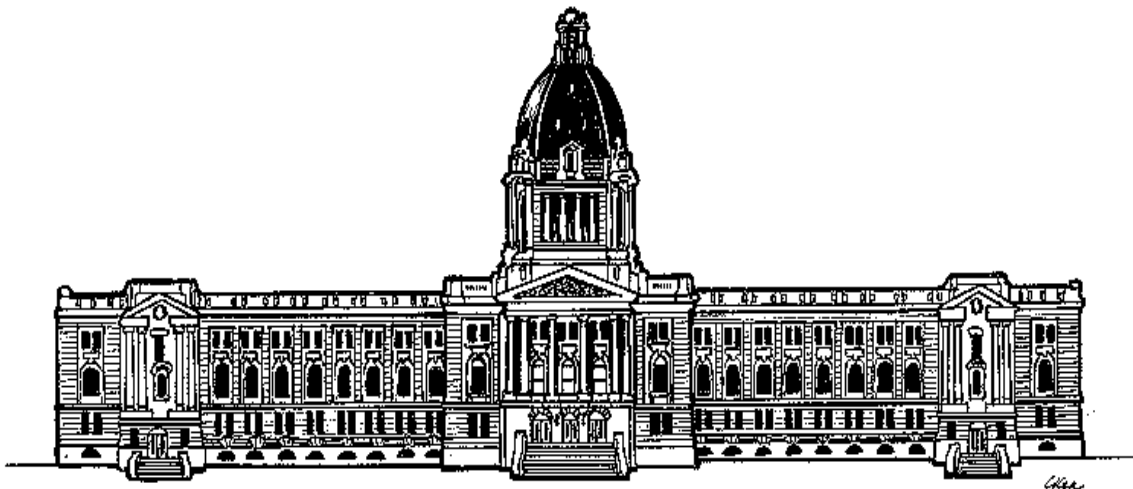




STANDING COMMITTEE ON HOUSE SERVICES

Hansard Verbatim Report

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Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

Twenty-fifth Legislature

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON HOUSE SERVICES
2004**

Hon. P. Myron Kowalsky, Chair
Prince Albert Carlton

Mr. Rod Gantefer, Deputy Chair
Melfort

Ms. June Draude
Kelvington-Wadena

Mr. Glenn Hagel
Moose Jaw North

Mr. Don McMorris
Indian Head-Milestone

Hon. Andrew Thomson
Regina South

Hon. Harry Van Mulligen
Regina Douglas Park

Mr. Kevin Yates
Regina Dewdney

The committee met at 09:00.

The Deputy Chair: — Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. We'll bring the Standing Committee on House Services to order if we could and begin our proceedings for the day. I'm advised that the committee has received an order of the Assembly dated April 23, 2004, to consider and report back the estimates of the following:

vote 34 — the Chief Electoral Officer;
vote 57 — the Conflict of Interest Commissioner;
vote 55 — the Information and Privacy Commissioner;
vote 56 — the Ombudsman and Children's Advocate; and
vote 28 — the Provincial Auditor.

The agenda for today's meeting is as follows. We're going to consider the estimate for the following officers: the Chief Electoral Officer, the Ombudsman, the Provincial Auditor, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, and the Legislative Assembly Office. And with the agreement of this committee, it has been suggested that we add the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and the Children's Advocate. Is that agreed by committee members?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you. So we will add those two items to our agenda.

So if we could begin with the Chief Electoral Officer, which is vote 34 on page 127 of the Estimates. We would like to welcome the Speaker and the Chief Electoral Officer here, and we would ask the Speaker to please make the introductions.

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

Subvote (CE01)

The Speaker: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee. You have a very ambitious agenda here today so I'm not going to take a great deal of time on anything except to introduce Jan Baker, who has been our Chief Electoral Officer for the last several years and through two elections. And I'm glad that she was able to make it here today to report to the committee because she's busy working on doing the finishing touches for the electoral returns. So I give you the Chief Electoral Officer, Jan Baker.

Ms. Baker: — Thank you. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. I'm pleased to be here today on behalf of the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer to provide background as to the office's 2004-05 budgetary estimates before you.

As you are familiar, the responsibilities of the office are regulated through various statutory enactments. The Election Act, 1996, The Referendum and Plebiscite Act, The Time Act, and The Political Contributions Tax Credit Act.

The principal mandate of the office is to direct and supervise

the administrative and financial conduct of provincial electoral events. The office's mission is to maintain a state of provincial election readiness and its goal is to facilitate provincial electors, registered political parties, and candidates in the exercise of their democratic rights.

As with previous budget submissions, expenditure estimates are presented in accordance with the office's function in base-year and non-base-year formats. Specifically, the base-year estimates comprise the expenditure forecast associated with the office's annual operational activities, administration of the political contributions tax credit regime, and proposed new office initiatives.

The non-base-year estimates include potential annual electoral event 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 expenditures.

The office's funding request for fiscal year 2004-05 coincides with the commencement of the first year of the current Legislative Assembly and directly relates to normal operational and post-election administrative activities. As you are all familiar, funding for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer is based on statutory provision. On February 23, 2004 the Board of Internal Economy approved for expenditures associated with the office's base-year functions, an allocation of 761,000 for fiscal year 2004-05.

I'd be pleased to answer any specific questions you may have regarding the office's budgetary submission.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you very much, Ms. Baker. Are there any questions? Ms. Draude.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Ms. Baker, and to Mr. Speaker. I have a couple of questions. I'm going to start with the election that took place just yesterday, and I know that your office wasn't directly involved in it, but I am also . . . have been advised that you did some work with their chief electoral officer. And I'm just wondering if you can give me an idea of the money that was allocated to them for the work that was done, and was it done through your budget?

Ms. Baker: — I'm not familiar with the election that you're speaking of.

Ms. Draude: — The Métis election yesterday.

Ms. Baker: — Certainly the Department of Aboriginal Affairs approached me and asked me some time ago if I would give consideration to participating with the chief electoral officer, the administration, to conduct the vote. As a result of the end of my mandate in the near future, certainly the requirements in my office were such that in order to complete my mandate prior to the end of my term, I was not involved in this particular vote other than providing advice and assistance particular to the distribution of forms, materials, etc., and all of those were provided free of charge out of my office.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. Was there any training for their

officers, their returning officers, done through your department?

Ms. Baker: — No.

Ms. Draude: — Okay. I guess the other question I have is, the refunds that were given back to different constituencies through the campaign in 2004, was there a marked difference in the percentage that was returned to them, that was applied for, compared to the last election?

Ms. Baker: — Specific to the reimbursement; you're speaking specific to the reimbursements that are currently ongoing in the office, comparing those to the 1999?

Ms. Draude: — That's correct.

Ms. Baker: — I believe that a majority of the candidates of the two major political parties, the New Democrats and the Saskatchewan Party, many reached the maximum threshold, which was forty-four three ninety-three. What I'm currently seeing is very, very large returns. Many of the candidates spent 30,000 plus. In 1999, it was more across the board particular to all the political parties.

Ms. Draude: — Specifically my question is, was there more returns that . . . When they were audited by your department, was there less money approved for these returns this time than last time?

Ms. Baker: — No.

Ms. Draude: — Okay. And when I'm looking at the budget I see that it's, you know, it's a little bit different. Do you, when you're doing your determining of the budget amounts required, do you take into consideration a number of by-elections that are expected or could happen each year or is that just . . . if a by-election happens, is some extra money put in at that time?

Ms. Baker: — Right. As I mentioned, we do, we prepare the budget on base-year and non-base-year format. If in fact we have an electoral event, the estimate that I have provided specific to a by-election is incorporated into our operational budget and so that it becomes one and we continue.

Ms. Draude: — And I just have one other question if that's okay. The political tax contribution that was changed federally last year, what kind of an effect did that have on your office?

Ms. Baker: — Certainly one of the . . . The office is now at the point, particular to reimbursement of election expense returns, still processing and paying interest on election expense returns. And one of the primary reasons for that is, is that one of the activities is, that has come to my attention, is there was much activity particular to fundraising or receipting of monies during a campaign, and as a result we're looking at larger election expense returns.

I have not received from the Department of Finance any numbers particular to political contribution tax credits used by contributors. However I am responsible for the administration and maintenance of the tax credit filing which came into my office on April 30.

What I'm normally seeing from the political parties that are participating is receipts that maximize 1 to 2,000. What I'm seeing particular to the two major political parties this time around is 6 to 7,000. So there was much activity over the election and in the year 2003, political, to receipting.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you very much.

The Deputy Chair: — Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — Thanks, Mr. Chair. And, Ms. Baker, I just only have one question. I had a chance to ask questions in dialogue when we had the review of your budget before the Board of Internal Economy and my questions were answered at that time.

Just as you're wrapping up the work related to the '03 provincial election — I know you referred earlier to being near the end of that activity — when do you see the final rebates being completed and all of the related administrative work completed from your office?

Ms. Baker: — Particular to candidate returns, as I said, I have exhausted the three-month provision for reimbursement. I am now into paying interest on those that I have not processed. I have only processed a little over half of the 139 that are available. I'm hoping that by the end of June we will have everybody paid out.

Candidate returns were due May 6. The initial 75 per cent reimbursement was forwarded immediately, and I'm hoping that prior to the end of July that we will have closure on all candidate returns.

In addition to that, the office has receipted the annual filings of fiscal period returns of the political parties and the political contributions tax receipt reporting, which is required every year.

I have started that process of sorting and had a periphery view of what may be involved in resulting closure on the fiscal period returns. I see that potentially going into the fall, as this office is very . . . or my office is very interested in heightening the credibility of the political parties, assisting them in meeting the heightened reporting requirements. So the office works with the political parties to ensure particular to the fiscal and the political contributions tax credit reporting that we have the level that is required specific to the statute. So that is ongoing.

However that said, all of the election expense returns to candidates, political parties, the fiscal period returns, the filings under The Political Contributions Tax Credit Act, are all available to the public immediately upon receipt in my office. However when distributing those materials, everyone is informed that there is no specific timeline for closure and that the closure of any deficiencies that may result in the filings may be ongoing.

Mr. Hagel: — I just want to acknowledge the fact, Ms. Baker, that in a democracy the essence of the protection of the freedom of democracy, of course, is the assurance that when elections are held that they're administered in an independent and efficient and competent manner. And I do want to acknowledge that you have served your province very effectively from the

office in different capacities over a large number of years and want to say thank you for your good service to your province.

Ms. Baker: — Thank you.

Mr. Hagel: — Thanks, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: — Any further questions by members of the committee? If not, I notice that the budget for the Chief Electoral Officer is statutory and therefore there is nothing to vote.

Vote 34 — Statutory.

The Deputy Chair: — I would like to, on behalf of the committee, thank Ms. Baker for her attendance here today and for answering . . . being available to answer our questions. Thank you very much.

Ms. Baker: — Thank you.

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

Subvote (OC01)

The Deputy Chair: — Members, the next item on our agenda is the Provincial Ombudsman and since we have agreed to include the Office of the Children's Advocate, and since that budgetary consideration is one and the same, with your indulgence I would like us to be able to address questions to both of these topics, recognizing that on short notice we added the Children's Advocate and they are not in attendance. But the Speaker will take note of any questions that may be presented by the members and make arrangements so that they can be answered on the request of the members.

So therefore we will move on to the consideration of the estimates on vote no. 56 on page 137, the Ombudsman and the Children's Advocate, and ask the Speaker to make introductions.

The Speaker: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee and Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce the Ombudsman for the province of Saskatchewan, Barb Tomkins, and with her is the manager of administration, Lynne Fraser. I would turn it over to the Ombudsman.

Ms. Tomkins: — Good morning. I'm pleased to be here this morning to speak to our budget for '04-05. I'll just give you a summary. Our budget request was for an increase of \$138,700; the approved increase was \$17,000. The total budget approved for the office was \$1.581 million.

The requested increases that were not approved related to maintaining status quo of service by maintaining what is now a temporary investigator position; our request to create a communications position to enable us to meet our legislative mandate. Those are the two significant requests that were declined.

In addition, jointly the Children's Advocate and I requested a

sum of money to enable us to upgrade our failing case tracking system which enables us to keep records, search files, gather information, and create statistics, and for this year that request was also declined.

I have a summary of the approved budget and where the approved increases go. If the members are interested, I'd be happy to distribute those.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you very much. Members? Ms. Draude.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. Good morning and thank you very much for attending. I know that your office is one that's very important to many people in this province, and they don't think about you unless you're really in need. And that probably isn't the kind of happy phone calls you get often in your office because people only come there when they desperately have no place else to go to.

So I understand that with the amount of money that you requested and not received it's going to . . . you indicated it, the money was needed just to maintain the status quo. Can you give me an idea of what's going to happen now that you didn't get what you asked for?

Ms. Tomkins: — We're going to manage. What we were attempting to do in the requested budget submission, I had noted that for example in looking at calendar year '03, complaints were up 13 per cent over '02. And that's a trend that we've seen throughout my term and I think pretty much through the life of the office.

I recently calculated the total increase during my term. From 1994, when I was appointed, to 2003, the total increase has been 59 per cent. In that time, the number of investigator positions has not changed except with this proviso we created.

You may recall in 1998 an alternative case resolution process which has an impact on the number of detailed investigations that we're required to undertake, and those detailed investigations are what the investigator positions I refer to do. They also affect the workload of the intake staff. But aside from those positions, we've managed those increases with an essentially stable staff.

In '03-04 we, through reallocating other sums and judicious budgeting, hired a temporary — initially part-time and then for a few months permanent — additional investigator, partly by not filling a position we had for major investigations. And what we were hoping to do, and that's why it was referred to as status quo, was maintain that position on a permanent basis. Because it was status quo at the time I was making the budget submission, that position existed on a full-time basis.

In the meantime we will continue. We will manage. It is likely that our timeliness of doing complaints will change.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. Can you tell me what areas have seen the largest increase in the number of complaints in the last couple of years?

Ms. Tomkins: — I don't have that at my fingertips, but I would

suspect, were I to check, that you wouldn't find any particular area that had a significant increase. I'm sure they haven't all increased an equal amount, but it's not as if there's some department or agency that's suddenly had a massive increase. I think they're all increasing at an incremental rate.

Ms. Draude: — What departments do you receive the most complaints or requests for an investigation into?

Ms. Tomkins: — Always two that sort of vie for top billing, which is Social Services or what's now called Community Resources and Employment, generally regarding income assistance plan. And the other that vies is Corrections and Public Safety — complaints from inmates. And that's true for all Ombudsman offices across Canada, and it's probably true for all Ombudsman offices in any democratic country because those are the people who have the most decisions made by government that affect them directly, and in some cases, particularly with the inmates, many decisions being made every day that affect them directly. So there's just more government decisions that they could find or believe to be unfair than the average person who's not in either of those programs is likely to have affect them, and so there's more opportunity for them to dispute. I don't think it will ever change.

Ms. Draude: — And I just have one further — it's not really a question — but I'm sure that between your office and the Child Advocate's office there's probably duplications at some time because people get, you know, frustrated or they don't know where to turn to. So this morning we don't have the opportunity to speak to the Child Advocate and there were some direct questions that I have. So I'm just wondering if I can get some assurance from the Speaker that I could speak to the lady and make sure that these questions were answered for people who have come to my office.

The Speaker: — Yes, we can assure you of that, and if you wish to put them on record at this time that would be fine as well.

Ms. Draude: — I think that it'll be okay if we . . . I'll just advise that I'll meet with her when I come up, when I go to Saskatoon or if she's in the city, and then we can go over the questions.

The Speaker: — Thank you.

Ms. Tomkins: — I can say this, what I know of Dr. Parker-Loewen, she would be happy to do that.

I would like to add something to your preliminary comment. I don't think there's very much duplication at all between our office and the Children's Advocate office. There is an odd occasion when a complaint will come to one of our offices and we'll do some preliminary work and then realize it should more logically go to the other office, and we'll make the referral.

There are extremely rare instances, maybe once every year or two, when we might both be involved in the same file from different directions. But from very early on, after the Children's Advocate office was created, we apportioned the work and you can — we don't want to go there but we can have large debates about whether we ought to have done that — but we basically

apportioned the work so as to say in general a complaint will go to either the Children's Advocate or the Ombudsman, but not to both.

Given that we do entirely different things, once a complaint comes to our office — this is where the debate comes — is should people coming to the offices be streamed to one or the other or should they have the opportunity to have the work of both offices done, in appropriate cases, because the work is different.

But I'll leave that there for now. But I think the duplication is very minimal.

Ms. Draude: — And I am going to ask you one more question. You said that you felt that with the budgetary requirements being different than what you had hoped for, it would mean a change in the time frame that you could be expected to deal with cases. What's your time frame at right now as to when somebody would come in and require your help? And what do you think it will be?

Ms. Tomkins: — Right now we're doing much better than we have in the past. We, every year, do a little better than the year before, which I am extremely proud of my staff. For given that complaints have gone up, workloads have gone up, and most important the complexity of complaints has gone up, so the investigations, the intake, all aspects of the work are more difficult than they were before.

Right now approximately — and I don't have these exact numbers with me but these will be in the ballpark — 75 to 80 or 85 per cent of complaints are concluded within about 30 days.

Of those that require a more detailed and thorough investigation, I'm not going to attempt to break this down, but probably about — I guess I am attempting to break this down — probably about half are completed within three to four months. Probably about 40 per cent are completed within six months. And the balance substantially longer, and sometimes as much as a year, two years, or even three years.

That depends on a number of things. But the main thing is that where we have a substantiated complaint, particularly involving a significant issue, and we get involved in meetings and discussions and correspondence with government agencies and sometimes eventually with ministers, that piece of the process just takes time, as does an investigation.

And I know when I say three to six months, and that I'm reasonably happy with that — I'd like to see it shorter— but I'm reasonably happy with it. When you look at the nature of the work that is done in a detailed investigation there are just realities and it just can take that long.

As to what it will look like a year from now, I can't say. The staff in this office — and I say with absolutely sincerity — amazes me every week, every year, and every day. And I expect they will do what needs to be done because they care passionately about the work that they do. They care passionately about this government in the sense of ensuring government administration works fairly. And they care passionately about the people they do the work for.

The reality is if you have more complaints and the same number of people to do them, they're not going to get to them as quickly. Once they start, they will be done as quickly or as slowly, but they may have to wait longer before we start. And I can't project how long that will be. My guess is it will be less than I would project because of the work the staff do.

Ms. Draude: — Well I think that it's fair to say that everybody that needs your office is always very thankful and appreciative of the care and concern that you do have. And I know that your people are passionate in what they do, and it's good to know that we have . . . that there is a place for people to go to when they feel like nobody is listening. So thank you very much.

Ms. Tomkins: — Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: — Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — Thanks, Mr. Chair. Again, very briefly, I was just thinking as I was listening to the comments of the Ombudsman in response to the question by the member, by Ms. Draude, that it's an interesting reflection on our democracy as we look at our agenda for today.

We start with the Chief Electoral Officer and, ultimately, democracy begins with elections. But as we are looking at the review of the legislative officers today, it makes very clear that the proper exercise of democracy is a multi-faceted and complex thing that ultimately ensures that we have an institution that functions in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan, who at the end of the day will always, if democracy is working well, will be the focus.

And the objective of democracy is to serve their desires and their needs. And in that, I do want to acknowledge that both the Ombudsman, our current Ombudsman, and the Children's Advocate have been in their positions, serving their province, for almost a decade. And it is in the area of citizens' rights to have their services, delivered by the province, be reviewed if they feel that they've not been properly addressed, that they have an avenue for appeal.

It will be the case that members of the legislature, through their offices, will serve a number of those kinds of needs, and collectively over the province it runs into the tens of thousands. But there's no doubt that the Ombudsman and the Children's Advocate provide a level of scrutiny and also moral suasion that enables the system to adapt to changes in expectations and needs as time elapses, and that the investigations are done independent of bias.

As we look at all of our legislative officers, independence is an absolutely crucial characteristic of the way the office is run and that's a key part of protecting the integrity of those offices and the assurances of the citizens of the province that democracy is working for them.

And I just want to say to you, Ms. Tomkins, to say thank you for the decade of excellence that you have brought to the office, adding to the integrity of democracy, and doing that with your leadership and the good people in your office on a daily basis over a long period of time. And as a result of your investigations and the moral suasion with which you act helping

to find practical solutions for people individually, but also at the same time bringing recommendations for changes in regulation, sometimes in legislation, that ultimately enable our democracy to function more effectively for all Saskatchewan people.

And so for your excellence, as I know you're approaching the end of your term, in the history of Ombudsman service in the province of Saskatchewan, I want to say thank you very much.

Ms. Tomkins: — I appreciate your comments, but I think 10 years makes me feel far less old, and you keep saying a decade, a decade — like what a long time.

Mr. Hagel: — Well no matter how you look at it, you've . . .

Ms. Tomkins: — It is a decade.

Mr. Hagel: — . . . and have much reason to feel proud of your work.

Ms. Tomkins: — Coincidentally, it is a decade today that I was appointed.

Mr. Hagel: — A decade today. Congratulations.

Ms. Tomkins: — I'd like to correct something I said earlier, an impression I may have left. One thing we have been able to do about this investigation situation since appearing before the board and learning what the allocation was, is we have reallocated internally and have found a way to extend the additional investigator position. We're hopeful that we'll be able to do that through the fiscal year. It will depend on how other finances go.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you very much. Seeing no other members indicating they would like to ask questions, I'll refer members to the estimates on page 138. The vote for the Provincial Ombudsman (OC01), in the amount of \$1,453,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Subvote (OC01) agreed to.

Subvote (OC02)

The Deputy Chair: — The vote for the Children's Advocate, vote (OC02) in the amount of \$1,022,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Subvote (OC02) agreed to.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you, members.

Be it resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2005, the following sums for the Ombudsman and Children's Advocate, \$2,475,000.

Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — We need someone to move that motion specifically. Ms. Draude.

Ms. Draude: — I so move.

The Deputy Chair: — It's been moved by Ms. Draude. All those in agreement?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Vote 56 agreed to.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to Ms. Tomkins, the Ombudsman, and please pass on our appreciation to the Children's Advocate for their work and approval of their budget as well.

**General Revenue Fund
Provincial Auditor
Vote 28**

Subvote (PA01)

The Deputy Chair: — We'll now move on to the vote for the Provincial Auditor. The Provincial Auditor's vote no. 28 on page 139.

Members, we would welcome the Provincial Auditor and his official to the committee meeting this morning and ask the Speaker to make introductions.

The Speaker: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. There are five people here today from the staff of the Provincial Auditor's office. First of all, seated right beside me is the Provincial Auditor, Fred Wendel, and next to him is the assistant Provincial Auditor, Brian Atkinson. And then seated behind Mr. Atkinson is the principal to support services, Angèle Borys, and the manager for administration, Sandy Walker, and the data systems administrator, Heather Tomlin.

Thank you for being here, Mr. Wendel, and I turn it over to the Provincial Auditor.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Members, the Provincial Auditor's estimates are on page 139 and 140 of the Estimates book. And I invite members to have the opportunity to ask questions. Ms. Draude?

Ms. Draude: — I'm just wondering if the Provincial Auditor had a statement . . .

Mr. Wendel: — I have a few prepared remarks; it will take about five minutes.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you. I'm sorry, Mr. Wendel, I was anxious to have members have at you.

Mr. Wendel: — A change of roles. Thank you for the opportunity to talk to you today about our business and financial plan. We provided that to you earlier last week.

Our business and financial plan sets out the work we will do to achieve our goals and objectives. The plan also sets out the

resources that we will need to achieve those results. As required by law, we tabled our plan in November 2003. Also the plan is automatically referred to the Public Accounts Committee. The committee is required to meet with my office to discuss a work plan and to approve the resources that the Minister of Finance is to include in the estimates.

I want to draw to your attention that the Public Accounts Committee did not recommend the resources that appear in the estimates. When the estimates were prepared, there was no Public Accounts Committee. The law makes provision for such a situation and what the law requires is that the estimates that were included the previous year be included in the estimates for this year and that's, in fact, what has happened.

You will note that the \$5.853 million we requested to operate the office is \$98,000 less than the \$5.755 million that appears in the estimates that you are considering today. We asked for an increase to pay for additional costs. Those costs relate to more work caused by new agencies we have to audit, changing professional standards caused by business failures such as Enron, and salary increases to give our staff the same pay and benefits that other public service employees received.

The estimates that you are considering today has two parts. The first part is \$5.405 million. This amount is intended to finance the activities needed to carry out the work plan that's set out in the business and financial plan. Our business and financial plan asked for \$93,000 more for a total of \$5.498 million for the reasons I just mentioned.

The second part, \$350,000, is a contingency appropriation. The law requires a contingency appropriation to operate my office. This appropriation allows my office to respond to unforeseen expenses such as a new government agency that we have to audit or a special investigation that may be required. This year the contingency appropriation will also help me to pay for the extra \$93,000 of expenses to carry out the activities set out in the business and financial plan.

Now I want to talk briefly about our work plan that is included in the business and financial plan. My remarks will be brief because many of members in this committee are either members of the Public Accounts Committee or are former members of the Public Accounts Committee and are familiar with what we do.

In addition to the work plan . . . in addition, the work plan is based on the strategic plan that we have been using for the past several years. This is the same plan that the Public Accounts Committee has supported in the past.

The activities to carry out our strategic plan are focused on improving the management of public resources and the accountability of the government to the Assembly. Our efforts encourage government agencies to address the following risks in managing public resources: risks related to technology, demographics, economic constraints, and the environment; risks related to infrastructure including large computer systems; risks related to delivering services with other departments and other governments; risks related to human resources needed to deliver essential public services.

Our work results in recommendations to improve practices. One of the key ways we measure our success and the acceptance . . . is the acceptance of our recommendations by the Assembly and by the government. I am pleased to say that the Assembly has accepted more than 80 per cent of our recommendations and the government has acted on more than 80 per cent of those recommendations.

In closing, I want to say that for the last eight years legislators have supported my office's request for resources. Your approval of the amount in the Estimates will allow me to discharge my duties to the Assembly. And that concludes my comments.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you very much, Mr. Wendel. And now we'll have an opportunity for members to ask questions. Ms. Draude.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. And thank you, Mr. Wendel. I really appreciate the words that you just gave us, and I can tell you that when I was on Public Accounts I appreciated the opportunity to discuss in more detail, in that forum, the work that was actually going on in the legislature.

I noticed this, you indicated that the law said that there had to be an amount of money kept aside for unforeseen expenses. And would that mean requests for things like public inquiries?

Mr. Wendel: — Yes it would, Mr. Chair. Yes.

Ms. Draude: — Was there a public inquiry last year?

Mr. Wendel: — I'm trying to recall which year we did some work for the Crown corporations and central agencies committee on the Information Services Corporation. I'm not sure whether it was last year or . . . It did go between two years kind of, so there probably was some work done in there. So, yes.

Ms. Draude: — When there is a request for a public inquiry I believe, first of all, it can come from anyone, usually an elected member, or could you just clarify how this request would come?

Mr. Wendel: — We get a request to inquire from many sources. We get citizens calling me directly. I get letters from elected members, and I may get a request from a standing committee of the Assembly.

The ones that actually qualify as a special investigation would be those that come forward from a committee of the Assembly, passing a motion saying they'd like me to look into a specific matter and what it is they want me to do when they look into that.

I can also get a request from the executive government, and I've accepted such a request with regard to the Métis Addiction Council in Saskatoon and work is begun on that. I'll be reporting sometime in the late summer or early fall on that.

When I get requests from elected members and citizens, even if there isn't a special inquiry or special investigation carried out, usually what I do is pass the comments on to the auditors in

charge of that particular organization. And then when they next visit that organization, if there's something there, they will look into it as a matter of our regular business when we're there, and there may or may not be something to report out of that.

Ms. Draude: — You had indicated that there is . . . you're having work . . . work is being done right now on the Metis Addiction Council. When the work is completed, that will be given . . . that'll be a public report?

Mr. Wendel: — The way the law reads, I report first to the cabinet, is the order in council, to the present Executive Council. I don't know whether they will make that report public at that time. I plan to put some comments about that work in my Fall Report this year.

Ms. Draude: — I guess my question is, can you clarify when the public or at least the rest of the elected members would see it? Is there anything in the law saying that after it goes to the cabinet, it would come to elected officials?

Mr. Wendel: — No, there's nothing in my statute for that. It requires me to report to the president of the Executive Council the results of my audit. And I would probably summarize what's in there and put that in my Fall Report that would be released late November, early December.

Ms. Draude: — You've indicated that your budget request was for \$93 million more than what was approved. And you'd also indicated that the need was because of more work that was going to be required. So now what are you going to do since you didn't get the money?

Mr. Wendel: — Well one of the reasons for a contingency appropriation was also for this, in the event that we end up in a situation like we've ended up, where there was no Public Accounts Committee. I didn't have an opportunity to talk to the committee to see whether they would agree to an increase and recommend that increase to the House. So my plan is to use some of the contingency appropriation to manage my affairs for this year. Now I will try and absorb as much as I can and operate within the five million four oh five, but if I find it difficult to do that and carry out the work, I will have to use some of the contingency appropriation.

Ms. Draude: — The province is now operating under a summary financial statement, which I think was a recommendation that your department has had, put forward for a number of years. Is that work going to involve more cost as well?

Mr. Wendel: — I can't speak to the extra costs that the Department of Finance may incur. At the moment we don't audit the budget. We provide no assurance on the budget, so that isn't an increased work for us.

But it certainly, in the interests of accountability, I think it certainly is moving practice a long way forward, and I'm certainly pleased to see that there was a summary budget prepared and also that there was a summary operating plan prepared and put forward with the budget papers. So two very important steps.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: — Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — Thanks, Mr. Chair. I think you just want to correct that it wasn't 93 million more you wanted, but 93,000 more.

Mr. Wendel: — That's correct.

Mr. Hagel: — In fact I think you'd probably have a great deal of difficulty trying to figure out what to do with 93 million more dollars.

Mr. Wendel: — Yes. I think there'd be some difficulty spending that.

Mr. Hagel: — I just want to again acknowledge here a couple of things that have been said, Mr. Chair, and Mr. Wendel, in your remarks, that I heard you refer to over 80 per cent of your recommendations being accepted by executive government. And I think it is important to acknowledge that, because we sometimes . . . the news coverage will have us believe, if you look no further than the headlines, that the auditor appears at times to be in constant conflict with the government and that, in fact, that's not an accurate reflection of the relationship.

It certainly is, I think, accurate to say that there is a certain tension that exists between your office and government, and it's a healthy thing. It's a healthy tension because it is in the interest of not only the effective spending of the public dollar in the administration of public services for the people of Saskatchewan that you bring scrutiny, but also that — what I'm increasingly valuing — is the attention that you give to the risks that face government departments and Crown agencies in meeting of their mandates, which is a healthy tension directed towards effective planning and therefore effective management. And then presumably out of that, effective administration that's consistent with objectives that should contribute to a good quality of life when you put it all together in the ways that government impacts on people's lives.

And I simply want to acknowledge that that is a valuable service that your office brings as well, which is not per se a scrutiny on the expenditure of dollars, but it is a scrutiny on the risks that confront the delivery.

Also I just want to add my words of appreciation for your good work. I know that you've been with the auditor's office many years before becoming our Provincial Auditor and to acknowledge that your professional reputation is sound and contributes to the accountability and the credibility of the function of democracy, and to say thank you for your good work and the good work of your office.

Mr. Wendel: — Well thank you for the kind comments.

The Deputy Chair: — As such members, I refer you to page 140 of the Provincial Auditor . . . or the Estimates book, item Provincial Auditor, item no. (PA01). Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Subvote (PA01) agreed to.

The Deputy Chair: — Item (PA02), is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Subvote (PA02) agreed to.

The Deputy Chair: —

Be it resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2005, the following sums for the Provincial Auditor, \$5,627,000.

Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you, members, and thank you to the Provincial Auditor.

We need to move the motion.

Mr. Yates: — I so move.

Vote 28 agreed to.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you to the auditor and your staff, and we will now move on to the . . .

Mr. Wendel: — Thank you to the committee for the support. Thank you very much for that.

General Revenue Fund Information and Privacy Commissioner Vote 55

Subvote (IP01)

The Deputy Chair: — Members, we will now move to item no. 6 on our agenda, the Information and Privacy Commissioner. And I refer you to vote no. 55 on page 131. Thank you and welcome to the Information and Privacy Commissioner's office. Mr. Speaker, if you would do introductions please.

The Speaker: — It's my pleasure to do the introductions, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Chairman.

Seated right beside me is the new person on the block in terms of independent officers and that is Gary Dickson, who's taken on the job of being our commissioner for freedom of information and privacy. And seated beside him is his office manager, Pam Scott, who may be a familiar face to many people here. And right behind Pam is Diane Aldridge, the assistant to the commissioner.

And, Mr. Commissioner, you may have a few words that you might want to start with. Turn it over to you.

Mr. Dickson: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chairman, members, thanks very much for the opportunity. I'm happy to be able to share some information with you relative to the estimates for the

Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Because the office is . . . we're working a little harder to meet all parts of the mandate, I might just take a moment and refresh everybody's memory in terms of what the statute provides.

The mission of our office, as I see it, is to ensure that the people of the province of Saskatchewan enjoy the full measure of the information rights — that's both privacy and access — that they've been guaranteed by legislation; three different statutes in fact.

The first one's The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act that applies to provincial government departments and Crown corporations. The second is The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act that addresses municipalities, colleges, universities, regional health authorities, and school divisions. And then the third one, and the newest, will be the law that came into force only on September 1, 2003, The Health Information Protection Act. So that effectively defines the work we do.

There are some circumstances that we have no control over but have had a huge impact on the work of our office and I might just quickly list them, although they'd be well known, I think, to members. The first one is . . . We know from the five years experience in Manitoba and the three years experience in Alberta that health information and health information legislation is the trickiest, most challenging kind of privacy law you could imagine. And as I anticipated when I was in front of this committee in February, we continue to spend a good deal of our resources and time working with health information trustees and members of the public in terms of understanding just what can and cannot happen with personal health information.

In addition, the new federal law, the Personal Information and Protection of Electronic Documents Act, it's presented a lot of challenges for Saskatchewan businesses, Saskatchewan Crowns, in some cases local authorities, and a good part of our time has been spent helping organizations understand when the federal law does not apply and when Saskatchewan legislation applies. And hopefully we're making some headway there, but it's a big province with lots of organizations. The federal government has not done a very good job in terms of letting people know what the heck this new law is all about.

We're mindful that we're paid by Saskatchewan taxpayers and so we're not trying to do the work of the federal Privacy Commissioner. But I do think we have an important responsibility to work with Saskatchewan individuals and organizations to be clear in terms of when they're covered by the three provincial laws I'd mentioned.

The other item that is being allowed to work for us is the federal . . . or the provincial privacy framework that was formally announced September 1 and adopted by the province. There's a big focus in provincial government departments and Crowns to be compliant with the framework, and so that necessitates a lot of advice, consultation, input.

The other thing is just the explosion into surveillance technology. For example, we're posting to our Web site a set of guidelines for the use of video surveillance, when it happens in schools and public places, to address calls and requests we get

from the public.

And then lastly, I think there's quite a pent up demand in the province for reliable information on these different laws. So we have now done almost 70 presentations to a large range of groups in the province explaining what people's access and privacy rights are. Incidentally, schedule 3 sets out a list so you can see a sample of the kinds of groups and organizations we've met with to provide information.

Our legislative mandate — just very quickly — there are four parts to it. It's firstly to deal with access requests that have not been resolved directly by dealing with a provincial government institution, and we investigate and issue recommendations. The second part of our mandate is to address complaints, if people think their privacy has been violated by a government institution or a local authority. The third part of the mandate is the public education. And as I say, that's been a big focus of our office. And the last part of the mandate is offering commentary.

And we'll be doing a report shortly to the legislature with respect to the privacy framework and some observations we have about that and how it's working and some things that should be considered in making it more effective.

And I think we've discovered, as most other commissioners have across Canada, rather than going around sort of wielding a big stick, what tends to be more useful in terms of our resources in meeting our mandate is trying to work with local authorities, government departments, Crown corporations to build into the architecture of their programs good privacy, good access considerations. And so that's something that we work at also.

In terms of the . . . We've got some specific initiatives. A Web site we've set up, which I'm proud to tell you a New Zealand commentator has put on the list of the 10 best free privacy Web sites they've seen anywhere. So we're proud of that.

We produce an electronic newsletter called the Saskatchewan *FOIP FOLIO* that now has 1,000 subscribers throughout the province and a big focus on a privacy impact assessment we've created and put on our Web site that can be downloaded, and bodies can use that to effectively do a self-audit in terms of privacy compliance.

In terms of the numbers, the budget is a relatively small budget. We had asked for and did not get, when we appeared in front of the committee in February, for an additional point seven five FTE (full-time equivalent). We have three people in our office now; we are fully staffed. The salaries make up the biggest part of our budget — 57.6 per cent of our budget — is an increase of \$75,000 from what had existed in last year's budget.

In terms of supplies, you'll see an increase of \$6,000, which is relatively modest considering we've gone from one part-time commissioner to three people. So I'd like to think that we're trying to squeeze as much as we can from those tax dollars that we'd appropriated to the office. But I'd be happy to deal with your questions, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you very much, Mr. Dickson. Ms. Draude.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Dickson, welcome.

Mr. Dickson: — Thank you very much.

Ms. Draude: — I appreciate the opportunity to meet you and to see you here in the legislature. It looks to me like, you used the word frustration, but I think it must be . . . it looks like you're a very busy man in dealing with issues that people across the province, I believe, when they at one time, they'll . . . one hand, they'll talk about privacy and the next . . . on the other side, they talk about access. And I know that's the balance that you're dealing with.

Are most of the . . . Is most of the challenge coming up because of the new federal law?

Mr. Dickson: — No. I wouldn't say most of the challenge. I'd suggest this, that we've actually had one of the older FOIP, freedom of information and protection of privacy, laws in Canada among Canadian provinces. We have 11 years experience.

But my experience is that it's not well understood. I think there was some initial training that was done — 1992, 1993 — to let people know what was involved, but there hasn't been very much done since.

If you look at the Deloitte & Touche privacy analysis that was done after the ISM (Information Systems Management Corporation) furor a year and a half ago, there was an identification of a lot of work needed to be done on the privacy side. I'd say a lot of work also has to be done on the access side.

So probably most of what we do is citizens looking for information on the access side, concerned about their privacy. And a lot of it is Crowns and departments frankly, looking for information and advice and some help and guidance in terms of meeting the requirements of the legislation.

So PIPEDA (Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act) has certainly got people's attention, but that then leads to people wanting to understand more about the provincial laws that really do have traction and really do impact them.

Ms. Draude: — I think that one of . . . well I know that one of the biggest issues that face us in Saskatchewan is our health issues, and that the SHIN (Saskatchewan Health Information Network) program that the government has been working on for a number of years, probably the holdback is privacy, understanding where the line is and how the information can be shared.

But is this something . . . When I look at the list of people that you've met with in the last year or so a lot of it does appear to be health-related. Are these people giving you information as to how they see this whole SHIN, or the issue can be dealt with?

I think that we're spending a lot of money, and people need the information. Daily we bring up reports or incidents of people who, you know, where people would require more information. Yet at the same time, in their own homes, they don't want big

government looking into their lives. So is your office helping to develop the set-up to make sure that it is a balance that everyone can live with?

Mr. Dickson: — We're working hard exactly to do that. As I say my job is about trying to find a balance.

I'm no privacy zealot. I think it's about trying to . . . how we find that balance between recognizing that to be able to deliver cost-effective, appropriate health care in an appropriate time, it means you need good information systems. And yet at the same time I think the people of this province want it done in a way that's respectful of their privacy, respectful of their confidentiality.

I'm not sure — you would know better than I — but from my only six months in the province, my sense is that the challenge with HIPA (Health Information Protection Act) is less about SHIN, or that SHIN is less held up because of privacy concerns than it is with technological and cost concerns.

I think what happened, starting about 1997 Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba, everybody was all fired up to move towards the electronic health record. I think what we found, it is vastly, vastly more complicated than those early planners anticipated. And it's . . . I think there's a lot of technology challenges.

And I'd point out also that HIPA applied to paper records as well as electronic records. And frankly, if we go to most physicians' offices in this province, that's the way the records are. The only electronic information might be for billing purposes, but if I go to see my family doctor — if I can find one in Regina today — dollars to doughnuts it's going to be paper records, regular filing cabinets. And I think for the foreseeable future that's still going to be where health information is largely going to be.

So the challenge is — leaving aside for a moment SHIN — how do we make sure that those physicians and nurses and health care professionals are taking appropriate steps to protect your privacy and mine right now? We'll have a whole set of additional challenges as we move further towards an electronic health record, but the technological challenges bedevil frankly a lot of provinces.

Ms. Draude: — I just have one other issue I wanted to bring up. One of the areas that the government is working on that I'm supportive of is the School^{PLUS} issue where we actually have an integration of six different government departments. And that is one area where we have to be able to get across department lines when it comes to sharing information.

And we're usually talking about children, and the frustration that we hear about is the fact that we have different departments that have information that dealing with one child, and they can't give the information to another department. Is that something that you're working on? I know the government has acknowledged it, and it's a frustration that people who are living outside of this building are very aware of, that the duplication and the inefficiencies is being caused by not being able to deal with this information is huge. Is it a mandate of your office right now?

Mr. Dickson: — It sure is and it's a great question. I think part of the difficulty is that when the FOIP (freedom of information and protection of privacy) Act was designed in 1992, it's very much department by department. And if information moves outside of a single department like Sask Learning, or a local school division, that becomes a disclosure and there's all kinds of rules around when you cannot disclose and to whom. And so we've designed it that way.

As we start moving toward a shared service model, and School^{PLUS} is a great example of that, and it makes perfectly good sense if you have got a child at risk to bring together the police officer and the health worker and the teacher and, you know, different people — some people representing federal agencies, provincial agencies, maybe community agencies. But we haven't updated our Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, frankly, to enable shared services.

And one of the things you will see in my annual report, I will take up the call of my last two predecessors that our 11-year-old statute's looking a little tired and dated. And if we want to be able to enable those shared services projects — I think clearly they're important and worthwhile — we're going to have to spend some time figuring out how we can facilitate an appropriate transfer of information, because it doesn't happen now.

What we've been doing is Diane Aldridge in my office is focused very much now on working with Sask Learning, with school-based organizations. We're trying to encourage them to spend some time focusing on practical solutions. Unless and until the legislation is changed to do it sort of clearly through the front door, are there some ways we can improvise to make sure we're respectful of the privacy rules but we get the job done.

And so we've got some suggestions to take to these groups in terms of how it can happen. We're having ongoing dialogue with Sask Learning and with educators to see how we can sort this out. So it's still a work in progress, but it's clearly an important and immediate challenge for our office.

Ms. Draude: — Well, Mr. Dickson, I thank you. I'm excited and pleased that you are in our province. You say you've only been here six months, so welcome. And I think that we really do have some challenges and maybe we have an opportunity here to lead the pack when it comes to changes in technology and our . . . and the way we deal with information. So I look forward to seeing how . . . to seeing your work in the next few years.

Mr. Dickson: — Thank you very much. And I can tell . . . I can't tell you what a treat it is when the Ontario Information and Privacy Commissioner office with a vast number of resources and far more experience, calls our office soliciting advice on how to deal with their new health information law. I'm not sure that happens often enough, but it's a very nice and pleasant experience, let me tell you.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you very much. Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — Thanks, Mr. Chair. I just have one question and then a couple of comments. The question first of all, Mr.

Dickson. You referred to a certain amount of your time being dedicated to bringing information to interested parties in Saskatchewan related to the federal privacy legislation. And I'm just wondering in rough terms what percentage of your office's resources would you say end up being used for that purpose? Would it be like 5, 10, 15, 20? Is this a significant thing or is it just kind of blended with a whole lot of other things that it's part of the total picture?

Mr. Dickson: — Well it's both, Mr. Hagel. But I want to be real clear on this that although people will often phone and say we want . . . you know I'm such and such a businessman, or I'm an individual, and I want to know what I can and can't do under the new privacy law.

Most often when we get into talking about it, we discover that the federal law has no application at all. It has less traction in this province I suspect than any other Canadian jurisdiction. If you take that list of 74 Crowns, departments, government agencies, boards and commissions, actually a lot of people, we just end up then saying PIPEDA's got your attention, but now let's talk about the FOIP Act (Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy) because that's the Act that has traction.

In terms of a percentage, I think generally at least . . . Well, I'd say at least 55 per cent of the calls and inquiries we get are privacy related. And of those I think those that are uniquely and specifically with respect to PIPEDA is actually a fairly small portion of those.

So I'm not sure I'm being responsive to your query, but it's not as simple as PIPEDA or FOIP. In most cases that's what gets people's attention because they read about it in the paper and the media, but when we start talking, very quickly we discover they're under the local authority FOIP Act, or they're under HIPA and . . .

Mr. Hagel: — Okay. I appreciate your answer on that, that does answer my concerns. It's clearly my concern if it's a significant amount of your resources dealing with federally generated concerns and that's one thing. But it sounds from what you're saying as though in fact that's a catalyst that gets them dealing with your office appropriately.

And so from that point of view in terms of use of resources that doesn't trouble me in the least. If we were in a circumstance where you were not able to follow through on provincially mandated obligations because of federally generated concerns, then that's something I think that we'd want to have a second look at.

But having said that, I just want to say hear, hear, to your concern about the balance between the advances in technology — the collection of information, and then the ethical use of private information to serve the best interests of the citizens of the province. In this day and age of much more effective recording of information through the advances in technology, I think it becomes increasingly frustrating to people that when they're speaking to their government that they sometimes seem to have to tell, they have to tell the same story over and over and over and over again. Because as they interface with different agencies, there isn't a flow of that information between the agencies that enables the story to be told once and

then the public service in its response to use that information appropriately to respond in a holistic kind of way.

And increasingly, as government is inclined to want to be, in my judgment, more effective and more realistic as to how services truly do serve the needs of citizens, then that says to me there is a healthy and productive outcome to be expected if information is shared in the best interest of citizens — however respecting the privacy. And therein comes that tension and that balance that we have to work to achieve, and I look forward to the advice of your office in that regard.

I do want to acknowledge the place that your office brings again as other officers who have been before the committee here today in terms of protections of the interests of citizens in a democracy and, in this case, the protection of people's right to privacy. And then the other side of the coin, the ability to use that information to their best interest without a violation of their privacy.

I do also want to acknowledge the personal enthusiasm that you bring to the office and to say that it's very welcome. The time certainly had come that the office needed to be expanded, and I think we've got the right person in the right place at the right time that we've got . . . we're able to take advantage of your strong professional interests and background in this area. And if I'm not mistaken, to also be another one of those Saskatchewan boys who's returning back to Saskatchewan to advance your career, and I'm pleased to acknowledge that as well.

I'm very optimistic about the good work that lies ahead in the interest of the province and our people, and I fully recognize the challenges that you're facing, and I just want to acknowledge the great enthusiasm and professional competence that you bring as well.

Mr. Dickson: — Well thank you very much for those words. And I might say at the end of the day that the thing that makes these jobs — my job — such an interesting one is it's . . . when you try to find that balance, it sort of changes all the time. It doesn't lend itself to hard and fast rules.

And I think what works well about the Canadian model with this Information and Privacy Commissioner is the flexibility that it brings to be able to adjust and hopefully accommodate a number of things. And at the end of the day I expect from time to time we may not always agree on everything but my — I'm very clear having been a legislator — my job is to offer advice. And if I see a matter that's of some concern to me, I'll offer that advice to legislators, but ultimately you're then going to decide whether to make that legislative change or whatever. So I look forward to working with you and your colleagues also to achieve that end.

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: — Mr. Yates.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Dickson, I would just like to thank you for the work your office has done. As one of the members who has used your office, I was very, very impressed in the quick manner in which you responded, and the quality of the information provided.

As we move forward dealing with the issues of privacy and information protection, balance is going to become more and more an issue of discussion and one that we will face also as legislators every day.

And in achieving that balance the role that your office will play in educating government organizations and the public is key. I have a question that's facing us today and one which we would be looking into so being that you are here, I would be asking you.

Routinely information has been provided in past years so that members of the legislature, by school divisions, could write letters of congratulations to graduates. It's been raised this spring that that is no longer allowable under the freedom of information Acts. And I'm just wondering is this an issue — and there's some uncertainty around there — is this an issue that is in fact, that information not permissible to be shared? Or is this an issue of concern because of new legislation coming into place and people uncertain and . . . ?

Mr. Dickson: — Well I can tell you Mr. Yates, that I've actually received a formal request for a review on that issue and I haven't finished my response yet. No, I think I remember this issue coming up in Alberta for example, in exactly the same circumstance. It was legislators — I don't remember whether it was federal or provincial — wanting to be able to send a congratulatory letters and having had an informal arrangement with the school to be able to get that information.

I don't recall how it was dealt with in Alberta. I haven't frankly had time yet to specifically turn my mind to it. I think it's an example though of, you have this legislation and once people become aware of it then questions come up. And sometimes it means those practices that have gone on for a long time . . . It's a question of revisiting and determining whether it still complies with the legislation. So I'm hedging just because I want to just finish my review, and I'd be happy to share with you my conclusion once I've looked at it. It's that time of the year I suppose, and it's . . .

Mr. Yates: — Do you have any idea when you would be coming to some conclusion on that particular issue?

Mr. Dickson: — Oh I expect within the next week.

Mr. Yates: — Okay, thank you very much. That's all my questions, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you. Ms. Junor.

Ms. Junor: — Well thank you. As the original SHIN board member and the minister that was responsible for SHIN for a time, and that the original HIPA was brought in when I was the minister, I'm quite pleased to hear that your comments . . . your comments on HIPA not being a barrier to the electronic health record. Because that was the big worry of the legislation at the time we were bringing it forward; and we passed it and then had to revise it to fit the districts' needs.

And I think you've answered what I was going to ask, is that you will be bringing forward anything that you see as a barrier to an electronic health record that's in legislation or regulations.

And you will point that out to us so that we can move on to getting an electronic health record as finances and technology allow.

And I know that when we first started to look at putting SHIN out into the communities we ran into the exact thing you talked about, is the lack of technology and the lack of technical knowledge. So we were enthused to do it — deep SHIN I think we called it at one point — to put it into one area. And went out there and people were not familiar or comfortable enough with computers to actually accept the technology so we had to back off and start looking at different ways of doing it.

So I'm appreciative of your comments that with all the work that's been done on HIPA that it isn't going to be a barrier, and I'm hoping that you see that the current legislation and regulations we have do allow us to move forward with an electronic health record.

Mr. Dickson: — Yes it's . . . The electronic health record is an interesting challenge. I've just finished meeting with . . . the annual meeting of privacy commissioners from across Canada. And we had a presentation from a representative of Health Canada and actually of an FPT (federal-provincial-territorial) committee that's looking at harmonizing health information standards across Canada.

And I wouldn't want to leave you with the impression that I think necessarily any electronic health record model is going to work in Saskatchewan or is appropriate. It continues to be a question of, as this thing is designed that there will be whole series of challenges and issues and questions as it takes shape and what it covers and what it doesn't and who will have access to what bits and pieces of your personal health information or mine.

So I think a great deal of work yet to be done on it, but it's certainly something my office is going to be engaged in, in Saskatchewan. And we'll be working with the federal Privacy Commissioner and so on, because there's an FPT component to this. And so, it makes sense also for privacy commissioners to share experiences and views, so we'll continue to do that. And my intention will certainly be to offer commentary to the legislature on issues and challenges as we see us move towards NEHR (national electronic health records).

Ms. Junor: — Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Dickson. Seeing no further members expressing interest to ask questions, I refer members to Estimates book on page 131 and 132, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, vote 55, item (IO01). Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Subvote (IP01) agreed to.

The Deputy Chair: — Motion (IP01), correct that.

Be it resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2005, the following sums for the Information and Privacy Commissioner, \$387,000.

Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — We need a motion. Mr. Hagel.

Vote 55 agreed to.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you very much, Mr. Dickson. And, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Mr. Dickson: — Thank you very much, Chairman, committee members.

The Deputy Chair: — Members, with your permission, I would suggest that we now ask the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner's estimates to be dealt with. They are on page 129 and 130 of your Estimates book.

Thank you, members. As I noted when we initiated the agenda, the Conflict of Interest Commissioner is unable to be here today. Mr. Speaker is here. And are you going to introduce Ms. Borowski as being part of this or . . .

General Revenue Fund Conflict of Interest Commissioner Vote 57

Subvote (CC01)

The Speaker: — I'm not sure if . . . Well I will introduce . . . It is my pleasure to introduce Ms. Borowski. And I . . . As you know, Mr. Gerrand is very pithy in his comments and I know that he would probably just simply want to express his appreciation, the fact that all members got their form 1's in, and I hope they all got them in on time.

So with that we'll take any notes down that members might have and pass them on.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Are there questions, members? If not, as I noted in the Estimates book the Conflict of Interest Commissioner's vote is on page 129 and 130. The item no. (CC01), is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Subvote (CC01) agreed to.

The Deputy Chair: —

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2005 the following sums, \$122,000.

Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — A motion? Mr. Yates. Thank you very much.

Vote 57 agreed to.

**General Revenue Fund
Legislative Assembly
Vote 21**

Subvote (LG01)

The Deputy Chair: — Members, I would like to refer you to Legislative Assembly vote 21, page 133 in the Estimates book. Mr. Speaker, would you make introductions please.

The Speaker: — Thank you very much. We have the managers here from the Legislative Assembly and it's my pleasure at this time to introduce the managers. First of all the Clerk for the Legislative Assembly seated immediately to my left, and beside her is Marilyn Borowski, who is the manager of financial services. And to my right is Margaret Tulloch, who is the assistant to the Speaker.

And then, and not in any particular order here, but I see Greg Putz who is the Deputy Clerk; and then seated beside Greg is Linda Kaminski, who is a human resources and administrative services manager; Margaret — sometimes known as Meta — Woods, Clerk Assistant; and Marian Powell, the chief librarian; and beside her is Pat Kolesar, the assistant legislative librarian.

In the back row we have Gary Ward who is the manager for broadcast services. And seated beside Gary is Pat Shaw, the Sergeant-at-Arms; and Ken Ring, Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk; and Lenni Frohman from *Hansard*. Did I get everybody? These are all the people that are here.

Today what I would like to do is . . . we are here first of all to approve the budget as recommended by the Board of Internal Economy. We're doing it in this committee. We used to do it in what used to be known as the Estimates Committee. I want to give just a very brief review of this year's priorities and accomplishments, and then a bit of a forward look as to some of our objectives and plan for the current year and into '05. And then I will turn it over to Gwenn Ronyk to give you an overview of some of the figures and deal with the numbers.

I think that over the last year our priority was to do a lot of planning and a lot of preparation in anticipation of the implementation of the changes to some of our rules, particularly with respect to committees. This took a very great deal of time and training, learning on the part of the personnel involved, and also took some effort to change the infrastructure to put this room into place, to set up the temporary facility in the Chamber itself for the other committee, for the committees to be able to sit simultaneously.

This was a big job on the part of people in the broadcast services who installed the equipment in here as well. And also quite an adjustment on the part of *Hansard* who now are recording proceedings simultaneously in more than one — in both committee facilities. This last year also was an election year so there was a lot of work to do with respect to the dissolution of MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) offices during the writ, and then of course re-engaging the offices and resupplying them as we got into the new session.

And I wanted also to bring to members' attention some changes that have been made in the reporting systems based on our —

the work that's been done with strategic planning in the Legislative Assembly and specifically, just recently members were given the annual report to the Saskatchewan Legislative Library. And if you've had a chance to take a look at it you'll notice that the way the reporting is being done is considerably different than it has been done in the past. There are goals set out, objectives, and then performance indicators for each of those objectives. It's a direction that I think, a direction that has taken some time to implement and it would be . . . and members' advice and members' feedback on that would be quite welcomed.

As we go into this year and into the next, each department within the Legislative Assembly has set out a set of goals and objectives for the current year, and it's in part 3 of the estimates book that was given to the Board of Internal Economy and available to all the members.

Another challenge is going to be for this committee, this committee that we're sitting on right now is to develop a way to deal with the obligations it has with respect to overseeing and supervising . . . pardon me, overseeing and giving the members an opportunity to look at the work of the independent officers, not only their budgets but sort of the overall directions that they are going to. They would appreciate being able to do that.

As we approach the centennial year some of our objectives or things on our wish list still remain. If the opportunity and the money presented itself, we feel that one of our priorities would be to put in a new sound system and carpet into the Chamber. That would be something that we see as a priority for us in terms of capital because as you know the sound system failed us once last year, and it is rather aged. So it's going to stay on our objective list for awhile.

We've also, with the success we've had in this committee room and having a specific room set up like this for committees, we will continue to be looking at how and when we could expand that to a second committee room into the future.

2005 being a centennial year, it would be very good for the Legislative Assembly to have a gift shop open. We looked at several ways of doing that. And we have not yet come up with a successful way. A gift shop, one of the biggest problems is that it's hard to see how something like that could actually pay for itself. And we're not in a position at this stage to be able to fund it. And yet at the same time we don't want to set up a system that would appear to be in competition with somebody outside the legislature.

So we're kind of trying to marry those two ideas and get some other group to come in to operate a gift shop where they could perhaps sell other materials besides materials specific to the Legislative Assembly, which might enable them to keep it viable.

One of the big challenges facing all of us in the Legislative Assembly is going to be hosting of the MLC (Midwestern Legislative Conference) in 2005, and we've got a lot of people volunteering to do work on that. And then also to adapt to any plans that are forthcoming for centennial celebrations. And those we're looking forward to with considerable anticipation. And it's something nice to plan for and that is a good

celebration. And there's a lot of blue-skying and just free dialogue is going on about that right now. But I can't say that we've got a specific plan in place for any of the celebrations yet, but it's a matter of working these things out with the celebrations office and with MLAs on the whole.

With that then I want to be able to turn it over to Gwenn Ronyk, the mike over to Gwenn Ronyk for a moment so that she can brief you on the budget. Thank you.

Ms. Ronyk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Chair, the cover page on the summary that you have received shows that our overall increases that are being requested in our estimates for the 2004-2005 fiscal year amount to a 1.5 per cent increase overall. So the Assembly is holding the line reasonably well and the board reduced our requested budget in order to meet appropriate targets.

The budgetary side of the budget ended up with a point nine per cent increase, less than 1 per cent increase over last year. So I think our affairs are in reasonable order in that regard.

The summary page also shows you that sort of one of the major areas of increase in terms of percentage was in our accommodation and central services, and that was partly because of the need to expand space in the Walter Scott Building and some costs that we are incurring in this building with respect to the cabling of — paying for cable services in the Legislative Building.

Otherwise the increases are reasonably minimal and as the Speaker mentioned, the largest sort of base changes is due to committee reform. We've identified about \$120,000 in this year's budget that are increases that are due to committee reform. And that does not include any additional support staff or research staff for committees. That funding is there for a sessional broadcast person, additional production support in *Hansard*, additional editing and printing in the Law Clerk's office, binding and printing of Bills and so on that are related to the different way that we are now doing Bills and estimates in simultaneous committees.

And I think I will leave it at that and await any questions you may have.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you very much. Mr. Yates.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. My questions have to do with some of the future priorities that the Speaker had mentioned. And it centres around unexpended at the year-end . . . If you have unexpended dollars at year-end, do you have the opportunity to use that towards, as an example, the expenditure of upgrading the sound system in the Assembly?

Ms. Ronyk: — Yes we would. If a decision was made that we should pursue that project, resources that were not expended at the end of a fiscal year could be used.

The trouble is the time frame by which they have to be utilized is very tight, because we do lose . . . the funding lapses at the end of the fiscal year. And a big project like the sound system requires a fair bit of lead time in order to prepare the specifications, the proper tenders, and then actual installation

and testing and so on. So we're looking at, I would say at the minimum, a six-month project there. So it does make it difficult to do things very quickly.

Mr. Yates: — All right. Thank you, Mr. Chair. A number of the elements of upgrading the system though, the capital costs perhaps could be purchased in a particular fiscal year and paid for if there were the determination to move ahead with something like upgrading the Assembly. Is that not true?

Ms. Ronyk: — Oh yes. We could certainly do the project over, you know, two fiscal years and utilize any savings that we would have accumulated by the end of a fiscal year.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you. Ms. Draude.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Speaker, and the staff that we have here today. I thank you for your reports.

I have a couple of questions. One of them is to broadcast services. I'm wondering if there's any way that you can track the usage of the live broadcasting. I know that it . . . I have some people that tell me that they watch it faithfully, and I'm just wondering if you . . . I'm not a techno whiz at all and I'm just wondering if you know what type of usage there is.

The Speaker: — I wonder if Gary . . . I'll ask Mr. Gary Ward if he can comment on that. I'm not sure, were you able to get the whole question? I wonder if you . . .

Ms. Draude: — Sure, sorry.

The Speaker: — I wonder if you wouldn't mind repeating the question.

Ms. Draude: — Sure. Gary, I'm just wondering, is there any way that you can track what the public usage is of the live broadcasting? I know that people that are really in tune to listening to the legislature probably are excited they can do this now if they can't get near a TV. But do you really know how many, what percentage of the general public are using it, or is it something that can be tracked?

Mr. Ward: — No, we don't have any way of doing that. We had . . . some years ago the same question was asked if there was any way of finding out what our viewership was, and the cost of doing so was prohibitive — it was in the tens of thousands of dollars — and they wouldn't really guarantee much accuracy on it either.

Ms. Draude: — Okay.

Mr. Ward: — So it seemed to be kind of a pointless exercise.

Ms. Draude: — I would imagine probably the usage will go up as more and more people understand it's available and more people do . . . understand that they do . . . with the field committees now that they can have more input. So I'm thinking it probably will go up. Thank you.

Mr. Ward: — I think so. You know, just what I've heard personally, you know, from people at the cable stations and so on, that their viewership . . . They do get comments about the committees and they find that that's actually more interesting to watch than what the House had been.

Ms. Draude: — Hard to believe.

I have a question for *Hansard*. I know that with the committee system the turnaround time for the actual written transcript was doubtful at first and I'm wondering if you . . . Can it be actually given to us by the next morning now, or is there still quite a turnaround time?

Thanks, Gary.

The Speaker: — While we're calling Lenni to the table here I just would mention, Ms. Draude, that we do have the capabilities, I believe, for identifying the number of contacts through the video streaming technology. And we can ask the people from information systems to give you that information.

Ms. Draude: — Appreciate it.

The Speaker: — So, Lenni Frohman, please.

Ms. Frohman: — Pardon me, my voice is a little rough. Thank you, Ms. Draude, for the question. What we find, once we got going after our first week, was that a typical afternoon where the House would be having adjourned itself into the two committees, that often at the end of that day — by that evening — one of the committees would be ready and posted to the Web and printed, and we would get the second committee ready that morning, to be posted to the Web that morning.

So we find that that routinely has been our pattern, well under a 24-hour turnaround. And I think the latest we've been in has been later in the morning, 11 o'clock, actually getting the printed copy ready. The first week took us a little bit there, but I'm also interested in any feedback you have too. Thanks.

Ms. Draude: — Well you're doing a great job . . .

Ms. Frohman: — Oh, thank you.

Ms. Draude: — And it's not that . . . and I understand it was a learning experience for all of us. In fact many members spent some time trying to find out which room they were supposed to be in, and which question, anyone to ask questions. And so it wasn't a criticism, it was more of a request on . . .

Ms. Frohman: — No. Why I appreciate the question. And it's often to credit editors like Dave, who is behind you, who manages the ebb and flow of conversation in the House when it's set up as a Chamber too. So thank you.

Ms. Draude: — And I think it must be a challenge sometimes when some of us speak very quickly to be able to hear everything that we say, so thank you.

I've got a number of questions, so it's probably going to mean I'll be asking other members to come forward. So I'm wondering about the permanent calendar, if it's going to have a

financial impact on the Legislative Assembly when we have more of a routine, or proposed routine for House sitting days.

Ms. Ronyk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We haven't had a lot of time to really assess the impact of a calendar financially. We do expect that being able to plan is going to be very helpful for the services that we try to provide. Of course the more time we have to prepare, I think the better we are going to be able to provide the services. Knowing that there may be a sort of a regular winter/spring period and a regular fall period will help us work around the support into those time frames.

Our financial costs are driven to a good extent by the number of sitting days that we have. So I am assuming there won't be a lot of change in the number of sitting days, so I wouldn't just be able to identify, you know, savings in that regard. Certainly we should be able to be a little more efficient in our preparations since we know what we are aiming for in terms of time frames.

Some of our costs are when we have to commit to our satellite distribution and we do need time frames in order to get the contracts that we need in those areas. And the schedule or a time frame for a calendar for the House is going to be very helpful in that area.

Committees, we will likely know a little more about how their time frames are going to work given that we know when the House is going to be sitting. So that will be helpful in planning the staffing and so on for that work.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. I would imagine that with the two different times, maybe Pages that will be required in the Assembly, it may be more difficult to have consistent people in the Assembly.

Ms. Ronyk: — Yes, you have identified a good . . . an issue for us, with our part-time people. That also applies to, you know, our security and our *Hansard* staff who are largely non-permanent employees. In the *Hansard* and security, we do tend to get the same people back on an ongoing basis. And therefore it probably shouldn't be as big a problem there.

But for Pages, certainly we don't keep them and if we do hire in the fall, we're likely to lose them to other jobs or to going back to school or to other things if we can't offer them work again until the spring. But knowing . . . when once we know that, we will be able to deal with it and we may need to have a number of them change, or even the whole group may change from one element of the session to the other.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, has there ever been any talk of putting an ATM (automated teller machine) machine in the legislative . . . I don't care; I want to give it a shot.

The Speaker: — It's never come up formally that I can recall.

Ms. Draude: — It is now.

The Speaker: — It is now.

Ms. Draude: — Just a question.

The Speaker: — It's something we can take a look at. But

again, we'll probably end up with this same problem in terms of appearing to give favour to one group as opposed to another to put in a machine. That's the first thing that comes to my mind.

And I do have a little additional information here. More specifically, I've been advised by our Deputy Clerk that there we have approximately 40 to 50 people watching video streaming per day. And although there have been other times when it's peaked . . . and it's peaked on budget day; it was up to about 450 people.

And also just looking in this direction, I did not introduce Iris Lang who is hard at work here today as one of the Clerk assistants, so I want to welcome Iris here as well.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. I have a question for our Sergeant-at-Arms. I think it was driven by one of our members that just came back from England and some of the issues that happened over there in the last little while and he was talking about the increased security that was, is required there in their parliament right now. And I'm wondering if there's any thoughts right now around security and any changes to the security systems that we have right now?

Mr. Shaw: — Well security is constantly being reviewed. We think about it all the time. We had contemplated putting in metal detectors and the board didn't pass that and were considering it. There has also been talk in past of putting up some sort of barrier in the Chamber for the galleries to prevent somebody from throwing something over or jumping over or whatever. And that didn't receive favourable reviews either. But those two things have been considered and are still being considered, but nothing concrete has come out of it yet.

Ms. Draude: — How often . . . or do you ever check rooms to see if there's any kind of listening devices involved in the rooms?

Mr. Shaw: — On a request basis. We've had the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) in here three times — the CTI team, the counter intrusion . . . technical intrusion team and they've done whatever offices that have been required. The latest one was approximately a year ago. Nothing has been found.

And as I've mentioned to both the government and opposition caucus members, that probably the biggest threat in terms of that is cellphones and misdirected faxes. This building has a security presence 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. People entering the building are required to wear identification which is, I might add, really increased our security profile here. Our incidents of theft and other things in the building have dramatically dropped — in fact to almost zero since the implementation of the photo-identification cards.

But one of the factors again is that we have a 365-day-of-the-year, 24-hour-a-day security presence, which I can't think of any other building in the province that has that. So that severely diminishes the possibility of somebody getting into to do a bugging of any kind.

And really, other than some of the low, low-end bugging devices that can be purchased from RadioShack or whatever, they can't possess those. It's illegal, so you'd have to go to a

clandestine operator to get that. And it takes some sophistication, particularly when it . . . in terms of telephones to do any kind of bugging.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. I don't think I have any further questions. But I do want to on behalf of probably all members, but especially on speaking on behalf of all the people like my caucus, I want to thank all of you in your different areas. I don't have questions for everyone, not because I don't have an interest in it, but it's because sometimes like in life we take people for granted and we know they're there and we know you're doing a great job.

When I was first elected people said, first thing they said to me is don't change. And when I get into this building everybody treats us all with such dignity and reverence that sometimes I feel like I'm very important, and get back home again and I realize life hasn't changed at all.

But I want you to know that you do . . . you're just a tremendous help to all of us and that we really do appreciate you. And for the new members I know that they're just amazed at when they came through their lessons and realized what it takes to make this business of governing of people operate. So thank you very much to all of you.

The Deputy Chair: — Hear! Hear!

Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a couple of questions. We haven't . . . I know we haven't been at it all that long, but based on experience so far in the operations of the new committee structure, is there any reason to believe that we are going to . . . that we're heading off target budget wise?

Ms. Ronyk: — No, I don't think so at this point. The committees are doing the work that would have been done in committees of the whole House, or committees of Finance, and until the committees start doing additional work beyond that, I don't think it should have a financial impact.

For example the expense or the cost of *Hansard* are directly driven by the number of hours and that really . . . It would, having maybe more hours but . . . or the same number of hours in a smaller amount of time, but that doesn't change the cost itself. So I think we're on target with our budget. It's early in the year to tell and early in the committee system to tell. But we do not expect it to have an impact that would cause us not to be able to maintain our forecasts as we have them.

Mr. Hagel: — My second question, Mr. Speaker, is for yourself. One of the things that's happened around here the last couple of years that I was really pleased to see was the introduction of the journalism institute. And I just wanted to ask, is there an expenditure to the Legislative Assembly related to that. I assume there is some small amount. What amount is that and secondly, is it the intention to be continuing with the journalism institute?

The Speaker: — Thank you very much. Most of the work that's involved here is done by staff that we have and also by people who volunteer, MLAs for example and other people

whose job is connected with governance. But in addition to that, we expend probably slightly under \$1,000 but we do provide lunch here for the participants and one . . . the Lieutenant Governor provides a lunch for them as well. And over and above that is the coffee that we would be providing and use of ordinary materials, like photocopying for example.

Mr. Hagel: — And the future intentions?

The Speaker: — We would intend to continue with this with the college at the U of R (University of Regina) and we also want to extend an invitation to any practising journalists who may want to come from the newspaper association or from the electronic media. We have had some expression of interest on that, but the difficulty there is that most of these people are in private industry and unless there's a specific thing that they feel is job-related, they're really unable to get away.

Mr. Hagel: — And at this point in time, do you see this being an annual institute for students at the School of Journalism?

The Speaker: — So far.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay. And just one final, and related to it, I've had some inquiry just informally by a couple of students who are in the Education Faculty at the university who had heard about the parliamentary institute . . . social sciences institute on parliamentary democracy, who wondered whether there had ever been discussions with the Faculty of Education in terms of some of the training for teachers before they become professionals in the field; being in a position to have included in their course of studies some brief content related to the practice of parliamentary democracy as part of the social sciences curricula, I would presume. Has there been any discussion in that regard?

The Speaker: — Well this year when we got into the Social Science Teachers' Institute, we found that, because the date we had chosen was right around holiday time that we . . . actually our numbers were down from the usual 24 people. So what we did is we extended a quick invitation through . . . to the College of Education and we had two students attend. The feedback that we've got is quite positive, that they enjoyed it. And I think the teachers that participated enjoyed having the student teachers with them as well. So it is something that I think we will discuss as we go into planning next year.

Mr. Hagel: — Good. Glad to hear that. And I just also want to join with Ms. Draude in saying how much I appreciate . . . I think all members of the Assembly do appreciate the good work of the Assembly here. It would be my view that the operations of the Legislative Assembly — from the Clerk's table throughout the organization — are held in very high regard in the nation, and I think that's something about which we are all justifiably proud in the province and I want to commend the level of service as well. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I want to thank both of you for those comments and I certainly would add mine to it. It's very much a pleasure to work with our professional staff in the Legislative Assembly Office.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and

I would like to also express our appreciation — my appreciation — to all the members of the Legislative Assembly for all the functions and support they provide to members. I think it's a huge testimony to the fact that this Assembly functions as well as it does, that the officers of the Assembly conduct and discharge their duties in such a professional manner. So thank you very much.

With that we are then . . . we would refer members to the Estimates book, pages 133 through 135, vote 21, subvote (LG01). Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Subvote (LG01) agreed to.

The Deputy Chair: — Subvote (LG02). Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Subvote (LG02) agreed to.

The Deputy Chair: — Subvote (LG03). Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Subvote (LG03) agreed to.

The Deputy Chair: — Subvote (LG05) is statutory.

Subvote (LG04). Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Subvote (LG04) agreed to.

The Deputy Chair: — Subvote (LG06) is also statutory.

Members, the main estimate:

Be it resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2005, the following sums: for Legislative Assembly, \$6,319,000.

Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — I need a motion on that. Mr. Yates.

Vote 21 agreed to.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates
Legislative Assembly
Vote 21**

The Deputy Chair: — And the supplementary estimates:

Be it resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2004, the following sum: for Legislative Assembly, \$224,000.

Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Vote 21 agreed to.

The Deputy Chair: — I need a motion for that as well. Mr. Hagel.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I think we have a couple of motions that we need to deal with, members. Members, following the approval of these estimates, we are distributing a draft report for your consideration. And if you members see fit that we will have a motion that this draft report be adopted and presented to the Assembly on May 21, 2004 . . . May 27, 2004.

Mr. Hagel moves that the draft third report of the Standing Committee on House Services be adopted and presented to the Assembly on May 27, 2004. All those agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you. Is there any other business? There being no further business for this committee, motion to adjourn? Ms. Junor.

Thank you very much, members.

The committee adjourned at 11:11.

