



# **Standing Committee on Estimates**

## **Hansard Verbatim Report**

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES  
2003**

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 09:05.

**The Chair:** — Order. Call to order the Standing Committee on Estimates. Welcome everybody here. It's a beautiful day outside so I know we all want to be in a basement room here.

You have an agenda that is handed out or distributed. And I just wanted to inform members that the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the acting one, is out of the province and won't be here today. We do have Board of Internal Economy verbatim. We have an individual that can answer questions if required. We can pass it and then send letters for questioning if you wish, or we can schedule another meeting. But just to highlight that for members if they are interested.

I know we are pressed for time and that there are other engagements that we may want to slip out a little earlier than the scheduled 12 o'clock departure time, so we'll try to move forward as quickly as we can.

And I notice that Mr. Speaker is ready to go and it's his prerogative to do that, I guess. So we invite Mr. Speaker here, and if he wanted to introduce any officials if he wishes and if there's a very brief opening statement, if he wanted to.

**General Revenue Fund  
Conflict of Interest Commissioner  
Vote 57**

**Subvote (CC01)**

**The Speaker:** — Well good morning, committee members, Mr. Chairman. What I'd like to do is follow the process that as we go through each one of these independent officers, to introduce them in turn at that time because that's when I expect that the people will all be here for it.

And so at this time it is my pleasure to present to you the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, Gerald Gerrand, and ask him to come to the table. And, Mr. Gerrand, if you would make any remarks that you might wish to make and we'll proceed with the questioning and comments on your estimates.

**Mr. Gerrand:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, the budget of the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner is quite straightforward. It's submitted in an amount that is identical to the estimates of the previous year.

Some of the items within the budget have been slightly altered but the figures remain the same, and I invite you to give it favourable consideration. And I'll be pleased to attempt to answer any questions the members have.

**The Chair:** — All right. The first item before the committee is Conflict of Interest Commissioner, (CC01) on page 112 of the Estimates book. And I'll open the floor to any questions.

**Mr. Wakefield:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Commissioner, now that you have sole responsibility for conflict of interest, are you finding that has worked better for your timing and your ability to perform the job.

**Mr. Gerrand:** — Yes, yes. I'm able to devote myself entirely to that responsibility and fortunately there has been nothing out of the ordinary in the last 12 months that has required my attention. And I very much enjoyed my carrying out of the statutory duties.

**Mr. Wakefield:** — So does that mean that we'll get scrutinized more carefully?

**The Chair:** — Well one of us will.

**Mr. Gerrand:** — I've carried out my scrutiny for the year 2003 and the answer to your question likely depends on the identity of those that may return to the House next year.

**Mr. Wakefield:** — That's a good response, so I would like to say that the question was frivolous.

**Mr. Gerrand:** — Well I tried to make the answers equally frivolous.

**The Chair:** — I will call this meeting back to order. Thank you very much. Were there any other questions, frivolous or otherwise?

Okay. Seeing none, were there any final comments.

**Mr. Gerrand:** — No, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** — No, I see none. Okay. Conflict of Interest Commissioner, for the amount of \$122,000. Is that agreed?

That is carried.

Okay. Now could I have a mover for that? Mr. Krawetz moved that. Is that agreed? That is carried.

Subvote (CC01) agreed to.

Okay. The next item before the committee is the Provincial Auditor, Mr. Fred Wendel, and I'd like to . . .

Just a clarification, members, just to formalize the process for my comfort. What Mr. Krawetz moved is:

That there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2004 the following sums of \$122,000.

Okay, there we go. I was putting words in your mouth. I thought I did but I just wanted to clarify.

**General Revenue Fund  
Provincial Auditor  
Vote 28**

**Subvote (PA01)**

**The Speaker:** — Mr. Chairman, it's my pleasure to introduce the Provincial Auditor, seated beside me. That's Fred Wendel. And I would ask him to introduce his officials that he has with you and then to make any opening remarks.

**Mr. Wendel:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Chair. With me I have Brian Atkinson, the assistant provincial auditor. Over in the far left, Angèle Borys, who is principal, support services, and looks after all hiring and those kind of things. Sandy Walker, manager of administration, keeps the books. And Heather Tomlin, our data system administrator, keeps all the databases current and operating. And they've prepared most of the information that's in this business and financial plan.

So I have about three or four minutes of a prepared text that I'll just present and then open it up to any questions, if that's agreeable to you, Mr. Chair? Okay.

We sent you a copy of our business and financial plan earlier and the plan sets out a work plan as well as the financial resources that need to carry out that plan. We presented that plan to the Public Accounts Committee on December 17, 2002 and the Public Accounts Committee supported the appropriation that we requested that you're considering today.

Before I actually discuss the actual request for resources, I want to make the following remarks.

We said for many years that when legislators need certain information about our work plan and our financial plan to assess our request for resources . . . And we also say in our reports that legislators need to see information from all government agencies when they approve their estimates.

First legislators need to know that we're delivering the services that they need. A work plan needs to set out what we're planning to achieve in the way of services and our targets to monitor and report on what we actually achieve.

We encourage legislators to review the work plan and provide advice as to how we might improve what we're doing. Our work with the Public Accounts Committee and more recently with the Crown Corporations Committee helps us to gauge legislators' view in support of our work. As I said earlier, the Public Accounts Committee supports our work plan.

Second, legislators need to know whether our request for resources is reasonable to carry out our work plan. Page 36 of our business and financial plan contains a report from the auditor who audits our office. The auditor reports that our request for resources is reasonable to carry out our work plan.

Now we'll talk about our request for resources. Pages 5, 6, and 7 of the business plan are a summary of that request. It has two parts; we are requesting two appropriations.

The first appropriation is for the same purpose as in the past. It is our request for resources to audit government agencies during 2003-2004, based on what we know about the number of government agencies at October 31, 2002 and the state of their records. Our first appropriation that we request is \$5.405 million for the year ended March 31, 2004.

This request is \$26,000 more than last year or half of one per cent. We face cost pressures for 2004 totalling \$206,000 or about 3.8 per cent. We plan to absorb \$180,000 or about 3.3 per cent of those costs.

We explain on pages 5 and 6 the pressures that increased our costs for 2003: \$49,000 is the result of new government agencies that were created during 2002; \$157,000 was for increased costs to salaries and benefits, as we provided our employees the same benefits that other public sector employees received.

We continue to try to find new and better ways to do our work. For 2004 we plan to reduce our workforce from 59 to 57 positions. For the last six years we've gradually reduced our workforce from 63 positions to 57 positions. However this trend may not be sustainable because of recent events such as Enron.

Those events are increasing the work that auditors must do to comply with enhanced professional standards. At this time we have not asked for more resources for this increased work. We will assess the changes and will include any required increase in future financial plans.

Private sector auditors that audit government agencies are asking for fee increases of 7 to 10 per cent for the increased work. The *National Post* carried an article last December about increased fees. They interviewed a senior partner with PricewaterhouseCoopers. He said that their Canadian clients would see fee increases of about 15 per cent.

The second appropriation is a contingency appropriation, and the purpose of this appropriation is to provide resources for the office to respond to unplanned work, unplanned salary and benefit increases, and to improve the timeliness of our work.

Until 2001 we kept enough money on hand, equal to about one month's salary and benefit expenses, to respond to these matters. The changes to The Provincial Auditor Act requires to now pay the money we have to the General Revenue Fund at the end of the year and obtain a contingency appropriation.

We are requesting a contingency appropriation of \$350,000 for 2004. This amount represents about one month's salary and benefit expenses. If we use the contingency appropriation in 2004, we'll make a full report as to why we used the appropriation and the amount that we used in 2004 in our annual report.

In closing I want to say that the last seven years this committee has supported our request for resources and recommended the amount we requested to carry out our work plan. The committee's support has allowed us to discharge our duties to the Assembly.

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

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Mr. Wendel. Were there any questions? Page 122 of the Estimates book, (PA01). Any questions? Mr. Wakefield. It's not a frivolous question, is it?

**Mr. Wakefield:** — Well I hope not. I don't think it is.

Mr. Wendel, when I looked at some of the detail following your opening remarks, there was a cost of the work plan — detailed work plan — that was listed. And from 19 . . . I mean 2001, 2002, 2003, the number of hours that were included in this plan

kept increasing all along and I think you highlighted that. But I noticed that the costs, the actual costs for doing these work plan audits was going down.

But I also noticed as well, and I was looking in your report I think at the graph on page 85 of the business and financial plan, the number of government agencies has increased quite significantly over the last 10 years. So how is the work being accomplished?

**Mr. Wendel:** — Well we've done a number of things. We've moved to a risk-based audit and a top-down audit. Looking from the top, obviously we look to key in on the main risks of an organization, devote most of our time to that, and work from the top down looking . . . starting with the board of directors and working down. And if we have good controls at that level, we're able to reduce a lot of work. And so that's how we've been able to slowly move things forward.

I think if you read our public reports, we continually have a focus on governance and supervisory practices, trying to make sure agencies have those good governance practices and have identified the risks and are starting to put out how they're managing those risks. So getting people to have to publicly say what they're doing will cause them to manage better which then reduces our work. So that's . . . It's been a gradual process. That's been the thrust of the office for some time.

Now there is going to be increased work coming in to each of our auditors. They're going to have to do more work on detailed systems; they're going to have to do more work for fraud and error, those kind of concerns; have more communication with audit committees and other oversight bodies. So there is increased work coming. We're starting to do that and we'll have to see how that all plays out.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Two questions, Mr. Wendel. You indicated that under unforeseen expenses you're budgeting, or asking for an additional budget of 350 million . . . 350,000. Was there any such expenditure last year or was all 348,000 transferred back to the general revenue?

**Mr. Wendel:** — That amount was all transferred back or will be if it isn't already done, and a further \$27,000 was lapsed on our regular appropriation. Now when I met with the Public Accounts Committee in December I thought we would be using some of the special appropriation or the contingency appropriation. I wasn't able to get enough contractual help in and there's a shortage of skilled workers. We were trying to get . . . bring people in between December and March. We weren't able to get those people.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Okay.

**Mr. Wendel:** — We contract. We don't staff up for that extra work. We contract that out.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Yes, I recall that discussion with our Public Accounts Committee.

The other question. You reported in your report to that Public Accounts Committee, you indicated that there were a number of health districts that you audit on a regular basis by selecting . . .

I believe there were 10 that you did out of approximately 33. Now that the health districts have been reorganized and we're now looking at a much smaller number, do you still anticipating doing the same number — that is one-third of the approximate health districts — or are you still looking at doing 10, which is 10 out of 12?

**Mr. Wendel:** — I think for the plan that you're looking at today is to do all of them, at least for the near future, to see how, to make sure all the things come together well, okay, and the new systems are put in place and they're operating. Then we may step back and maybe go in a cyclical basis with them again like we did with the district health boards. Initially we'll be doing all of them for, certainly for 2004 and again . . . oh, for March 31, 2003 we're working on right now; we're doing all of them. And our plan is for 2004 to do all of them. And we'll have to see how it plays out after that. For 2005 it may be a smaller amount.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Clarify then for the year just ended, March 31, 2003, will there be an audit of two sets of health districts, or will there be only one in existence?

**Mr. Wendel:** — Well there'll be the wrap-up of the district health boards, and then there'll be the work on March 31, 2003 year-end for the regional health authorities. And they're just starting to bring the practices together; like they have to bring their administrative systems together and make sure they do all that. So it'll be a year or two before that's all together and, you know, they have human resource policies for the whole organization and all of those kind of things.

**Mr. Harper:** — Mr. Wendel, in your report you indicated that you have reduced the number of positions in your office. At one time it was 59, now reduced to 57. Did those occur as a result of vacancies not being filled, or was there actual layoffs to individuals?

**Mr. Wendel:** — We have a lot of turnover at our office and . . . usually six people a year, and that's just normal for the kind of business we're in. So it's vacancies. And I decided this year I wouldn't fill one of the . . . this year and part of last year, I wouldn't fill one of our senior positions, executive positions. And I'm trying to operate that way and I don't know if I'll be able to continue to do that, but . . . so there's one senior person less in the budget and we'll see how that again plays out then.

**Mr. Harper:** — You also indicated that if the workload continues as it has in the past that you might have to move from 57 positions and increase that. What do you anticipate in the next foreseeable future as a need in the number of positions that would have to be added?

**Mr. Wendel:** — I think I'd like to work through the new audit requirements for a good year, see what impact that's going to have on the office, and then come forward with a plan to you. I don't think I could give you that answer today.

So I gave you an indication of what's happened in the private sector, having to do more work in the control systems. I don't know what impact that's going to have on us yet. I'd like to take this year to work through that. If I find I'm short, I will possibly use some of that contingency appropriation for that.

**Mr. Harper:** — Okay. And a final question: who audits the Provincial Auditor?

**Mr. Wendel:** — It's called the Virtus Group. But when you're thinking of how we're held accountable, like we're held accountable in a lot of places. And so when we're finished our work, we have to go meet with senior management, the boards of directors; they challenge everything we do, as you can certainly appreciate.

Then we appear at public meetings with legislators and we're challenged at those meetings as to whether our recommendations are reasonable and our findings. And officials sit at this end of the table where I'm sitting today — I usually sit down there — and they get to challenge what we're saying in a public forum. So we're accountable in that way in what we do to make sure we, you know, we are doing it.

We're also accountable to our profession to follow professional standards where we're reviewed to make sure we're doing that. And there's an auditor — what is it, Virtus Group, LLP — they've audited our office. They audit many of the different financial statements. They do the same audit we're supposed to do under the law and report directly to the legislature as to whether we have good systems and practices to look after our money, whether or not we comply with the law, and whether our financial reports are reliable. So they have the same power that we've got. And we do receive those reports.

**Mr. Harper:** — Great. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** — Any further questions?

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes. I'm looking at page no. 94. And I notice, and it didn't happen in other years, you have planned hours for the Crown Investments Corporation of 725 but the actuals is only 37, which is a fairly drastic difference. Why?

**Mr. Wendel:** — So the Crown Investments Corporation would have a December 31 year-end and likely we hadn't done a lot of work other than to begin to do some planning by the date of this report. Like this is work as at a certain date, September 30. So we may not have . . .

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Okay, so there's work . . .

**Mr. Wendel:** — There would be work to do yet.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — There's work to be done. Okay, thank you.

**The Chair:** — Any final questions? Seeing none, Provincial Auditor (PA01), the estimated amount is 5.405 million but the statutory amount is included and so the amount to be voted is 5.277 million. Is that agreed under (PA01)? That is carried.

And unforeseen expenses (PA02) for the amount of \$350,000, is that agreed? That is carried. And this is the resolution I need a mover for:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2004 the following sum for Provincial Auditor, \$5,627,000.

Mr. Yates, is that agreed? That is carried. And that concludes the consideration of the Provincial Auditor's estimates. And thank you, Mr. Wendel.

**Mr. Wendel:** — I would like to thank the committee for their continued support and we'll continue to work hard to earn legislators' support. Thank you.

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

#### Subvote (OC01)

**The Chair:** — The next item before the committee is Ms. Barbara Tomkins, the Ombudsman. And that is . . . The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate are combined under vote 56 and that is page 120 of the Estimates book, but we'll proceed accordingly.

What I propose to do is do the (OC01) and then (OC02) and then do a combined resolution at the end. So thank you, Ms. Tomkins. And Mr. Speaker, if you wanted to introduce your . . .

**The Speaker:** — Yes. It's my pleasure, Mr. Chairman, to introduce to you and to the committee the Provincial Ombudsman, Barb Tomkins. And with her is her human resource and financial administrator, Lynne Fraser. And I would ask Ms. Tomkins to make any remarks she may want to at this time and then they can proceed with a question.

**Ms. Tomkins:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In terms of a budget for 2003 . . . or budget allocation for 2003-2004, our submission to the Board of Internal Economy was for an allocation of \$1.652 million. Instead, the board allocated us one million, five hundred and sixty-four dollars, a shortfall of approximately of \$87,000 from what we asked to what was allocated.

I thought I'd tell you a little bit about how we will manage with that shortfall. In the calendar year 2002, complaints from the public continued to rise by about 9 per cent. Total complaints received against government in 2002 is 2,647 — I'm sorry — and according to my document, that's an 11.5 per cent increase over 2001.

In addition, I ask you to note that total complaints to the office over the last five or six years have increased 36 per cent and we've had no increase in our resources for investigations during that period of time and we did not request an increase for 2003-2004.

I note that only, I think as I have for a number of years, to alert the Board of Internal Economy and this committee to the likelihood that that request will have to come. We cannot continue to manage increases of this nature with our existing resources. But we are going to do it again for 2003-2004.

In terms of our next power, which is the power to conduct own motion investigations, this was used on many occasions during the last year as it is every year, the most visible of which was our public report on the four adult correctional centres, titled *Locked Out*, that was released late in November. I think or certainly hope that that report shows what a small office like

ours can do with our resources when given the opportunity. Unfortunately those resources will be substantially reduced, if not eliminated, for 2003-2004.

Our next focus of work is alternative case resolution which provides an alternate means of resolving complaints — an alternative to an investigation in circumstances where an investigation would not necessarily be effective or appropriate. That work also has the effect of allowing us to more effectively manage the investigations that we do. It reduces the workload for the investigators and is a large part of how we've managed the 35-plus per cent increase without requesting additional resources. In terms of alternative case resolution, we also did not ask for any additional resources for 2003-2004.

In terms of public education and communications, as a result of our budget allocation for 2002-2003, our request or our budget allocation was a reduction from the year previous. The way that . . . A large part of the way that was managed was by eliminating our communications coordinator's position and resulted in the layoff of that person. That of course had a substantial impact on our abilities to pursue opportunities in public education, which is a statutory power that we have, during 2002-2003. And for reasons I'll explain, those opportunities will be further reduced in 2003-2004.

A major pressure on our office for 2003-2004 is that we have sound — and I think I'm challenged — advice that our computer system almost, I think the words basically, will crash during the next fiscal year and must be replaced. We had sought one-time funding to enable us to do that and that request was declined.

Given those circumstances, we face an arithmetic shortfall of \$87,000 for 2003-2004 over what we had requested. Our request was a status quo budget plus the one-time funding for the computer hardware.

In light of the allocation I thought you might be interested to know how we have managed that shortfall. First off, we have decided not to fill an existing investigations position. In light of the fact that the corrections review was completed fairly late in the fiscal year 2002-2003 and in light of budget uncertainty because it was around budget time, we did not fill the position when that work was completed. And the position remains vacant at this time. Therefore it remains on the books, so to speak, as an FT (full-time) allocated to the office but it is not filled.

We can manage that in a number of ways. We can leave it vacant and simply not undertake any major own motion investigations or if we saw the need to do that, we would obtain those resources by removing or allocating moving one of our regular investigators to the own motion position and not backfilling their position. That would have obvious implications for investigations that we do routinely.

I have resigned my position as president of Canadian Ombudsman Association because there are costs associated with that, although there are certainly benefits — profile for the office and, I think, for the province. I will, however, remain a member of that association.

I have resigned my positions as a member of the board of the international ombudsman association. I will also resign my membership in that organization.

We will . . . We have certain opportunities for this year that we do not want to miss. The main one is it appears very likely that information about our office could be included in the school curriculum at the grade 5 level, the grade 8 level, and/or the grade 10 level. This is something that I have proposed for a number of years and I'm quite excited at the possibility.

It will involve some allocation of resources, people, and money at the outset to develop suitable materials for school-age children and to develop a Web site suitable for school-age children. And, in fact, our Web site needs enhancing for any age of person.

We have decided that the opportunity is there in the long term; it is a cost-effective opportunity. It would be broad-based public education for a relatively small investment, although most of that investment would come at the front end. We will allocate our 2003-2004 resources, we believe, to enable us to take advantage of that opportunity.

We will have less ability than we had hoped to monitor the implementation of the corrections review recommendations, but we will have some resources allocated to that. And we had — and I've mentioned this in previous submissions — undertaken the study of service to the North, which is another project I'm particularly interested in to look at the needs of residents in northern communities from an office like ours and ways we could best serve those needs and service delivery models that might be more effective and more efficient when serving a smaller population in a large geographic area.

We completed that work using, of course, existing resources, late in 2002-2003, and have a number of options available to us. We intend to pursue enhanced service to northern communities, but that also may be affected by the budget pressures that we'll be facing this year.

We will proceed, however, with the hardware replacement, essentially because we have no choice and the advice we're receiving is that we have no opportunity to defer that.

Those would be my comments and I'd be pleased to answer your questions.

**The Chair:** — Thank you. Were there any . . . I'll open the floor to questions.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Good morning, Ms. Tomkins. You indicated that you had made your initial budget submission to the Board of Internal Economy. I'm wondering if, do you supply the Board of Internal Economy with a complete package of your office's operations regarding the people employed, the salary comparisons, etc., similar to what the Provincial Auditor does for the Public Accounts Committee?

The reason I'm asking is, the salary component that shows in vote (OC01) is about \$1.238 million and about another 200,000 on top of that is the operations. I'm thinking that would be the office operations?

**Ms. Tomkins:** — That's correct.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — So does the Board of Internal Economy receive a report from you that indicates the same kinds of information as to, you know, what employees leave, who joins you, how many there are, etc.?

**Ms. Tomkins:** — They don't receive a breakdown person by person, but certainly in terms of numbers of staff, that information is provided; salaries versus operations, that information is provided, yes.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — In that salary component then, how many full-time equivalents are in the provincial office?

**Ms. Tomkins:** — Right now there are 18.6, one of which, as I mentioned, is not filled and will not be filled.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Okay. And you indicated that the number of, I guess, I think you used the word complaints . . . the number of concerns that were raised from people in the province of Saskatchewan in the last fiscal year was how many?

**Ms. Tomkins:** — Number of complaints against government was 2,647. We also received, and I should have that number — yes, I do have that number, I'm sorry — about 1,928 complaints that are not against government, all of which require some expenditure of time and resources. We do try to help people who have complaints that we don't have jurisdiction over to refer them to somebody else, to in some cases make a connection for them and to give them some advice.

So I like to mention those because it's not . . . With 2,000 of those per year it's not an insignificant amount of work. It's not so little that we could ignore it. There is a fair bit of time and energy devoted to it.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Of the concerns raised both, you know, against government and not against government, what amount of time on average would be spent on a file that actually requires more than just the initial phone call or the initial response?

**Ms. Tomkins:** — The vast majority of our files are closed within 30 days, and often substantially less than that. But those that require the in-depth investigation, I could get you that number and I should have brought it with me. I just had it calculated for annual report purposes.

Do you have an annual report with you?

**A Member:** — . . . last year.

**Ms. Tomkins:** — I can give you last year's number. Actually I can't. Last year's number for the average time that files were open — but this is all files, not just those that required the most detailed investigation — was just over 30 days. That's an average.

When we get into the more detailed files, there is a very large range. All of our complaints, our investigations, I believe, are becoming more complicated — partly because the detailed investigations . . . because we are becoming much more

efficient at dealing with those that are less complicated more quickly and without the in-depth investigation.

Also just the nature of the work that government does and the involvement people have with government in many ways has become more complicated. So those numbers from my office and actually for all ombudsman offices are increasing.

But when you get into investigations where you're reviewing legislation and documents and files often this thick, and in addition trying to talk to . . . it could be 15 or 20 different people in government, private people, and third-party people, just the mechanics of getting everyone, of reaching everyone, people on holidays for two weeks, and that delays you and so on.

That investigation can take three to six months. And our target is three; we're well within six.

When we go further than that and we have to correspond with government or meet with government and try and persuade them to accept recommendations that we're making in some cases up through formal reports to ministers, that time gets extended.

It is not unusual to see a complaint that has been dealt with efficiently take 18 months to travel that entire route. And I think you'll find that that's true in every ombudsman office. It's just the nature of the work.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — My final question. Besides tracking a file for a length of time — as you indicated three to six months for, you know, more extensive work for 18 months — does your office actually track the number of hours that each of your staff members spends on a particular file to know that, you know, file 883 took 37 hours of work? Is that done?

**Ms. Tomkins:** — No, that's not something that we have tracked.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Okay. Thank you.

**Ms. Tomkins:** — We had an interesting exercise in the course of . . . or incident in the course of 2002-2003. We had . . . I can comment on this publicly. It's not a financial issue, it's an operational issue. We occasionally encounter situations where our office is in a position of conflict and we're quite challenged to figure out what to do with those files. We don't want to decline them, but finding an alternative to the last resort is a little bit difficult.

In any event the three that we had last year, curiously, were all handled in different ways. And one was dealt with by there being appointed an Acting Ombudsman to deal with that file. And the office therefore paid that person to do that work, and the time billed for us was the equivalent of 18 days.

**Mr. Yates:** — I have a number of questions. The increase that you're finding in requests or complaints against government, would that be common across the other ombudsman offices across the country as well, due to increased awareness and education about the role?

**Ms. Tomkins:** — No.

**Mr. Yates:** — Or is that unique here?

**Ms. Tomkins:** — And I don't know what this means, but in fact when the ombudsmen meet, which we do once a year, traditionally when I first started, certainly, and for many years after, everybody spoke of increasing complaints, increasing complaints. In the last year or two a number of offices — and I can't be precise about this but I would guess there are a third to a half — are finding their complaints are reducing, in one office quite substantially. And then you get into the discussion of, do they reduce because of lack of knowledge about the office?

We think that our work at public education does increase the number of complaints that come. I don't think increases the number of complaints that there are; I think that number is just out there. It's just who brings them to our office and who doesn't.

We may find out as our work in public education decreases over the next year or two, and then we may find out big time if we're able to work, able to manage to take advantage of this opportunity with the school curriculum. Then somewhere years hence we may see the impact of that. I don't see that obviously being an immediate impact but I see that having substantial long-term impact.

**Mr. Yates:** — My second question has to do with the coordination of complaints. It's fairly common that somebody that has an issue with a government department or agency will go to their MLA, and go to the Ombudsman, and go several different routes in trying to solve a particular concern they have.

The coordination of information between the various avenues that a person goes to get a complaint resolved — are there ways to improve that such that, as an example somebody comes to my office or to Ken's office, and we get the issue resolved and you may not be informed, and then you continue on doing, you know, work that's really a duplication or . . . until you get to the point where you find this result as well. Are there ways to better communicate and coordinate those efforts in order to help you and your efforts and save time?

**Ms. Tomkins:** — I certainly believe there are, but for different reasons than you suggest. I don't think that there are many cases where we are looking at a complaint at the same time that an MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) is. If the matter has been raised with an MLA and is proceeding through those channels, we will generally — I can't say always, but generally — defer until that process has been completed, or say to the person, look, take your pick; you can do it in either order or choose one or the other, but doing both at once just isn't an effective thing to do.

I'm sure it happens, but it doesn't happen if we know. And there certainly are people, as we all know, who know how to, quote "play the system" and have things going on in three or four different places and don't tell us, but it isn't a frequent occurrence.

On the other hand, I think there's room for a great deal better communication between the members of the Assembly and my

office. Being an ombudsman is a very unique . . . and the work that an ombudsman's office does is very unique. And I don't think, with no disrespect to anybody, that anybody really understands what we do except the people who do it. I thought I understood what an ombudsman did before I got there, and learned pretty quick that I don't. And I don't think there's any reason to expect that other people will.

The difficulty I encounter not infrequently, although not in massive numbers, is MLAs referring people to our office with complaints that we cannot deal with. And we're saying to them, well you need to talk to your MLA about that. It's a political question; it's a policy question; it's something where you're looking for legislative change. That's not our bailiwick. And they're saying to me, well my MLA told me that you would help me. This isn't particularly good for either our office or the MLA. We sort of all look like we don't know what we're doing.

So I think there's room for better communication there, whether by MLAs calling us first and saying, look, I have a constituent who has this kind of a problem — is that something you might be able to look at? And we can answer it up front and avoid referrals that don't make sense for us or for the complainant and that probably end up being more work for the MLA in the end as well.

I think there's room for communication the other way and I'm certainly willing to speak or to talk to MLAs of any . . . in any forum to talk about what we do and the kinds of things we do, and maybe more importantly what we don't do. And I think yes, there is room for communication there but, as I said, not necessarily because we're duplicating work at the same time. There are questions of when it's better to deal with the matter through the MLA's office versus our office as well that I could discuss with the MLAs if they're interested.

**Mr. Yates:** — One follow-up question. Well then based on that, there may be some role for when new MLAs are orientated for the role of perhaps the Ombudsman and the Children's Advocate to meet and lay out what their roles and responsibilities are so that they're, as they enter in that there's a greater awareness in how they can complement one another to deal with the problem.

Just as a heads-up maybe to the Speaker. In future, that might be a good . . .

**Ms. Tomkins:** — Actually we do that.

**Mr. Yates:** — Well I didn't have that particular . . .

**Ms. Tomkins:** — In the new members' orientation, I and the Children's Advocate each . . . Now it's not a lengthy presentation. But I think the problem is that people are bombarded with information. Certainly the new members are during that orientation time. And the problem comes two years later when a constituent calls and that information isn't uppermost in your mind or maybe isn't assimilated to the complaint.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — One little follow-up. In reference to Mr. Yates' comments about improved communication, what I found with working with the Ombudsman's office — and this is a

very recent example, in the last two weeks — is I, as an MLA, receive absolutely no communication from the Ombudsman's office because I've been told . . . I cannot be told whether it's being investigated, I cannot be told whether the file is open, I cannot be told whether the information was received. And I am in the dark as an MLA.

And I've raised that concern with one of your staff members. And I was told to get the person involved to call the 1-800 number at your office because there would be no communication with me.

So I think there is room for improved communications because the concern was raised by my office. There was a letter submitted to the Ombudsman's office on behalf of an individual — not by me but by another constituent — and I've been told nothing. You can't hear . . . I've been told because it's infringing on someone's privacy, therefore I cannot be even told if the information was received.

So there are some concerns that we as MLAs experience, not because we're saying you can . . . you know, we're telling people that you can be helped. I don't even know if this person can be helped, but I will not be told directly whether or not this is a file that you'll open.

**Ms. Tomkins:** — Was that a Regina file or a Saskatoon file?

**Mr. Krawetz:** — It is a file out of the Canora-Pelly constituency and it is dealing . . .

**Ms. Tomkins:** — Regina.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — . . . directly here.

**Ms. Tomkins:** — I'll speak to the person who I suspect you were having your conversation with. But I think there's some misunderstanding on perhaps both sides.

When an MLA or anybody else brings us a complaint on behalf of someone else — it's a third party to them, a third party's complaint — by law we will not and cannot discuss that complaint with any third party. And the MLA is a third party to the complaint.

For exactly the same reason, I got a call yesterday from the *Leader-Post* who said, I'm talking to a fellow; he says he brought a complaint to your office. He has a letter from your office saying, we have your complaint, we're investigating it. Now would you like to talk to me about this? And I say no, and I will not confirm that we have the complaint and I will not confirm that we're investigating it. You can certainly rely on the information, as a media person, that you have. The person has a letter from us and it appears to be genuine. Go with it. I'm not going to deny it. But I, by law, like every ombudsman, must work in confidence.

Now if a constituent gives us permission to discuss it with you, we will. And that's no different than when a mom phones on behalf of their child or vice versa, we will not and cannot discuss the fact of the complaint, the fact of the investigation, or the details of that with any other person.

But what should happen and normally does — and I hope other MLAs will say this has because I know I've been involved recently in one where exactly that happened — where we will call or write and say, you know, thanks for referring this; because of these provisions we won't be able to discuss it directly with you, however your constituent certainly can discuss it with you and tell you what's going on and what we've told them.

The information isn't secret in the sense that the complainant can't tell you. The information's confidential statutorily in the sense that my office can't tell you without the complainant's consent. And you should have been advised of that and I'll clarify that in the office.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — No, definitely that was explained to me. My concern is, though, that as an MLA I don't even know if your office has received the file.

**Ms. Tomkins:** — That we could confirm to you and I'm surprised . . .

**Mr. Krawetz:** — I understand fully that the, you know, the confidentiality of the complaint and I'm not wanting to know that. I'm wanting to know if the office received the letter that was supposedly mailed of which I had a copy. I was told that cannot even be told to me. So it leaves me in the dark a little bit.

**Ms. Tomkins:** — I think that's correct, though. If you send me a letter or make a phone call saying, I have a constituent; this is his problem — you attach all their documents — I will acknowledge to you that I received your letter. And I will say, I now need to talk to your constituent; would you ask him to call me? Or I might write to him and say, Mr. Krawetz has referred information to me; would you call us? Or I might phone him, whatever. But no, I'm not going to tell you if he ever phoned me back. I cannot. He can.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Then I would reiterate what Mr. Yates said around orientation. And that should be made very, very clear to MLAs, both, you know, veterans and new people that come on board that this is the procedure.

**Ms. Tomkins:** — Yes, yes.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — And I know your presentation in orientation is relatively short but you need to have . . .

**Ms. Tomkins:** — . . . explain that.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — . . . that clear explanation so that MLAs all understand the method that will be followed.

**Ms. Tomkins:** — And I'd like to reiterate this is a legal requirement. It is true of all ombudsmen and we don't have time to get into this whole philosophical discussion about why that has to be, that it does have to be.

And in that context an MLA is not different than any other person who brings a complaint. We have people who come with support people, with parents, with relatives, whatever. It's the same thing.

**The Chair:** — I appreciate that. Our time is getting short and this is an interesting discussion but I think it can be held at a different venue.

Were there any final questions on this? Okay, we'll proceed then. (OC01), the amount of \$1.564 million . . . Some of that is statutory so the amount to be voted is \$1.436 million. Is that agreed? That is carried.

Subvote (OC01) agreed to.

We will then move on to the Children's Advocate, do that subvote and then do the final resolution. And just thank you, Ms. Tomkins, for being here today.

**Ms. Tomkins:** — Thank you.

#### Subvote (OC02)

**The Chair:** — And the next item is the Children's Advocate, Deborah Parker-Loewen. The next item is (OC02) found on page 120 of the Estimates book. And I would invite Mr. Speaker to introduce the officials.

**The Speaker:** — With us right now I would . . . It's my pleasure to introduce Deborah Parker-Loewen, who is the Children's Advocate. Seated beside her is Caroline Sookocheff, who is the administrative assistant; and behind in the chair is Glenda Cooney, the deputy children's advocate.

Welcome to Deborah Parker-Loewen and I ask her to make any remarks she may want to make at this time, and then we'll proceed to questions.

**The Chair:** — If you have any brief comments that's fine or we can go directly to questions, whichever you wish.

**Ms. Parker-Loewen:** — I'll make a couple of brief introductory remarks. Good morning. Thank you very much. It's again a privilege to appear here.

You're all familiar with the work of our office and I'm sure you've seen our 2002 annual report which I tabled in the Assembly in April.

We continue to be pressured to achieve our objectives within our allocated resources, and I guess I'd just like to once again on the record take the opportunity to thank my staff for all the hard work they do each year in our office.

I think it's always a challenge to manage what we have set out as our objectives within the resources that we have available to us. And they work very hard with and for the children of our province. I just wanted to, on the record, thank them.

The estimate forwarded to you is a total of 1.207 million with 1.079 million to be voted on this morning, the remainder being statutory. The increase to our appropriation represents a \$22,000 increase for annualized salary increases from our last year's appropriation and a one-time funding increase of \$67,000, which we're using for additional resources — personnel and others for our child death review work.

The annual report detailed the strategic plan for our office and the advocacy activities that we've prioritized to meet the objectives identified in our strategic plan. I won't go through that. I think we . . . just to say that we continue to respond to requests for individual advocacy assistance from parents. About half of our calls actually come from parents, about a quarter from young people themselves, and the other quarter come from a variety of citizens — professionals, yourselves, and other community advocates for children.

We continue to review a small number of child deaths each year and we're involved in a number of systemic and community-based advocacy activities. This past year we, while managing our core advocacy work, we were also challenged to get prepared for the introduction of the Youth Criminal Justice Act, which the federal government introduced April 1, 2003. So there's a lot of preparatory work for that.

We completed a major investigation of a situation where a small child was assaulted. And we continue to work and support youth engagement in the province through a number of youth involvement kinds of activities — particularly excited to see the real development of the Saskatchewan Youth in Care and Custody Network in our province. It's a real positive change from the last three or four years and that's a big plus.

And we launched a Web site that has a child- and youth-friendly component on it, including some games and activities that young people would be able to access to gain a better understanding of our work.

So just with those brief remarks, I would welcome your questions.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much for those opening remarks. And I'll open the floor.

**Mr. Wakefield:** — Yes, good morning. And my question would be about the number of FTEs (full-time equivalents) that is in your jurisdiction. Could you explain that a bit?

**Ms. Parker-Loewen:** — In our 2002-2003 budget, we had 11.85 full-time equivalents. And that's what we have again this year with the exception that we have funds for one more full-time FTE (full-time equivalents), which would get us to 12.85, just about 13 folks actually. There's a few more people because we have some part-time folks. And we're just in the process of hiring into that non-perm position to assist us with the investigative work.

The challenge with that of course is that it takes a while to hire someone, it takes a while to train them, and the funding ends at the end of March. So we're really challenged about how we're going to manage that particular piece and make the use of the funds meaningful.

**Mr. Wakefield:** — Just to follow up, then. Under the salaries column of 906,000 for 2003-04, does that take into account a projection for one more, one more person?

**Ms. Parker-Loewen:** — Are you looking at what was in the Estimates book?

**Mr. Wakefield:** — Yes, sorry, on page 120.

**Ms. Parker-Loewen:** — The 906,000, sorry? Is that correct?

**Mr. Wakefield:** — Yes, that's the one.

**Ms. Parker-Loewen:** — Yes, that does take into account for the one-time funding for the additional position.

**Mr. Wakefield:** — The 12.85 plus increases for the year.

**Ms. Parker-Loewen:** — Yes, for the regular staff of 22,000, right — plus, plus my salary is included in that, which is the statutory amount. No?

**Mr. Wakefield:** — I think it's included in that.

**Ms. Parker-Loewen:** — I think it's included in the total under the expenditure by type, salaries. Sorry.

**The Chair:** — Any other questions?

**Mr. Prebble:** — First of all I just want to, on behalf of government members, thank you for the work you do.

**The Chair:** — Could you get closer to the microphone.

**Mr. Prebble:** — Oh, I'm sorry. And in addition to that just say, just to ask if you have any observations about what the effect of the legislation that's been passed over the past two years, I guess it has been now, in terms of the children on the street who are impacted by sexual exploitation? Through your observations around the province and your own work in this field, have you got any observations about what the effectiveness of the measures that have been introduced to date has been?

**Ms. Parker-Loewen:** — Well we've been keeping an eye on that. It's difficult to sort of pull out that particular information specifically because the numbers of children coming into care have risen, although not dramatically. In Saskatchewan the numbers are relatively stable; there's been a small increase. There's been more of an increase of the numbers of children coming into care with First Nations agencies. So that would be one way to keep an eye on it, if you will.

But to actually know what the direct impact of that particular piece of legislation is, I think it's difficult to say. But my understanding is government is doing an evaluation and hopefully we will all have a better understanding of that.

We're also interested in the next year or so to keep an eye on what the impact of the new legislation introduced this year on kinship care and extended family care is going to be on the numbers of children coming into foster care which of course is . . . There's always the balance of wanting to make sure the children are safe while also, as much as possible, living in the context of their families. So that'll be an important element to keep an eye on as well. They're tough questions to figure out how to keep an . . . how to watch.

And I know the department is also wondering what are the outcome measurements that would make sense here without implying that we want to stop children from coming into care at

the risk of having them not come into care and stay in unsafe situations. So it's a tough balance, I think.

**Mr. Prebble:** — Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** — Members, are there any final questions? Seeing none, Children's Advocate, (OC02), in the amount of \$1.207 million, which includes statutory amounts so the amount to be voted is \$1.079 million. Is this agreed? That is carried.

Subvote (OC02) agreed to.

And then we will do the resolution which combines the Ombudsman and Children's Advocate:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2004 the following sum, for Ombudsman and Children's Advocate the amount of \$2,515,000.

Can I have a mover for that? Mr. Prebble. Is that agreed? That is carried.

And thank you very much, Ms. Parker-Loewen and Ms. Sookocheff, and thanks for coming.

The next item before the committee is the Chief Electoral Officer. I invite Mr. Speaker to introduce his officials and this is on page 110 of the Estimates book.

### **General Revenue Fund Chief Electoral Officer Vote 34**

#### **Subvote (CE01)**

**The Speaker:** — Thank you, members, Mr. Chairman. Next item being the budget of the Chief Electoral Officer. Before you is Jan Baker, who is our Chief Electoral Officer, ready for taking some time off, I guess, from preparing for an election. Welcome, Jan.

**Ms. Baker:** — Thank you. Good morning. I'm pleased to be here today to provide background as to the office's 2003-04 budgetary estimates. I would like however to take this opportunity before turning to a discussion of the office's expenditure estimates to make a couple of very brief comments.

As you are familiar, the office undertakes its mandate to protect and extend the province's rich democratic heritage. In this regard the achievements of past years would not have been possible without the continued support and dedicated efforts of the province's election officials, registered political parties, candidates, and Election Saskatchewan staff. I extend my sincerest appreciation for their commitment to the advancement of democracy in Saskatchewan.

As with the office's previous budget submissions, expenditure estimates are presented in accordance with the office's function in base-year and non-base-year format. Specifically, the base-year estimates comprise expenditure forecasts associated with the office's annual operational activities, administration of the political contributions tax credit system, and to propose new

office initiatives. The non-base-year estimates include potential annual electoral-related activities.

If in fact the province were to experience one or more of the non-base-year electoral activities, their associated expenditures would have to be included with the office's base-year estimates.

The office's funding request for fiscal year 2003-04 is the critical funding request in the election cycle and coincides with the 10-year interval of the establishment of a Constituency Boundaries Commission.

General election preparations must be complete in 2003-04 which will mark the commencement of the fourth year of the current Legislative Assembly. Additional funding is necessary to enable the office to fulfill its mandate in the manner that was intended, and directly relates to provisional salaries, appointment . . . (inaudible) . . . and constituency returning officers, and mapping requirements.

As noted, funding for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer is based on statutory provision. On February 26, 2003 the Board of Internal Economy approved for expenditures associated with the office's base-year functions an allocation of 811,000 for fiscal year 2003-04. This current expenditure estimate reflects a zero per cent increase from that which was approved in year 2002-03. I'd be pleased to answer any specific questions you may have regarding the office's budget submission.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Ms. Baker. And I'll open the floor to any questions.

**Mr. Wakefield:** — Good morning, Ms. Baker. Just again, how many FTEs are involved in the salaries line there?

**Ms. Baker:** — Five.

**Mr. Prebble:** — I have a question and that is with respect to the enumeration. Can you just tell us what the expectation of your office is with respect to the visitation of persons during an election campaign to ensure that they're registered for voting purposes?

**Ms. Baker:** — Certainly traditionally enumeration has been viewed as a interface with the electorate; a way of informing the electorate that an election is in progress. And we still . . . The Act still provides for an enumeration of each electorate prior to each electoral event.

I am not sure whether you are aware, there is provision in The Election Act to do an enumeration outside of a writ of election for preparation for a forthcoming election. That would have to be . . . An application would have to be developed by regulation.

Certainly jurisdictions — the national registry, the Elections British Columbia with the continuous list, Ontario has adopted the national registry — are no longer doing enumerations. However they are continuing to use our enumerations for verification purposes, etc.

The office has not . . . I believe that there is a point where we are going to have to consider not doing an enumeration specific

to each electoral event. However the office has not experienced some of the traditional problems that other jurisdictions have had with respect of having difficulty getting competent election officials.

I'm of the view that whether you participate on the administrative side, the campaign side, you are participating. It is primarily volunteer based. We do employ a number of individuals, I believe approximately 10,000 across the province, who are not traditionally in the workplace because they choose to be involved with the democratic process.

**The Chair:** — Any final questions?

**Mr. Prebble:** — I have a follow-up question because it would concern me a great deal — I'm just speaking for myself here — but it would concern me a great deal if we were to give any consideration to the idea of no enumeration. That would concern me greatly, just by way of feedback.

And I guess my specific question is, is there an expectation that someone will be visited on a minimum number of occasions, like two occasions or three occasions, before they're invited to simply call if they want to get registered? Is there a policy in this regard?

**Ms. Baker:** — Absolutely. There is the initial visit. And we request all enumerators to do, at a very minimum, two callbacks. We also have . . .

**Mr. Prebble:** — So three contacts altogether?

**Ms. Baker:** — There are three contacts. We also have that documented on forms carried with enumerators so that we can verify, once the enumeration period has closed, for purposes of revision or inquiry made to the . . . directly to the returning officer's office.

**Mr. Prebble:** — That's very good. No, that's good to know that we're looking at three because I think my experience — now having been involved in elections for 25 years — is that the effectiveness of an enumeration is very important in terms of determining whether or not people actually participate in the election or not, very important.

I think it surprised me actually. You know, I underestimated how important it was in my earlier years in politics. And I've now realized that it's extremely important in terms of determining participation.

And therefore I would be a big supporter of continuing an enumeration during election campaigns because I think it's quite fundamental to ensuring that people feel that they have the right to participate in the process. And often if people haven't been enumerated, they're quite reticent about going to the polls even though of course they have the right to do so.

**Ms. Baker:** — Absolutely. I totally agree.

**Mr. Prebble:** — Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Any last final questions? Okay. Now there's some irony in this, is that the Chief Electoral Officer, the

amount is statutory, so no vote is required. But just to advise members, (CE01) the amount of \$811,000 is statutory so no vote is required so we don't have to agree or disagree for that.

Subvote (CE01) — Statutory.

Thank you very much for your presentation, Ms. Baker, and best wishes in the boring year you're going to have.

**Ms. Baker:** — Thank you.

**General Revenue Fund  
Legislative Assembly  
Vote 21**

**Subvote (LG01)**

**The Chair:** — The next item before the committee members is the Legislative Assembly and that is on page 115 of the Estimates book.

And I recognize Mr. Speaker to introduce his officials.

**The Speaker:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. All of the — not all of them — nearly all of the officials of the department heads within the Legislative Assembly Office are here and I'd like to introduce them at this time.

Seated beside me on my right is Margaret Tulloch, who is the assistant to the Speaker. Then, Gwenn Ronyk, the Clerk, who is beside me; Marilyn Borowski, director of financial services; and then Greg Putz, assistant to the Clerk. We have from *Hansard*, Darlene Trenholm. Thank you.

Ken Ring from legal office of the Law Clerk; Gary Ward from broadcast services; Lorraine deMontigny from visitors services; Guy Barnabe from our IT (information technology) section; Pat Kolesar and Marian Powell, Marian being the director of library services; and Linda Kaminski, who works with our human resources department, works very closely with Marilyn Borowski. And then we have Pat Shaw, who is our director of security.

Members of the Assembly, last year I gave this committee a bit of an overview of the work of the legislative office. I think I will, in the interest of time, refer you to last year's minutes if you really wanted to know, but I think most members are already quite familiar with the work of the Legislative Assembly Office.

So what I will do is shorten that aspect of my comments just to mention that once again that the budget that is presented to you, and there's a handout which you've been given, that is a budget requesting \$18.465 million estimated for this year — that has been the recommendation of the Board of Internal Economy. Most of the increase, I would say, is due to negotiated provisions and increments to salaries.

There are a couple of new items that we are looking at. One, for example, being the addition of a, to last year's budget, of a salary item for a Prince of Wales entrance security person.

Another one is an increase of . . . to the CPA (Commonwealth

Parliamentary Association) budget to accommodate some upcoming conferences in the year 2005-2004 that we are hosting here in Saskatchewan — one of which is being hosted here in Saskatchewan — and we wanted to put some funding into place for that.

I would like to take a moment to bring to members' attention a survey which has been distributed to all members that the LAO (Legislative Assembly Office) office does once every . . . once a term. And members have just received this. And I would urge that all members take some time to actually provide this — this is sort of once-a-term feedback that is used to make adjustments — and encourage their fellow members to take the time. And it does take a bit of time to actually go through this and provide some answers. It does become a very valuable resource though for the Clerk and all department heads to use.

I want to thank members that have already responded to the survey put out from the Speaker's office, a survey with respect to satisfaction and adjustments that we might make to the teachers' institute that we hold and the new journalist institute and the Speaker's outreach.

The teachers' institute I'm pleased to say was oversubscribed this year. It's becoming a much more popular event and we had the full 25 teachers with some on hold for next year.

We did start a journalist institute this year and just this week, earlier this week, I met with Pat Bell and Karen Briere, and looking . . . and did a bit of an assessment of how things went on it. And our objective for next year is to increase the time on it from one and a half days to two days, and make some adjustments as suggested by feedback that we got from the participants.

And I'd like to report that this year I visited approximately 30 schools, and I appreciated having members with me to, I think, almost every one of the schools. And it's an excellent contact I believe for MLAs to make with the schools in regard to particularly the promotion of democracy and our parliamentary system.

I think I'm going to stop there, members, because I'm just . . . judging by the anxiety I see on faces that I not get too carried away. So I'll open it up for questions.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm thinking of a number between one and ten. We'll just see how prescient you are.

All right. Administration (LG01) on page 116 of the Estimates book. I will open the floor to questions. I think you caught them surprised.

I will then proceed. Administration (LG01) for the amount of \$2.042 million. Is this agreed? That is carried.

Subvote (LG01) agreed to.

Subvotes (LG02), (LG03), (LG04) agreed to.

Subvotes (LG05), (LG06) — Statutory.

**The Chair:** — And that concludes that portion. And therefore:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2004, the following sums for the Legislative Assembly, \$6,261,000.

And I see Mr. Harper is moving that. Is this agreed? Okay, that is carried enthusiastically.

Thank you very much, members, and thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And all to the legislative staff, we appreciate all the work that you do for democracy here in Saskatchewan.

And that concludes the Legislative Assembly Vote 21.

### **General Revenue Fund Information and Privacy Commissioner Vote 55**

#### **Subvote (IP01)**

**The Chair:** — The next item before the committee, if members could stay at the table, it is the Information and Privacy Commissioner. And as indicated the acting commissioner, Richard Rendek, is out of the province but I'm advised that Gwenn, Myron, and Marilyn may be able to answer any questions pertaining to that on page 114, if there are any. And so I guess it's to the wishes . . . I'll proceed and if there's any concern not to proceed then the members can share that with me.

That is Information and Privacy Commissioner (IP01) for the amount of \$306,000. As well, in the Supplementary Estimates book, vote 55 (IP01) for the amount of \$31,000 which was required to provide for the appointment of a commissioner on a full-time basis. I presume there's no opening remarks, or is there, Mr. Speaker?

**The Speaker:** — I just want to mention that Marilyn is quite informed on the details of this budget and would be prepared to answer any questions or at least have them referred to Mr. Rendek if there's something beyond that. This is his first budget and since . . . and he has been . . . We've gone through the process identified by the, or approved rather by the Board of Internal Economy to recruit the acting commissioner. And so I believe that all of . . . Everything is going along as it should I suppose as we're getting into this new position.

**The Chair:** — Okay. Is it all right . . . Yes, Mr. Krawetz?

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Just a quick explanation then, Gwenn, if you would. I see under the salaries component 148,000, and wondering what is the difference between the Information and Privacy Commissioner's office in terms of the salaries paid, the amount of time versus what we saw in the Conflict of Interest Commissioner's office? Why such a huge discrepancy?

**Ms. Ronyk:** — Yes, Mr. Krawetz. If you'll recall up until this past year both offices were held by the same individual, by Mr. Gerrand, so they were both part-time. There was a decision made partway through the year to create the Information and Privacy Commissioner as a full-time office which . . . and to provide some staff for it. So the board did consider a

recommendation that there be a full-time salary for the full-time commissioner and two staff. The two staff that are proposed — are not yet there but are proposed in this budget — are for a privacy officer and for a secretary/receptionist. And so that's the difference.

The Conflict of Interest Commissioner is still a part-time officer with no full-time staff. We merely pay some money for office and some secretarial assistance for him.

The Privacy Commissioner is now to be set up as a separate office, a street office with two full-time staff and a full-time commissioner. And this is the sum of money that should suffice for the initial start-up year. It'll only be a part of the year that we'll have those staff and the commissioner on duty. So the next year there will be another increase as we reflect those three people for a full year.

Right now as Mr. Speaker mentioned the recruitment process is ongoing for the full-time commissioner. Mr. Rendek is in an acting capacity, does not wish to continue to become the full-time commissioner. So our recruitment process that the board approved is underway expecting to have a new commissioner in place probably by the end of September.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — A follow-up if I might. The Board of Internal Economy would have had this discussion regarding the workload. Is there a clear definition of what the Information and Privacy Commissioner will do during that full-time position along with that staff?

And what I'm looking for is a comparison of when the two positions were both part-times, that was handled by one individual. Now, obviously, the workload has dictated that this be split off. Is there a report given to the Board of Internal Economy as to what the office will do for the full year?

**Ms. Ronyk:** — Yes. For several years the Information and Privacy Commissioner has recommended in his report to the Assembly that at the part-time status with no staff was not sufficient to even carry out the statutory mandate of the office.

But the primary change has been in the proclamation of the municipal level, the local government freedom of information legislation. And in both the access to information Act that deals with the provincial government and in the similar Act that deals with local government, the privacy section of both of those Acts is a growing, expanding role that has never been actually properly dealt with.

And a lot of that role has to do with the privacy of electronic data and information. And the privacy officer felt they needed a staff person who had some ability to deal with the electronic technology and what are appropriate ways of ensuring privacy of that personal information that may be held by governments on individuals. And it's all in the ad for the new position. But there certainly is . . . And the other component that has never been actually utilized is providing some information to the public on what the role of the office and the commissioner is.

And the commissioner, I always like to compare his office with the parallel offices in our neighbouring provinces of Alberta and Manitoba. Oh, I think Manitoba has 12 staff and Alberta

has something like 17 staff to do this similar role.

**The Chair:** — Do members want that ad distributed to them just for information sake?

**Mr. Krawetz:** — I think it would be useful. I'd find that useful.

**The Chair:** — Would that be all right, Gwenn, to distribute the copy of the advertisement that's . . . to the members of the committee?

**Ms. Ronyk:** — Sure. Sure.

**The Chair:** — That would be appreciated.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you for that explanation then.

Just strictly a financial question, Gwenn. When taxpayers would look at this and say the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, which we've already voted, is \$122,000, added to the three zero six we're talking about four twenty-eight — 428,000. If I looked . . . If people looked back or I looked back two or three years ago, what was the combined budget of the office back then? Any idea? Is it that one zero five that's printed on the budget?

**Ms. Ronyk:** — Yes.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — So one zero five added to last year's one twenty-two would be about 200.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — Yes.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — And now we're talking . . . So we're seeing a doubling of expenses for the operation now of two separate offices — one full-time with staff; one part-time without staff.

**Ms. Ronyk:** — Yes, that's fair to say.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Are there any other questions? Okay. Information and Privacy Commissioner (IP01) for the amount of \$306,000. Is this agreed? That is carried. Therefore:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2004, the following sums:

For Information and Privacy Commissioner for the amount of \$306,000.

Do I have a mover for that? Mr. Wakefield. Is that agreed? That is carried.

**Supplementary Estimates 2002-2003  
General Revenue Fund  
Information and Privacy Commissioner  
Vote 55**

**Subvote (IP01)**

**The Chair:** — Also supplementary estimates on page 6 of the Supplementary Estimates book, Information and Privacy

Commissioner, vote 55 (IP01) for the amount of \$31,000.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Is the 31,000 then that's under supplementary estimates, is that to be added to the one zero five that was in the original estimates for '02-03?

**Ms. Ronyk:** — Yes.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — So that's on top of the \$105,000?

**Ms. Ronyk:** — Yes, right.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Okay. Are we prepared to proceed?

Okay, (IP01) for the amount of \$31,000. Is that agreed? That is carried.

Therefore:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2003 the following sum:

For Information and Privacy Commissioner for the amount of \$31,000.

Do we have a mover? Ms. Jones. Is that agreed? That is carried.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and Gwenn, and we appreciate the work that you have done.

And there's a couple more motions I think we have to move, so I will go through this.

Number one:

Resolved that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain charges and expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2003 . . .

Well thank you very much for all the work and we'll see you later this afternoon. Pardon me, I will read this again. Resolved that towards making good . . . I thought this had something to do with them, but it doesn't.

Resolved that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain charges and expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2003, the sum of \$31,000 granted out of the General Revenue Fund.

And that was already moved by, I think Ms. Jones, so I will sign this.

**Mr. Kaczkowski:** — Actually that was . . . This is a different motion.

**The Chair:** — Oh this is a different motion. Ms. Jones, would you be prepared to move this?

**Ms. Jones:** — Sure.

**The Chair:** — Okay, if you could sign there. Is that agreed? That is carried.

The next motion is number two:

Resolved that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain charges and expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004, the amount of \$12,359,000 be granted out of the General Revenue Fund.

Anybody feel like moving that? Okay. Ms. Harpauer. Is that agreed? That is carried.

Two more . . . Three more motions. Moved by a member:

That this committee recommend that upon concurrence in the committee's report, the sums as reported and approved shall be included in the Appropriation Bill for the consideration of the Legislative Assembly.

Anybody wish to move that? We'll give this one to Mr. Harper. Oh, we'll give the next one to Mr. Wiberg. Do you want to pass that on?

Is that agreed, that's been moved by Mr. Harper? That is carried.

And this one will be moved by Mr. . . . Now is this something I should move or . . . as the Chair?

**Mr. Kaczowski:** — No this is the one that someone else will have to move.

**The Chair:** — Okay.

**Mr. Kaczowski:** — The draft report has been given to the members of the committee and this is what this motion is, is agreeing to adopt this and present it to the Assembly.

**The Chair:** — Should we give them the draft report?

**Mr. Kaczowski:** — They have got it.

**The Chair:** — Good, okay. Then we'll say, if this is all right with Mr. Wiberg:

That the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Estimates be now concurred in.

Are you all right moving that motion, Mr. Wiberg? Do you want to move that? You don't have to. I just . . . You had your hand up before and I'm trying to be . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Okay, we'll pass this down to Mr. Wiberg and if he fills it out, we'll consider it. And I won't make any comments.

Is that motion agreed to? That is carried. I want to make sure he signs it because . . .

Now I think this concludes, other than a motion to adjourn, is there anything else? Do you want to take a moment to look . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . But let me read this again for members. Moved by Mr. Wiberg:

That the draft report of the Standing Committee on Estimates be now . . . be adopted and presented to the Assembly.

And then Mr. Wiberg can initial the change. Is that agreed? That is carried. Were there any motions, Viktor? That's it. Okay.

And I see Mr. Harper moving this meeting do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt that motion? That is carried.

Thank you members for all your good work.

The committee adjourned at 10:39.



