there are times when the MLA process might be more appropriate for a particular kind of complaint than ours, and we're quite willing to recognize that when it occurs.

The Chair: — If there's no further questions. Vote 56, (OC01) for the amount of \$1.533 million.

Subvote (OC01) agreed to.

The Chair: — Thank you very much, Ms. Tomkins.

The next item of business is the Children's Advocate which is Vote 56 (OC02) subvote.

Subvote (OC02)

The Chair: — Mr. Speaker, if you could introduce your officials.

The Speaker: — Mr. Chairman, I want to introduce Deborah Parker-Loewen who is our Children's Advocate, and I'll ask her to introduce the officials that are with her here today.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Good morning. With me are Glenda Cooney, the deputy children's advocate, and Bernie Rodier, our office administrator.

It's an honour for me to be here again to discuss the estimates for the Children's Advocate office for this year. Would you like me to just make a few opening remarks?

The Chair: — If you wish, yes, that would be helpful.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — I just have brief remarks. As I tabled my annual report for the year 2000 with you yesterday, I'm not going to review the activities and future goals of my office. The annual report provides you with those significant details.

I do want to just take a couple of minutes to describe the staff complement in my office. The staff in my office consists of myself as a legislatively appointed officer and 11 full-time equivalent staff; plus we occasionally have additional non-permanent people working with us on a casual basis.

We work together also with two committees — a Provincial Youth Delegation made up of young people from across the province who meet at our expense on a regular basis to offer information and advice to the office; and I also chair and we provide some funds to a provincial Child Death Advisory Committee, also made up of a wide variety of individuals. And so some of the funds that we utilize in our office in addition to . . . for our staff are for committee travel and some small honorariums.

As you'll see from the 2001-2002 estimates, we've requested \$1.118 million for this fiscal year. This represents a 3.3 per cent increase over our 2000-2001 estimate, for a total increase of \$36,000. Thirty thousand of those dollars will be applied to salary adjustments such as retroactive pay, employment equity adjustments, and annualized increases. And \$6,000 will be applied to our pro-rated . . . our portion, pro-rated with the Provincial Ombudsman, of the increased accommodation costs in our office.

You'll also note in the estimates that we intend to reallocate funds from the supplier and other payments category to salaries. We've been utilizing a vacancy in our office to assist with

hiring temporary staff who have helped us manage the increase in our individual advocacy work and to help conclude some of the child death files that we're involved with. We recently, as of May 1, filled that vacancy on a full-time basis and we also reallocated funds from our existing budget to hire one additional advocate.

So our intention is to prioritize advocacy work with northern Saskatchewan citizens and with First Nations children in the next couple of years, and these two additional individuals will assist in doing that.

We're also planning to increase the staff in our child death review team. We're currently exploring options on how we're going to do this as we need a research assistant, some information management, and some increased investigative staff.

The Youth Delegation coordinator role has also expanded, and we plan to have that young person working full time during the summer months while she's not attending school and then continuing working part time with us during the school term.

So as I mentioned, the salaries will be reallocated from our existing annualized budget. We didn't request additional funds with the exception of the 3.3 per cent increase for the . . . as I described earlier. So we've asked for a total of \$1.118 million.

So thank you, and I welcome your questions.

Ms. Harpauer: — Ms. Parker-Loewen, when you said the increase in salary was pay equity for the most part, then are the employees all within that program and we're no longer having to meet with pay equity, or not?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Just one sec. I'm just going clarify something with Bernie. One of our staff had an employment equity adjustment which had to do with the classification of the position. And the remaining of those funds were the regular annualized salary increases for our staff.

Ms. Harpauer: — So after this one employee, then you no longer have any other employees that you're thinking will be readjusted . . . or classified?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — We have one employee whose position was moved from an in-scope position to an out-of-scope position this year. So during this year we will be submitting that position description for classification in the out-of-scope plan.

And we don't at this time know what will happen with that because the Public Service Commission will make that determination. And it may mean that there would be some salary adjustment depending on how that position is classified.

We don't anticipate changing her job description particularly; it was just a shift in the scope.

Ms. Harpauer: — You said you were hoping to be able to employ a few more on your staff, but you haven't increased your budget for that at this point.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — That's true.

Ms. Harpauer: — So you're going to just try to work it within the boundaries you have?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Right. We're going to be reallocating our funds from our existing annualized dollars to cover the costs of those staff changes.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Any further questions?

Mr. Wakefield: — Just for clarification, could you tell me what you mean by annualized budget — your annualized dollars that you're saving or reallocating?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — I actually may not be completely correct on this but we're . . . The budget that we had approved from the previous year, I guess I'm . . . that's what I'm referring to as the annualized budget. So if the decision is to reduce that budget then that wouldn't be our annualized budget any longer. But at this point I guess that's what I was referring to.

Mr. Wakefield: — I think I understood your explanation of the full-time staff complement and you wanted to increase that a bit more. The overall budget is increased, as you indicated, about 3.3 per cent. But it shows the salary portion of the increase up to 20 or 21 per cent. Can you tell me again just why there's such a large salary increase within the 3.3 per cent budget increase?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — From the 2000-2001 budget, if you see last year, we had . . . the estimate is 411,000 applied to supplier and other payments. Those were funds that were utilized for a special project in the child and youth and care review and for the expansion and some of the relocation regarding our office. So we're going to reallocate those dollars into the salary codes.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you and, Mr. Chair, just maybe a follow-up question to that. The salary increases and the number of people that you have working has increased from 1999-2000 and on. But I've also noticed from your, from your report yesterday that you are . . . your officials are very involved and your department or your agency is very involved in the work that you're doing. It's a very comprehensive report; I was very impressed with it.

Some of the numbers and stats were quite disturbing, but the report was very comprehensive. So I suspect that your workload is not decreasing, it's probably increasing. Is that correct?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — I have a very hard-working, very dedicated staff and team, and we push very hard to fill our days. Our work is changing and increasing at the same time. The complexity, the detail, the emotional challenges with regards to the work that we do all compound to increase our workload in, not always just in numbers but also in terms of the type of work that we're engaged in.

So it's true that for a staff of 11, we do a lot of work, and I'm very proud of the staff that I work with.

Mr. Wakefield: — And maybe one more, Mr. Chair, if I could. You referred to a couple of committees that you — I don't know if it's formally or informally — convene. One is called . . . I think you referred to it as a Youth Delegation Committee. Can you tell me a little bit about that? Where these young people are . . . how they're recruited, where they come from, what they're able to offer?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — We have a group of young people called . . . they call themselves a provincial Youth Delegation. They first came together at the invitation of our office in 1998; 25 young people from all over the province — from the far North, Estevan, and points in-between. And they were recruited initially at our invitation. So they were young people we either knew or knew of.

Since that time we have recruited new young people as others have moved on to other things in their lives. And we did that through an active application process. So applications were sent to all of the schools, to youth organizations that we knew of, through departments like the Department of Social Services to the youth centres. We're trying to bring together a broad cross-section of young people from across the province who have many, many interests.

So these aren't just young people who are in care, but they represent a broad range of interests — for example, a young person involved in Students Against Drinking and Driving; a young person involved, very actively involved with 4-H; and young people who've had experience in young offender system; and a young person who's had experience living on the street.

So just a huge variety of young people with a great deal of passion and interest about making Saskatchewan a better place for youth.

And we fund their travel expenses, their accommodation expenses, and we provide them with a small, daily honorarium when they attend meetings. The steering committee which is composed of about 10 young people meet three, four, sometimes five times a year, and we've hired a youth to work in our office to coordinate really the activities of that group, and to keep the minutes, and to move forward on any recommendations.

The major project of the delegation this past year was to host, what was called a Mind the Gap conference. One of your colleagues, Ms. Harpauer, was in attendance at the adult portion of that. Young people spent the weekend coming up with a set of recommendations which they then presented to a group of adults on a Monday morning. And it was a very successful and wonderful event that these young people planned and implemented on their own with some adult-ally support.

We were excited about that. You can tell I can talk about this for a long time.

Mr. Wakefield: — That's sound very good. I appreciate that. And the other committee you referred to was the, I think, the Child Death Review Committee. Is that the correct word, the correct title?

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Child Death Advisory Committee.

That committee doesn't actually review any individual deaths. What we're looking at, in that committee, is how are child deaths generally reviewed in Saskatchewan? What can we do to improve how deaths are reviewed? What do we know about child deaths? And what can this committee do in terms of making recommendations to myself and the Chief Coroner which then myself and the Chief Coroner could take forward.

So they are an advisory committee to the Children's Advocate and the Chief Coroner's offices, and then we would take forward their advice in the work that we do around reviewing child deaths.

That committee is made up of representatives from several government departments — Justice, Health, Social Services, the Institute on Prevention of Handicaps, the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police), the Police Commission, several First Nations organizations and agencies, the Metis Nation, and of course, the Chief Coroner's office. And we have been meeting about twice a year to deliberate on various matters related to understanding and moving forward on reviewing of child deaths.

And we fund, through our office, the costs of the meeting and also we fund some travel and accommodation for the non-government committee members. We don't fund the government members obviously, but the non-government members we would provide them with travel and accommodation costs. And some training costs, we've allocated a bit of funding for that and hoping to, for example, to include some training in the upcoming year for the committee members.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Are there any final questions? Okay.

Subvote (OC02) agreed to.

The Chair: — Therefore it is:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty the twelve months ending March 31, 2002, the following sums:

For the Ombudsman and Children's Advocate in the amount..... \$2,651,000

Would someone please move that? I recognize Mr. Harper. Is that agreed?

Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Thank you, Ms. Parker-Loewen, and to your officials. I appreciate that.

**General Revenue Fund
Provincial Auditor
Vote 28**

Subvote (PA01)

The Chair: — All right, we will begin. I welcome Mr. Dennis Wendel, the Acting Provincial Auditor. And Mr. Speaker, if . . . the vote is 28, which is . . . and subvote (PA01) which is found

on page 135 of the Estimates book. And Mr. Speaker, if you would like to introduce your officials.

The Speaker: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee.

The Chair: — Dennis Wendel, didn't I? It's Fred Wendel. My apologies.

The Speaker: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to introduce to you our Provincial Auditor, Fred Wendel, who is seated right beside me, and then the principal for support services is Angele Borys. Seated behind us are Sandra Walker, manager of administration, and Heather Tomlin, assistant to the manager of administration. So I would turn the mike over to Mr. Wendel, our Provincial Auditor.

Mr. Wendel: — I have a brief presentation, Mr. Chair. Would I be all right to present that? Again, thank you for the opportunity to appear here this morning and talk to you about our 2002 business and financial plan. We provided you a copy of this plan earlier in the week.

We presented this plan to the Board of Internal Economy in January, this year. The board recommended the appropriation we requested that you are considering today. The board supported our plans for the last six years, and this committee has supported our plans for the last five years.

I'd also table an annual report on operations each year that explains and shows what we did compared to what we planned to do the previous year. And we tabled our 2000 annual report last June. And there's copy here if you want copies; I have some along. We'll be tabling our 2001 report in June again this year.

Each year we try to improve our plans and take into consideration the questions that are raised at the Board of Internal Economy and the Committee of Estimates to provide more information. We expect others to do the same.

In our reports we say a sound public accountability relationship consists of an agreed upon, reasonable plan, an annual report on operations the following year, and then a reasonable review of those annual reports. And we talk about accountability relationships more fully in appendix 3 of the plan.

The business plan sets out our operating plan, which is the results we plan to achieve; that's our goals and objectives. The plan also sets out our financial plan to achieve the results.

The first part of the plan explains what we do and why, as well as our financial proposal for this year, next year, and for the previous three years. We discuss the forces and trends that affect our work and our risks to achieving our objectives, and how we manage those risks.

In this part we also talk about our employees. The knowledge, skills, and abilities of our employees determine what we can do for the Assembly. We have about 60 people organized into five groups. At any time we have 30 to 35 professional accountants and 15 to 20 people training to become professional accountants.

Each year about five professionals leave the office. Many will go to government organizations. Each year we hire about five graduates from the two Saskatchewan universities to come to our office to train to become professional accountants.

Our employees on average are about 34 years old, and we have about the same number of female and male employees. I think we've now tipped the scales — we have more females than males.

Angele Borys, seated next to me, is responsible for our training and recruiting. Our training program has been reasonably successful over many years. In December, five of our eight students that wrote to become chartered accountants this year passed.

One of our measures of success is the percentage equalling or exceeding the percentage of the provincial pass rate. This year we had 62 per cent. Last year, 67 per cent. And the provincial pass rate is around 65 per cent. So we're just a little bit shy this year.

The second part of our plan is in appendix 1. In this part we provide detailed information and detailed work plans for several years. In this part we also include a report from the auditor that audits our office. The auditor's report provides you with assurance that our request for resources is reasonable to carry out our operating plan; that is our goals, objectives, and strategies as set out in appendix 1.

The third part of our plan is in appendix 2. In this part we provide answers to questions previously posed by members of this committee and the Board of Internal Economy. These are good questions and they should be asked of every organization to help you assess what the organizations are doing and what they are trying to achieve and how they are managing their operations.

The fourth part of our plan is in appendix 3, and this part responds to a request by the Board of Internal Economy to suggest how the board could obtain independent advice to assess our request for resources. And the advice had two parts.

The first part was the board should seek advice from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts because we work very closely with that committee and they should ask the members of the Public Accounts Committee as to whether or not what we're doing is relevant to what the Public Accounts Committee is doing.

A second part is they should receive a report from our auditor saying that our financial plan reasonably reflects our operating plan. And that was that auditor's report I talked to you about earlier.

On pages 5, 6, and 7 are a summary of our request for resources. We request an appropriation of 5.1 million for the year ended March 31, 2002. The request is about \$400,000 more than last year or about 9 per cent.

We face cost pressures for 2002 totalling \$540,000 or about eleven and a half per cent. We plan to absorb about 100 per cent . . . or 2 per cent of the costs related to these pressures, and I'll

explain some of those pressures to you now.

\$294,000 of our increased costs relates to the need to spend more of our resources auditing the government systems and practices of the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority, Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority, and the Workers' Compensation Board.

\$105,000 of our increased costs relates to changes in The Tabling of Documents Act. The Act requires government agencies to give their financial statements to the Assembly earlier each year; is to improve 30 days each year for the next few years. To ensure agencies can meet their deadlines, we need to do our work more timely.

\$66,000 of our increased costs relates to new government agencies created in 2001.

\$52,000 of our increased costs relates to providing our employees the same economic and salary adjustments and benefits that the government gave to other employees in the public sector in July, 2000.

\$25,000 of our increased costs relates to hosting the national conference of legislative auditors next September. This is a joint conference held with the Standing Committee on Public Accounts hosted by the Legislative Assembly Office.

As you can see the \$438,000 increase we are requesting relates to new work the office must carry out.

We continue to try and find better ways to carry out our work. For example, for the end of March 31, 1998 we had 62 employees to carry out our work. For 2002, we are forecasting we will need 59 employees. During the intervening four-year period the number of new agencies created by the government increased the amount of work our office is required to do. To carry out all these new audits would require about four more employees than in 1998.

For the last five years this committee has supported our office's request for resources and recommended the amount we've requested to carry out our work plan. The committee's support has allowed us to discharge our duties to the Legislative Assembly.

And that ends my presentation. If you have any questions, I'd be pleased to answer them.

The Chair: — Are there any questions for Mr. Fred Wendel? Mr. Krawetz?

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Wendel, on page 69 of your report you make reference to out-of-province travel and that it's been pretty consistent over the last number of years. Could you indicate what out-of-province travel occurs for . . . What particular functions are you or your people requested to attend?

Mr. Wendel: — As I was saying in my opening remarks, our ability to do our job depends on the knowledge, skills, and training of our people. And the government's in many specialized businesses and a lot of courses are not available in

Saskatchewan. We're in the business of gaming, insurance, pensions, health, justice . . . Many of the things we have to get training in, we have to go out of province for.

So, for example, there's a . . . We have two people training to become pension and insurance experts. Those courses are held in Toronto, and there's exams with that and they travel to Toronto to do that.

We have two conferences that the legislative auditors have each year. One in wintertime, one in the fall with the Public Accounts Committee — a joint conference. I'm required to travel to that and they usually have the assistant provincial auditor travel with me.

We serve on several study groups as legislative auditors. What legislative auditors have done is work together to come up with criteria for doing audits. So rather than each of us developing these things, we have small groups with three or four members from each . . . three or four jurisdictions with a member and we split up the work. And they go to these meetings once a year or twice a year to work together to come up with . . . So those are the kind of things we would have out-of-province travel for.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you. In your remarks you also noted that Saskatchewan is the host for a national conference this September. Has your office specifically allocated a budget amount that you would hope to have spent on this conference?

Mr. Wendel: — The budget amount I presented was \$25,000. That includes time for our staff and our out-of-pocket costs.

Mr. Krawetz: — Okay. And one final question, if I may, Mr. Chair. Your salaries and your employees that are listed, the comparison charts that you have on page 70, 71, and 72, I note that you've referenced the changes that have occurred to each by giving an explanation numbered 1 to 7 as to why changes took place.

How stable is this staff? And I note that you have numerous changes that are, I think, probably first year employees and after they're there for a period of time you adjust the salaries. I think those are coded no. 1.

How often do you have changes in your staff of 60-plus employees and counting on 59. What occurs with your staff component?

Mr. Wendel: — Well as I said in my opening remarks, generally we anticipate five people leaving or six people leaving each year and recruiting six new people. That's been going on for some years.

But this past year the economy and the jobs available to young people — even to some of our more senior people — has improved and there's a lot more opportunities. So in the last 12 months we've lost 12 professionals. So we're having some problems with getting our work out but we're determined to do so.

I'm going to be looking at salaries, or when the new Provincial Auditor comes, we'll have to look at our salaries again and see whether we're being competitive enough to keep our senior

people.

We also are facing in the next five years what a lot of organizations are going to be going through, which is succession. There's a lot of people that are around my age, I guess . . .

A Member: — The baby boomers.

Mr. Wendel: — The baby . . . well, I'm just ahead of them. I'm just a little ahead of those baby boomers.

So we're going to have to do some serious succession planning. We've begun that work. We're beginning to bring our 35- to 40-year-olds trying to bring them up to speed as we turn over to people that are 55 to 65. So that's going to be a problem for us too.

So at the moment, we're struggling with losing that many people, but we have a new crop of CAs (chartered accountant) coming up — they'll be writing this summer — and I hope we'll get to keep some of them.

Mr. Yates: — Yes, my questions also refer to salary increases. There's a number of reasons why salary increases go up in any particular organization on an annual basis. Do you see . . . There seems to be a fair number that are above what the market would have been in the last . . . or general increases would have been in the last number of years because of pressures, particularly in auditors and the financial field. Do you see that stabilizing in the long term? As, you know, the trends go in the employment of professionals, do you see this stabilizing out?

Mr. Wendel: — Mr. Chair, as I was saying, the salaries have gone up a great deal for professional auditors and accountants this last year, and it's shown just by the turnover we're getting. Like one of the people that left here as a senior person making \$82,000, he's gone for 15, almost \$16,000 more to go to Alberta, to the Auditor General's office there.

So I'm not sure what's going to happen. I'm going to watch it closely, and try and make sure that we hang on to some of these senior people. And we'll have to come back to the Board of Internal Economy or, I guess if the Bill before the legislature goes through, to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to discuss that this fall.

But what I can say, is we start our people at a salary that's generally below the public service salary for a graduate, Commerce or Administration person, and that's done to make sure that we're comparable to the private sector who are also out there competing with us for students to train as accountants.

But once they come to work for us, we have to increase their salaries fairly quickly as they . . . to respond to the marketplace in the public sector. Because they're out auditing at these organizations, they're valuable people to them, they have opportunities to go there, so we have to respond to those market pressures.

Mr. Yates: — Just one follow-up question and it really goes to the strategy of salaries. I'm wondering if you've done any analysis to see whether or not starting salaries, increasing them,

would in fact help retention of people and reduce changeover?

As you know, the fluctuations are quite extreme between the private and public sector at entry levels as you get graduates. But in order to retain the best graduates or the most promising, would we not be further ahead to start our employees a little higher?

Mr. Wendel: — At the moment we've been successful recruiting good students at the starting salaries we have. Our problem is once they've been with us a couple of years, three years, and they get their CA designation, their CMA (certified management accountant) designation, their CGA (certified general accountant) designation, they're very marketable.

And while we . . . you can see we give them large raises as they pass and move up, it still isn't enough to hold them in some cases. Like we still can't match the salary at all times. Nor should we at all times.

At the moment we're going through a period when there's lots of opportunities; at other times there's less opportunities and we don't have to provide those kind of increases. So it goes both ways.

Ms. Harpauer: — I noticed on page no. 71, there is an entry for Mr. Strelloff, the former provincial auditor. I'm assuming that this is probably a severance package that had been negotiated, and is this completed or are we looking at this for a few more ongoing years?

Mr. Wendel: — This matter was discussed at some length at the Public Accounts Committee last fall, dealing with the salary for the Provincial Auditor.

In the past, people that came on board as deputy ministers received a deferred salary. And they were entitled to two months of pay for each year of service, to a maximum of twelve months pay. So if you came on board before 1990 I think it was, that was the deputy minister's package.

In '91 or '92 there was a law that went through, rescinding those packages for people that were part of executive government. The Provincial Auditor's office was not part of the executive government so that Act did not apply to the Provincial Auditor.

So Mr. Strelloff had started before that date, so he was entitled to that package.

Now what's happened since then is the law before the House, is that if there are any packages like that in the future, the Provincial Auditor also wouldn't have this package. So it makes it the same, I guess, as the Crown employments contract.

I don't have this package, and the next Provincial Auditor will not have this package. So there is no further liability into the future; there's no further liability for this.

Ms. Harpauer: — How about for Mr. Strelloff, are we looking at paying more again this year, or no?

Mr. Wendel: — No. There's no further liability. Mr. Strelloff

has been paid in full.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Welcome, Fred, this morning. On page 48 we were just taking a look at the government organizations created in the year . . . fiscal year 2000-2001. And I see that there's a handful of companies, new companies here that as an auditor you're only looking at it's going to cost you a hundred bucks, really, to do an audit. Could you explain then, is there an audit done outside of the Provincial Auditor, and all you do is review that, and then that's as far as that goes?

Mr. Wendel: — There are several situations. In some cases there is also an appointed auditor involved, at which point we're . . . while we're still responsible, we work with that appointed auditor using a set of protocols that have been agreed to. In other cases we do the audits directly.

In the cases of some of these smaller files that's just essentially the cost of just setting up a file, there is an appointed auditor for those organizations, and we don't do a lot of work because some of them don't have a lot of activity.

So that's just our guess as to what's going to happen with that over the next year, okay. We set up a file; someone has to go look and make sure we follow it up. So they have some discussions with the auditor and with management to see how much activity there is, and if it begins to become active, then we will bring forward in our next business plan, a request for resources for that.

If there's . . . something happens during the year that comes at us, we have to absorb that.

The Chair: — Any final questions?

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Wendel. Part of your work is reviewing the audits of agencies that have been audited by other auditors. Is that an increasing workload for you, for your department?

I noticed in page 70 . . . no, page 67 of your business and financial plan, graph no. 3 shows an increase in the number of government agencies since 1992 — quite a staggering number — looks like they've increased almost 40 per cent in numbers in that period of time. So I would assume that that would put a stress on the auditing requirement. Can you comment on that?

Mr. Wendel: — I had talked briefly about that we keep looking for new ways to do things and we always are trying to innovate to find . . . to do the same amount of work or more work with less people; we try and do that as best you can. And when there's increases we also try and accommodate those.

We have several strategies for doing that. We follow a risk-based audit approach now. And what I mean by that is we look for the key risks that organizations have, and make sure that we're covering those key risks over an appropriate period. And that's allowed us to move to more of a rotational approach for the smaller district health boards that have an appointed auditor. Generally they all have the same kind of risks for the smaller boards.

And then what we've done is we've created an advisory committee made up of members from district health boards, like people that work for them, members of the boards of directors of the boards, and people from the Department of Health, and the appointed auditor community to see where we could best spend our time to move practice along to improve financial management practices in the district health boards.

We follow the same kind of approach for the community colleges but we haven't yet set up an advisory group on that. We're just getting started on that.

The other thing we've done is change our auditor approach to a top-down audit approach. And what I mean by that is we look at how the board is governing. We spent a lot of time on that and on senior management to make sure that they're managing these organizations well because they have the primary responsibility to do that. We do less detail work on the detailed controls that way.

And the other thing that's helping us to manage these things is information technology and new computer systems and so on. Like we can do some of our research on the Internet, share stuff with legislative auditors, and automate our audit files.

So those are things that are helping us to improve what we do. And those are the same things that public accounting or private accounting firms are going through, the same kind of growing.

So one of the things that impacts is our average salaries. We have a smaller, more highly paid staff. We have less work for the more junior staff. That's going to cause us some problems in the future as we try and bring in enough new people to staff the people that are leaving. So it's all kind of a balancing act, but that's kind of how we're trying to improve our practices.

Mr. Wakefield: — Maybe just a follow up. In the process, the changing process of your audit function from trying to ID (identification) risk and risk assessment, getting away from actual, you know, looking at the numbers and crunching them up, do you see any change in that direction? Do you see an acceleration away from the — I don't know — what I would call I guess the traditional accounting, in my understanding, to more of the risk assessment that you've already described and evaluating those risks on behalf of the legislature, and through them, the taxpayer? And will you be counting more heavily on independent audit firms of which you work with and review their results?

Mr. Wendel: — Well I don't know. We don't make the decision as to whether there's going to be an audit firm involved in the audit of a public agency. That decision's left to the executive government. So I don't know whether there'll be more work going to the private accounting firms or less in any particular year or any particular period of years.

At the moment there's some 95 or more organizations that have appointed auditors. Now one of the risks again we have when there are appointed auditors, is making sure we have enough knowledge of business to be able to report with confidence to the Assembly that we know what's going on there.

So as long as we keep the core of people we have at the

moment — our senior people — it isn't as large a concern as it will be when we start to lose some of those people with the corporate history that used to audit those organizations directly. So we'll have to go through some fairly extensive succession planning to make sure we keep that knowledge. But I don't know whether there'll be more or less.

The Chair: — Vote 28, (PA01) for the amount of 5,136,000, is that agreed? That is carried.

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2002 the following sums:

For Provincial Auditor..... \$5,136,000

Could I get a mover for that? Moved by Ms. Harpauer. Is that agreed? That is carried.

Thank you very much, Mr. Fred Wendel. And again I apologize for the brain fade.

Mr. Wendel: — ... the committee and Mr. Chair for your support.

The Chair: — Thank you very much.

Mr. Wendel: — And there is a Dennis Wendel, and he's actually married to Leslie Wendel who works in our office, and they're no relation.

The Chair: — Well I don't know him either. Thank you very much.

General Revenue Fund Legislative Assembly Vote 21

Subvote (LG01)

The Chair: — Okay. I invite Mr. Speaker to introduce his officials to deal with Vote 21, the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Members of the committee, I want to introduce a whole series of people who head various sections of the Legislative Assembly and provide services to members.

Starting right on my left is the Clerk of the legislature, Gwenn Ronyk. On my right is Greg Putz, who is the Deputy Clerk.

I just want to make sure I'm not missing ... Viktor Kaczowski, of course, who is seated beside you, is the Clerk Assistant. We have another Clerk Assistant who may be coming in later is Margaret Woods.

Our director of administration is Linda Kaminski, and Linda is right here. And the director for technology services, Guy Barnabe, seated against the wall. Clerk assistant for journals, Marilyn Kotylak. She is not here right now. Sitting beside our Clerk is the director of financial services, Marilyn Borowski. Our director of broadcast services is Gary Ward. Our director of visitor services is Lorraine deMontigny.

Legislative Council and Law Clerk, Ken Ring. Legislative Library, the librarian is Marian Powell, who is right on my right. In charge of security, our Sergeant-at-Arms, Patrick Shaw. And also Judy Brennan is here from the *Hansard* office. And from the Speaker's office, my assistant Margaret Kleisinger.

I think I got everybody.

What I'd like to do is just give a brief overview of some of the highlights I'm looking forward to this year, and also a list of upcoming pressures that I sort of foresee coming up over the next year or two.

One of the things that has just happened this week was the expansion of broadcasting of the legislative proceedings. It's expanded considerably. We are now available on Internet, and so if you have people in your home constituencies that are connected to Internet, they can hook into the Internet and see live proceedings of all proceedings that ordinarily could see on cable television or those television outlets it was available on.

I believe this to be the first . . . one of the first, if not the first, in video Internet hookups. They call this thing video streaming, I believe, is the technical name for it. But one of the possibilities into the future is to actually have that archived where you could look back several years from now and maybe see what you said and how you looked when you were saying it, as members in the legislature.

It's interesting to note that this is also available not just in Saskatchewan, but because it's on the Internet it's available to pretty well anybody who can find our Web site, worldwide, on the World Wide Web. These things will have a way of . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That's right, living onto posterity and reminding you of your past.

One other thing that we expect to be adding to this is the legislative channel now has the capability of going 24 hours a day, so we'll be looking for materials to put on it. The people are working on trying to get suitable PowerPoint biographies of MLAs of a sort of a standard pattern that would be suitable to put on there. And also be able to put on the education videos that have been produced for the legislature or about the legislature.

It's my intention to continue the education outreach, starting this fall, as been done by the two previous Speakers. The demand for this seems to be . . . from all things I can pick up, there's a lot of interest in it and the people in the schools would like to see the Speaker come out, do the visitations, so I intend to follow up with that this fall and then through the winter months.

The annual Social Science Teachers Institute which is . . . the third one has been held and the fourth will be held in the spring of 2002, is something that requires a lot of coordination that my staff does. And it's a coordination between the MLAs, the Department of Education, and we certainly do want to acknowledge the part that the department plays and that the MLAs play in supporting this initiative. But I think it's one of the very direct ways that we can get the work that legislators do for the people of Saskatchewan out into the general public,

through the teachers into the classrooms because teachers then become directly knowledgeable about it.

And quite often the teachers that you talked to who have gone through this will say that their perception of what elected members do has been fine-tuned to a considerable extent. And a lot were very impressed and having, in many cases, changing their opinions of what . . . because they see a bigger picture when they come.

I also want to pay tribute to the contribution that SCN (Saskatchewan Communications Network) has played to the Speakers. They do provide us with computers and resource materials and staff. So I'm quite enthused about the partnership that's between the Legislative Assembly here and the Department of Education and SCN to produce this.

One of the new items that's being introduced and it's reflected also in the budget increase is the legislative internship program. This will start on January 2 of the following year. There is a committee which the Speaker and the two caucus representatives are on — one from the opposition side, one from the government side — which will be developing the plans as to how the interns are going to be spending their time and when the switching point will be as they go from one caucus to the other. Mr. Addley and Mr. D'Autremont are your representatives on that.

The legislature of Saskatchewan and the MLAs continue to expand our outreach and professional development exchanges with other legislatures. We're continuing the partnership of parliaments with Germany exchanges. We had just yesterday a visit from l'APF, the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie who wish us to join and extend a partnership with that parliamentary group. Over the last few years we've expanded our partnership with the Midwest legislators in the United States of America, and this is proving to be quite beneficial I believe for all MLAs and through the MLAs, to the people of Saskatchewan.

I might mention that other than the CPA, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, our exchanges with these other partners is being funded through the Department — partially — of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs.

These partnerships go into . . . the ones with Germany and with the Midwest, our experience is they go into quite a lot of substantial issues as well as simply procedural issues. and it's quite valuable to have the involvement of people from Saskatchewan who are doing similar work to what the conference participants from the other countries are doing and to have those specialists there.

This fall we'll be hosting the Canadian parliamentary . . . Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Canadian regional seminar, so you'll see a budget item there which was a one-time every several years to absorb the cost of hosting this conference. We'll also be hosting the Public Accounts Committee conference this September. You heard the Provincial Auditor mention that they're involved in partly funding that as well.

What I see . . . also what's happened in this year was expanded

activity by committees and I can see that this, depending on what recommendations are adopted in the Rules Committee and presented to the legislature, I can see that there's a possibility of a necessity for more work from Clerks, the support staff, researchers to the committees, if committee structure continues to expand or changes in a way. There may be some offsets in terms of time saved in the Legislative Assembly itself, but this is one of the, I think would be one of the things that I'm looking forward to as being an adjustment that has to be made in this budget, in this department.

The internship program has only been paid for . . . we've only budgeted about \$41,000 for it this year, but on an annualized basis from now on, it will be around \$80,000 so the following year there will be an increase in there as well.

Members might notice that administration, the budget has increased considerably. That is really a way of making up for really what I believe was overworking some employees in the administrative department when we increased our services to constituency offices through directive 24. And in just . . . in order to keep up with the work, the Board of Internal Economy recommended additional staff, and we do now have that . . . we will have that staff budgeted for, and so that this service can be provided on a timely and accurate basis.

Of the other increases, there are increments, regular increments, and a cost-of-living allowances that every department is subject to and, by and large, pay equity . . . the pay equity provisions have been done . . . adjustments have been done and are reflected in this budget as well. So I think that . . . there won't be any more surprises of that type.

And in my own staff, the pressures are . . . depend very much on . . . terms of how many conferences we have to host, and what type of visitations we get. But it seems that the . . . every time the Speaker's office takes on a new function, there is a bit of an increased need for staffing, so that's something we might have to look at down the line — not this year but in a year or two from now.

So, I think I'll stop with that to allow opportunity for questions, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Were there any questions on what we've just heard?

Mr. Prebble: — I have one question. I just want to preface it by saying that how well served I feel by the services that we have in the Legislative Assembly. I feel that we're very well served as members.

I have a question with respect to the provision of coverage that we get in terms of cable networks and television — our placement on television networks around the province when the Assembly is being covered.

And I'm wondering whether more can be done to get appropriate placement for legislative channel coverage. And I just use my home city of Saskatoon as an example. It's not likely that many people are going to switch to channel 72 or 73 . . . or I think . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . 73 that we're on now. Yes, very few people are watching this on channel 73.

In comparison in Regina where we're kind of located in a part of a band that people use a lot, you know, I have 10 times as many people say they've been watching the proceedings in Regina or that they, you know, saw something that I said in Regina than they do in Saskatoon.

And I think we need to pay attention to where we're located on the band and not just getting a location on the band. Because we're paying for this, of course, and I think we need to . . . Now in some cases we may be getting it provided as a service. And maybe you can clarify that Gwenn, but wherever we are I think it's important that we're located in such a way that we're likely to be accessed as people move between what I say are the primary programming channels.

Because, quite frankly, a lot of people don't tune into the legislature. They catch the legislature as they move between other programming choices and they say, oh, that looks interesting, I'm going to watch this for 20 minutes. And they kind of stop and watch. And when we're located on channel 73, nobody happens to catch that as they move across the band. And I think, therefore, there is very, very little tuning in to the legislative channel in Saskatoon.

And this may be a problem in other communities as well, I don't know. But I think it's a problem that our staff really do need to examine and see if we can remedy. So I'm not meaning this as a criticism but just as something I feel needs some attention.

The Speaker: — Thank you, Mr. Prebble. This is a question I believe that was asked a year previous as well. And I want to ask Gary Ward, our director of media services, or of television services, to provide a response. Maybe you can just take this mike.

Mr. Ward: — The distribution that we pay for is for the transmission of our signal from here to SCN and SCN uplinks our signal to the satellite. But beyond that, we don't pay for anything. So the cable companies have no obligation whatsoever to even carry our signal and the placement of it is entirely up to them.

And regardless of my attempts . . . for instance, in Regina, which is an impaired channel that we're carried on. In other words the channel 2 is the CKCK off-air channel and that interferes with the signal in town. That's why it's so bad. I've been trying to get it off there since 1983 and they won't do it. That's their decision.

We figured in Saskatoon we were lucky to be up higher on the spectrum where we had a clear channel. And we would gladly take a channel 73 in Regina but they won't give us one.

Mr. Prebble: — Yes, Gary, I hear what you're saying. And in terms of clarity of the signal in Saskatoon, there's no problem. But we're located in a part of the band where rarely do you get people watching.

There's just a huge . . . I suspect — I don't this — but I suspect that there's a large discrepancy between viewership in Regina and viewership in Saskatoon.

Mr. Ward: — We could advertise the channel locations in each community. But the problem with that is that they have changed us several times in each community. So if you advertise channel 73 in Saskatoon, then they may change you to 74 at their whim — which they do.

The only way, the only way that you can get a reasonable channel in the lower part of the spectrum is have the CRTC (Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission) mandate that our signal be carried. And of course, I mean that's not all that easy to do. They just are not really interested in provincial politics.

Mr. Prebble: — I wonder whether we shouldn't look at that though? I wonder whether we shouldn't examine that? Because if we're serious about having the proceedings of the legislature understood by the public, then the location of these . . . where the signal is carried and where it is on the band is actually very relevant.

Like I said, I don't think people, I don't think the public so much tune . . . it's not like everybody turns their sets to question period everyday. But if they catch it as they're moving back and forwards between other mainstream programming, that's what I believe — just from my personal conversations with people now over 25 years — that's how people . . . that's how a lot . . . I believe that's how the majority of people actually watch the Assembly.

They are moving back and forwards between other programming choices and they say that looks interesting, I'm going to stop for a few minutes and watch this. Then they may watch it for an hour and a half.

So you have a certain kind of core group of listeners who watch on a regular basis and actually tune in. But I believe the majority of people who watch the Assembly do so to a degree by accident. It's sort of a spontaneous decision to stop and watch this. And if you're not located in a part of the . . . you know, in sort of the range of programming choices that people move back and forwards on, on their television sets, they don't catch that.

So as a result, people in Regina, I believe, are watching the proceedings far more than people in Saskatoon. And I don't believe it's based on the fact that there's just more interest in Regina — I don't think there's any less interest in Saskatoon — I think it relates to the location of the . . . where the programming choice is available on the band.

Mr. Ward: — And again, I think that the only solution to that would be to advertise. But as I say, you know, if you can convince the local cable company to confirm your channel and say they'll leave it there, then fine, advertising would be, you know, a reasonable solution.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. I have Mr. Yates and then Mr. Krawetz.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you. My question has to do with committees of the Legislative Assembly.

We are hosting next year, the Canadian Council of Public

Accounts Committee's conference here in the province and we've allowed \$66,000 for that. But has there been any consideration of the impact a new Standing Committee on Health Care will have on this section of the budget? And what, if any, plans do you have to accommodate that?

The Speaker: — For any new committees that are established in the legislature, by the legislature, the funding for that will have to be allocated through the Board of Internal Economy. So the board will have to have another meeting and authorize the spending.

Mr. Krawetz: — Two questions, first in response to Mr. Prebble's concern. I found that in my constituency and across the province, most of the people want to know the number of the channel.

And you've alluded to that, Gary, by saying, you know, whether you're carried on Image, wireless or whether you're on, North Eastern Cable or Cable Regina, there are channel numbers all over the place. Then you mix in CPAC (Cable Public Affairs Channel) and you're not sure whether it's channel 2 or channel 27 or 33 or 74.

And I find that people who want to watch the legislature channel, they phone to find out where the channel is. They're not channel surfing. The people in the afternoon know where their soaps are and they don't surf if they know what show they want to look at.

I think if we wanted to do a better job of having people understand what goes on in the legislature, it would be to advertise or to somehow educate the public as to where the channels are, what numbers are they in the various communities because that's the most common call. And they tune into CPAC and they say gee, you know, I don't think it was the Saskatchewan Legislature, you know. Surprise, surprise.

So I think that's . . . if we're going to do anything, I think it's just to make sure that people understand where the channel number is in the various communities.

But my question is dealing with the vote (LG03). With the renovation that occurred here at the legislature, we have a new barrier-free entrance. And I notice that the cost of commissionaire services is going to increase by 43,000. Is that because we need a new person to actually monitor that entrance?

The Speaker: — Yes, that's true.

Mr. Krawetz: — Okay. Thank you.

Ms. Harpauer: — I have two questions and they're totally unrelated. One has to do with, I believe, Mr. Kowalsky, you and I had talked about the possibility of the cameras going to the — can't think of the word here — the balconies in the case of introductions. Is that possible? Are we able to do that or have you looked into it or had a chance?

The Speaker: — Yes, we do have the technical capabilities of doing that, I know to the Speaker's gallery for sure, and I'm not sure about the eastern and western gallery . . . inaudible

interjection) . . . We do.

But the protocols that have been established are established through the Rules Committee on that and also informal discussions that I have with the House leaders on a weekly basis. And at this time what we've agreed is that if there are special guests that you would like to have the camera pan on, what we would like, anybody would like it, they come to the Speaker and the Speaker makes a request after agreement with the House leaders.

And the Speaker simply makes their request to Gary and we identify it ahead of time, and I think we had that happen twice — yesterday was one time and a previous time was when we had the Speaker from Inuvik come in.

However, there is a capability. So if the members, through their House leaders and through the Rules Committee, feel that that's something that they would like to add that feature during introduction of guests to pan on the group of students or on any guests that are introduced, it's possible. It's just a matter of us establishing a protocol on it.

Ms. Harpauer: — Okay, great. The other question has to do with committees of the Legislative Assembly. And this budget that is allocated for that area, is that dealing mainly with the two committees that we have at the present time which is the Tobacco Committee and the Committee to Study the Child Sex Trade?

The Speaker: — It's very difficult to sort of estimate what the committees are going to be costing ahead of time. So this reflects what we know will be needed. And that is for the Crown Corporations Committee, the Public Accounts Committee, operating of the Estimates Committee, and the Regulations Committee, and the standing committees that operate. But no, it does not include estimates for what might happen into the future.

In the case of the Tobacco Committee, I believe what happened there was . . . I'll ask Greg to just give the details on that.

Mr. Putz: — With the special committees, when they're established and there's time to put the estimates of what those committees will cost into the regular budget process, then they are included as part of this budget. When the committees come up and they miss the regular budget process — then that's as Mr. Speaker indicated with respect to Mr. Yates' question — then the estimate of costs because it will be additional cost to what the board has approved, will go back to the board for approval at that level.

With respect to the Tobacco Committee, it operated actually in a couple different fiscal years so part of it was new and the board approved it; the next year it was in the budget, the regular budget, and it was approved by the board in the regular fashion.

This year in this committee budget there was . . . it was anticipated that the Children's Abuse Committee would be operating into this fiscal year so some funds were allocated in this budget for that purpose. I'm not sure that it will be enough because they are meeting with . . . they are meeting more than we had anticipated. But in any event, some funds are in this

budget for that committee.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a comment and then one question.

The comment would be . . . and it's regarding the streaming of the television onto the Internet. I certainly appreciate the effort that was put forward to make this happen. Because as you know, in my part of the country, maybe in others as well, cable television is restricted to some of the towns. But certainly not my city of Lloydminster, cable is coming through the Alberta side. And we would probably never get a chance to get it into the city. So now we do.

And probably more importantly, many in the rural communities don't have access to cable television. They have access now to satellite dish and so on, which doesn't include our legislative . . . in many cases doesn't include the legislative broadcast. But now with the advent of high-speed Internet available almost everywhere and increasing, I think that's a very commendable thing and I appreciate it. I know we had a chat about, about that — Gary and I and you, Mr. Speaker — and thank you for the effort to make that happen. It's noticed already and it's only been I think a week, less than a week.

The question I had would be regarding the administration part, the (LG01). And there's a comment in here. I guess I'll just preface that by saying that whenever I'm asking questions about . . . When the Committee of Finance . . . One line that always keeps coming up and shows a steady increase each year and certainly it's explainable in most cases. But for a signal to the public looking at these estimates, the administration, which means kind of the internal control of what you have, is increasing virtually in every department. And this too is an increase. And you've covered the reasons for that and I think that's acceptable. The signal is kind of important.

The question I had is the item, the third bullet down on the page that you gave me, at least I have, and that's regarding the administration strategic plan which was 116,000 approved and 2.75 FTEs (full-time equivalents). Can you expand on that administration strategic plan — the approval of it?

The Speaker: — First of all what I'd like to do is return the compliment. Thank you very much for raising the issue of putting this on Internet ahead of time. And with your prompting and people in . . . and with the help of the Clerk and administration we were able to implement that sooner than waiting for the end of the budget cycle because we were able to find ways of funding it.

And I'm pleased it's on and I think it will help maybe fill the gap that Mr. Prebble referred to earlier. And I guess I would just encourage all MLAs to maybe if they have a newsletter going out, they list the Web site down and maybe . . . Because even from the Web site you'll be able to pick up what channel the televisions are broadcasted on. And I'll ask Linda Kaminski to respond to the question about strategic plan.

Ms. Kaminski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In regards to the strategic plan, what actually happened is last summer, summer of 2000, the administration branch worked with the Public Service Commission's management development centre, and

we looked at a reorganization and a strategic plan just for the branch, the administration branch.

And we modelled our strategic plan on government's new accountability framework. And within government's new accountability framework there are three components — the strategic planning, the performance management, and reporting.

So using that model, we in turn utilized it for our own purpose and did a review of our services that we are providing, the clients that we are serving, and determined that there was a need for additional staff resources to deal with the increased services and benefits that occurred over the last few years.

In addition to that, through our strategic plan, we identified a number of new initiatives that we want to initiate, particularly in the HR (human resources) area, with competency-based human resource management, performance management, and a number of other new initiatives.

So in order to deal with the increased clients and services that had been added to our branch in the course of the last number of years, as well as initiating some of the new projects with the strategic plan, it was identified that we needed additional staff resources. And we identified 2.75 FTEs — one new permanent position, as well as two new non-permanent positions, making up the 1.75 per cent.

I think the other comment I want to make as well is that the Legislative Assembly as a whole is also embarking on the strategic planning process for the entire organization, and we are planning to present our first overall organizational strategic plan to the Board of Internal Economy as part of our budget review meetings for next fall.

So we've initiated a small project in one branch because of a need for additional staff and resources, a new strategic focus, a new strategic direction being more focused on the future as opposed to reactionary. But that in turn has led to us looking then across the whole organization for the strategic planning process that other government departments have been doing for the last couple of years.

I hope that answers your question.

Ms. Ronyk: — Mr. Speaker, if I just might add, if I might add to that that our HR (human resources) and admin branch, does human resource services not only for the Legislative Assembly proper, but for members, for the caucuses, for constituency offices, and for the other independent House officers. So our branch does HR work for almost 400 individuals.

And that's part of . . . equivalent to a medium . . . small- to medium-size government department. So we feel that we're now at . . . once we get these new people in place and the learning curve is met, we should be able to operate on this basis at an adequate level. And we think we're at a fairly comparable size to . . . the equivalent size of organization in government.

Even though we still think we're more complicated than government because we have people that are . . . staff that are still in the public service, in the House officers' organizations. We have in-scope aligned, we have out-of-scope aligned

people. We have elected people and their staff; we have a lot of non-permanent employees because our sessional people are non-permanent. They're starting and stopping work two and three times a year. It's just a lot of paper work to . . . it's a lot more difficult than just a full-time employee that's here all the time and gets paid the same amount every month.

So we think we have a fairly complex HR demands but we feel that with the new plan in place, we know what we need to do, we know where we're going, we know what we need to get there; and we're feeling much more in control and comfortable with the resources that we have to do the job now.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. Are there any final questions? Okay, seeing none, Vote 21, administration (LG01) for the amount of \$2,049,000. Is that agreed?

Subvote (LG01) agreed to.

Subvotes (LG02), (LG03) agreed to.

The Chair: — (LG04) part of which is statutory, so the amount to be voted on is \$199,000 committees of the Legislative Assembly. Is that agreed?

(LG04) agreed to.

Subvotes (LG05) and (LG06) — Statutory.

Supplementary Estimates 2000-2001 General Revenue Fund Legislative Assembly Vote 21

Subvotes (LG01) and (LG03)

The Chair: — For the amount of \$71,000. Is that agreed? Agreed. That is carried.

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2002 the following sums:

For the Legislative Assembly..... 5,977,000

Could I have a mover please? Moved by Ms. Jones. Is that agreed? That is carried.

And for the supplementary estimates:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2001 the following sum:

For the Legislative Assembly..... 71,000

Could I have a mover for that? Mr. Harper. Is that agreed? That is carried.

Thank you very much, Mr. Kowalsky, and to your officials.

The items of business for the next meeting is the Conflict of Interest Commissioner for 122,000 and the Information and Privacy Commissioner for 105,000. As well the Chief Electoral Officer is a statutory vote so . . . There's a few minutes left in

the meeting. Are there going to be any questions with regards to those issues? If there are, we are scheduled to have a meeting next Thursday from 10 until 12. What is the wishes of the committee?

Okay, then I don't think we should vote them off. Then the next meeting is next Thursday in this room at 10 o'clock a.m.

If there's no final questions could I have a motion to adjourn? Moved by Mr. Prebble. All those in favour? That's carried. We are adjourned. Thank you very much.

The committee adjourned at 11:55.