



STANDING COMMITTEE ON HOUSE SERVICES

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON HOUSE SERVICES

Hon. Dan D'Autremont, Chair
Cannington

Mr. Warren McCall, Deputy Chair
Regina Elphinstone-Centre

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff
Saskatoon Silver Springs

Mr. Herb Cox
The Battlefords

Mr. David Forbes
Saskatoon Centre

Mr. Corey Tochor
Saskatoon Eastview

Mr. Doyle Vermette
Cumberland

Mr. Randy Weekes
Biggar

[The committee met at 15:01.]

The Deputy Chair: — Colleagues, officials, welcome this afternoon to the Standing Committee on House Services. We're here for the consideration of estimates and supplementary estimates for the Legislative Assembly and officers of the Legislative Assembly. We're joined by committee members Mr. Cheveldayoff, Mr. Weekes, Mr. Tochor, Mr. Vermette. I think we've also got Mr. Belanger here as interested participant with a voice, no vote.

Anyway we've got an hour in front of us. We've got three independent officers of the selection to hear a bit more detail about their estimates. So with that, I would turn things over to Mr. Speaker who is Chair of the House Services Committee. I am serving as Deputy Chair, of course, but Mr. Speaker has got some folks to ferry through the proceedings, given that we're here pursuant to rule 139(5) to consider the following estimates for the legislative branch of government, having been deemed referred to this committee on March 26th, 2015.

Those are of course vote 76, Advocate for Children and Youth; vote 34, Chief Electoral Officer; vote 57, Conflict of Interest Commissioner; vote 55, Information and Privacy Commission; vote 21, Legislative Assembly; vote 56, Ombudsman; vote 28, Provincial Auditor; and the supplementary estimate for the legislative branch of government, having been deemed referred to the committee on March 18th, 2015 which is of course vote 76, the Advocate for Children and Youth. But with that, I would turn things over to the Speaker and independent officers that are here with us today.

The Speaker: — Well thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. The old saying goes that the Speaker figuratively has no voice, and today it's literally I have no voice.

The officers will be presenting their budgets and be prepared to answer any of the committee's questions. It's a pleasure to be here before the House Services Committee to carry out the proper functions of the committee and to answer the questions regarding the estimates. I will turn it over now to the officers, and to my right is Mr. Michael Boda, the Chief Electoral Officer.

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

Subvote (CE01)

The Deputy Chair: — Dr. Boda, if you could, before you get going, and this is probably what you're just about to undertake, if you could properly introduce yourself and officials that have joined you here today.

Mr. Boda: — Absolutely. My name's Michael Boda. I am the Chief Electoral Officer for the province of Saskatchewan. This is Jeff Kress. He is our deputy CEO [chief electoral officer] for electoral operations joining us today. Would you like me to just say a couple of opening words?

It has been a very busy period for Elections Saskatchewan,

going back into the last part of the calendar year. We conducted a by-election in the constituency of Lloydminster in November, relocated staff to a new location on Hillsdale Street in November. We responded to legislation proclaimed in December and began preparing to the corresponding regulations.

We began preparations to establish the foundations for what is an historic change. We're moving from our last enumeration, which will be part of this coming general election, to establishing, just in advance of the election, the new provincial permanent register of voters. And along with that, we've completed an election year budget for the 28th general election for submission this . . . And this past week, as I mentioned to Mr. Cheveldayoff, we completed pre-training in Saskatoon for our field leadership team made up of returning officers and election clerks. And that was a very important event for us.

The 28th general election will be the largest event we've ever held in the province. It'll require more than 10,000 temporary election officials; has six registered political parties involved; 200 candidates, over 200 candidates; and focuses on our 800,000 eligible voters. So the FY [fiscal year] '15-16 estimates were submitted to support these efforts in light of the legislature's mandate to reform Elections Saskatchewan, but also in light of factors that have an impact on all of us, and that includes demographic challenges, economic challenges, and social challenges. So with that, I am happy to answer any of your questions.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you very much, Dr. Boda. Committee colleagues, any questions? I see Mr. Belanger and, just to make certain, as not a committee member, I'm not chitted in, but certainly as a member of the Assembly here as a participant. Anyway, with that, Mr. Belanger.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thanks so much for your initial comments, Mr. Boda.

My very first comment I want to clarify was, was I correct in hearing you saying that you have 800,000 eligible voters for Saskatchewan?

Mr. Boda: — That is correct. That is a relatively accurate number.

Mr. Belanger: — How did you arrive at that number, if I may ask? Just curious.

Mr. Boda: — That number? It is a difficult number to establish, and we have worked hard to determine whether there would be a provincial government agency that would be able to facilitate that. We were unable to get that number, so we have outsourced it to an individual in Saskatchewan who's a statistical expert, and he was able to assist us with that. We're also working with Elections Canada because they have a similar number that they have to establish.

Mr. Belanger: — The line of, the reason I'm asking that particular question is that, as we've spoken in the past, I as an Aboriginal member, we want to see the Aboriginal community participate a lot more in the elections of Saskatchewan and, of

course, of Canada. And would you be able to give us a figure as to how many of the 800,000 voters would be of Aboriginal ancestry? Could you give us a figure today?

Mr. Boda: — Those are not numbers that Elections Saskatchewan would have collated in the past. It may very well be that Elections Canada would have some of those numbers. Part of the reason why I have encouraged a transition from doing the traditional enumeration to doing a permanent register of voters is so that we can work more collaboratively with Elections Canada and be able to produce those statistics. But given where we're at as an election management body, we wouldn't be able to provide those numbers.

Mr. Belanger: — One of the issues that we have wrestled with — and we've had this conversation before, you and I; I'm pretty sure it was you and I — we had this in the Assembly during a similar venue in which I've long advocated for an effort by the appropriate agencies. And I think the Chief Electoral office is one particular agency, I think, that should be involved to capitalize on a movement out there that is encouraging Aboriginal participation in the election.

I'm not certain of the advocate group's name, but they've begun a process through the social media to encourage people to get out and vote within the Aboriginal community. While we are obviously involving the Métis people, that effort is particularly focused towards First Nations because what we have, in many people's thinking, is that since many First Nations are viewed as federal responsibility, they don't participate in the provincial election too much in the past. This group is trying to correct that misconception that because you're a federal responsibility, you shouldn't be participating in the provincial election. So my question to you is, are there any specific measures that are being undertaken as a result of the enhanced role that you've seen your office play in trying to promote Aboriginal participation when it comes to voting?

Mr. Boda: — Well, thank you for your question. It is an important question. It is an issue that we take seriously at Elections Saskatchewan. What I will tell you is that Elections Saskatchewan and as Chief Electoral Officer, I'm very concerned that everyone have the opportunity to vote in the province, that everyone, all of the 800,000 eligible voters have the opportunity to vote.

If you look at the traditional election management body, there's really two elements that we would look at. One is the reduction of barriers to all voters. And that is principally the concern of an election management body, that we would make sure that there weren't barriers to voting and, if there were, we would work to reduce those administrative barriers in order to allow people to vote if they so choose.

Now there's also an element of motivating people to vote, and Elections Saskatchewan doesn't view itself as the sole carrier of that responsibility by any means. This is the responsibility of all the political parties, of third party groups, of individual citizens living on streets, encouraging people to vote. And so this is something that's part of our mandate, but it is much more important that we look at how to reduce those barriers, and we are doing that. And we're doing that across the population, so it's important that it be clear that we're looking at all of the

population of Saskatchewan.

Now what are we doing in particular for First Nations? I can tell you that in the coming weeks I will be in touch with each of the chiefs well in advance of the coming general election. It's something that I feel that's important, that there be open communication between the Chief Electoral Officer and the chiefs of the First Nations, outlining for them . . . or asking them for assistance in terms of creating the list. And the quality of the list — just because, you know, you can vote even if you're not on the list, I'm sure you're aware of this — but the list and the quality of the list is what enhances and facilitates the effectiveness on election day. And so what I will be doing is communicating with the chiefs in order to establish a mechanism by which we can improve the quality of that list.

The second thing is, of course, we've established that identification is something that can be a barrier. And as a result, I will be communicating with the chiefs well in advance, indicating what it will take in order to establish letters of attestation that have been used, that were used in 2011. They were used during the by-election up in Lloydminster and will be used again during the coming general election.

But it's a process of simply saying, this is the mechanism, this is the process by which this election will be implemented, and we simply want to make clear well in advance because I think that we can always do better. And we haven't communicated well in advance in the past at Elections Saskatchewan, so that's what we will be planning to do.

Mr. Belanger: — Yes, I think it's really important. And I'm not being overdramatic in the sense of saying that it's really important, some of the work that your office is undertaking to ensure the integrity of our democracy. I often speak about that in the Assembly, that my father was a World War II vet. And he often spoke about the value of freedom and the democracy that we enjoy. He spoke highly of that.

So the whole notion of running a fair and inclusive election I think is the spirit of some of the discussions that we've had with him. So I really take that, your role, very seriously. And as an Aboriginal person involved with provincial politics, I just sense at times that — and many people may try to dissuade me, but they so far have not — that I feel that there have been barriers put up in place.

[15:15]

And I'll give you a couple of examples; I'm sure I've shared them with you. But your staff that runs elections in our region, and certainly in my constituency, are professional people. I know most of them because most everybody knows the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly], and especially ones that are involved with the election. But when I go in there to vote and obviously cast my ballot, they will not give me a ballot until I show them my ID [identification]. And everyone in that building knows who I am. Everyone that worked for your office know who I am, but they will not give me a ballot unless I show my ID.

And you know, it may work in the First Nations' favour. We're really pleased that the attestation process is encouraged because

the more people that come out to vote, the greater the success of our democracy. That's a fundamental argument that we always make. We saw evidence of some of the meddling in the process, you know, by political — I'm not going to get into the discussion here — but by political parties on numerous fronts to try and discourage voting, voter suppression tactics that are being used.

And when you're an elder in northern Saskatchewan that has language barriers, guess what? You're not going to have a driver's licence with your picture ID. If you're an immigrant that recently enjoyed status as a new Canadian, new Saskatchewan resident, you may not have a picture ID or a driver's licence. If you're somebody that has a disability, you know, there's a lot of people in our province that do not have a photo ID driver's licence. I'm talking the elders, some of the immigrant community, a lot of the Aboriginal people. So when I walk in there and I say I want to vote and they say, well we need your ID, Buckley. That's what they say to me. Well you know who I am. No, you still have to show us your photo ID.

Now I think that is an incredible barrier, and I will still maintain that the voter suppression tactics that were put in place as a result of the electoral process is shameful. If you want to encourage First Nations and Aboriginal people to vote and elderly people to vote and new immigrants to vote, then you've got to reduce those barriers. And having a photo ID driver's licence presented, even though officials in your office, from your office know who I am, they're still professional and they still want to see my ID.

I'm not in any way, shape, or form attacking their integrity nor am I questioning their motives. I just think they're following the rules, and those rules are unbecoming of our democracy. And when we see evidence of that happen, we go to the independent officers such as yourself, to tell you, to encourage you, you've got to remove those barriers to encourage greater opportunity, especially for First Nations and Métis people to participate in voting. And we've seen time and time again effort to try and suppress vote.

In this day and age, in 2015, we think that's not a very intelligent thing to do, but some of those practices still occur. So it's my long way of saying to you that those that may want to put rules in place to suppress vote because I don't have a picture ID, that we have to find ways and means in which your office, from an independent perspective, does exactly what you intend to do, and that is to encourage full participation by removing barriers. So that's why the question was so important to me. So besides the specific issues around First Nations, we applaud the effort for the attestation. It helps out tremendously.

We know that there was also a rule that was trying to be put in place where one band member could only attest for another one. They couldn't attest for two or three other band members. I think that rule, through the graces of your office, was fixed properly, was corrected properly.

But this is exactly what I mean when we say that there's certain hurdles, certain barriers that are put in place. So all this process I guess, and all what I'm . . . My conclusion I'm trying to arrive at here is that we (a) want to encourage you to continue looking at ways and means to reduce those barriers; (b) to be on guard

to ensure that there are specific groups of people out there that don't have photo ID; and (c) that we have a more open and honest system of qualification to vote.

And I'll use myself as an example. Going there to vote, they want my photo ID. That's just plain silly. They know who I am. I'm the candidate, for crying out loud. So why would they need to insist on a photo ID? So even if your staff members say, I can guarantee that he's a resident of this constituency, so let him vote. Even something of that sort or signing a form of saying that you are a member of the constituency and that you're allowed to vote, self-declaring that. Even that's a legal, binding contract; I used to be able to do that.

So there's four or five examples of some of my older relations that walked to the polling station and tried to vote. They couldn't unless they had a photo ID. They walked back to their homes, got their photo ID, and went back to vote. Now to me, that was a barrier for them. But they knew there were people who were trying to prevent them from voting, so they were determined to vote.

And I also concur with your assessment that it's everybody's responsibility to advocate participation in a democracy. We do it. You know, our leaders in our community do it. Everybody does it. But the defenders of the integrity of that process would be your office, and that's why it's really important we pay attention to what you do. So I just wanted to get your response to these few comments I've made.

Mr. Boda: — Sure. Well thank you, thank you for your comments. I think what I would like to do is begin by talking a little bit about our work together last week in Saskatoon with our field leadership team. There will be 122 returning officers and election clerks, and we have others involved in that leadership team that are directing the 10,000, as we refer to them. And we spent a great deal of time on Wednesday talking about the values of an election management body and what they should be. And I think for a long time . . .

This isn't just Elections Saskatchewan. Other election management bodies, they knew what they weren't. We knew that we didn't have the same values of a political party, which is not bad. Partisanship is a great part of our democracy. But an election management body doesn't have the same values. And we literally spent, we spent a good deal of Wednesday talking about our values and how we should be approaching election administration as election administrators.

We went back to our values and looked at things in particular, talking about what independence means and what impartiality means and what it means to be a professional. And then we also talked about service orientation and what it means to be in service to our stakeholders, the voters absolutely, but our political parties and our candidates, and went through that. And I talked about what it means to be a servant leader. It means to be in service to others but also leading.

So I can't guarantee you that 10,000 people are going to change their views overnight, but I can tell you that our leadership team is pushing in that direction very much, and it's extremely important.

So you take that and the values that we have as election managers, but you also have legislation. And we are tasked and mandated with implementing elections according to legislation, and identification is part of that. It's part of it in other jurisdictions as well. It's increasingly becoming part of the process, but our role as elections managers, as I said before, is to determine how it doesn't become a barrier to others.

So when we talk about letters of attestation, there is an option there. All voters have to have identification. We will implement the election according to the legislation. If you want to have a separate discussion about identification, that's not my role to indicate whether we'll use identification or not. I made that very clear to my leadership team that it is your job as legislators to establish how we will run the election. Now as an expert, you brought me here. I will give you advice as we go through legislative change, but it's your job to establish the path that we'll move forward. But I can tell you that I will be looking for ways to reduce the barriers for the voters.

So ultimately I have to apologize in advance; you will be asked for identification. And it's part of the process and the election officials are doing the right thing, but they're going back to their values and saying, what does it mean to serve you? What does it mean to make sure that you are allowed to vote and to explain it very carefully? It doesn't mean bending the rules. It means helping you work your way through that process. And it's not just about you and your constituency up north, it's about all voters. For those who have an accessibility problem, what can we do to serve them better to help them vote? What can we do for people who have arrived in the country, become Canadian citizens, and have never gone through this process?

So I can tell you that we have values. We have clear values. I'd love to share them with you more. And know that we are trying to do the right thing, and by doing the right thing we're also going to implement the election according to *The Election Act, 1996*.

Mr. Belanger: — No, those are statements that are a good testament to the professionalism of your office. I'm not calling that into question.

The other question I would have is, how familiar are you with the past elections of Saskatchewan? Have you done any research into the history? And I guess the reason I'm asking that question is that, was there a huge issue with how elections were run in the past? Were there rampant abuses of people voting in four or five different constituencies and that there was a problem with identification, and this is a major catastrophe in past elections to warrant the changes we are seeing in *The Election Act* that was designed by legislators? And I can tell you today if you are a student of that history, you will find no such evidence of any major problem with how elections were run. People generally followed the rules.

And I guess I can't ask you to comment on *The Election Act*, which I opposed because of the barriers it put in place by a big majority government, in my opinion, that are trying to suppress votes. But I guess I could ask you the question if you are a history . . . Maybe you have studied the history of Saskatchewan elections, maybe some of your officials may have a bit of history as well. Was there any glaring issues, any

catastrophic problems with how elections were run? And I can tell you today there probably wasn't. So why the new rules? Why the increased scrutiny on the identification?

And it leads me to conclude very easily that one of the groups that was identified to suppress vote would be the Aboriginal community of which I am a member of, and I'm an elected member of that process. So the bottom line I'm trying to do here is to allow my people to vote and stop putting barriers in front of Aboriginal people to vote, and people that have immigrant status and are Canadian now, and the elders who've never had a driver's licence. These are the groups of people that have a tough time following the new identification rules in the electoral Act today that, in my opinion, was designed to suppress their vote.

Now you can make any comments on that. I appreciate that. But my question to you is that, given the history of elections in Saskatchewan, was there a major problem and issue of people voting that weren't supposed to vote in a lot of these areas and that falsely declared their right to vote in certain ridings?

[15:30]

Mr. Boda: — I don't think I can fully answer your question or answer it helpfully given the fact that there's an absence . . . You have to have evidence, and I'm not sure that I've seen the evidence. I can tell you that coming here in 2012, I was given a 2009 report by David Hamilton, the former chief electoral officer of the Northwest Territories, who outlined that there were some concerns, there were a lot of concerns with respect to Elections Saskatchewan, how it had been funded in the past and how it had operated. And working together with the Board of Internal Economy, the registered political parties, other stakeholders, we are on a path for renewal, but the focus was a great deal on the election administration, on the institution, and on moving forward.

In terms of the kind of questions that you're asking, I'm not sure that I can be fully helpful. But you're asking, was there something out there that would have brought forward identification, would have pushed for identification? Obviously . . . Well not obviously. I was born in Saskatchewan. I was raised here but I spent 20 years outside the country working on these particular issues that are related to elections, administration of elections, and I have watched as identification has increasingly become part of the electoral process. And it's not just in the United States or in Great Britain or Germany. It's in places like Haiti where identification is required.

But again going back to what our mandate is in election management body, it is to reduce the barriers for people, no matter where they live and who they are, to help them find a way to vote. And there are ways outside of identification that are available. And there are a number of approaches to identification such as vouching, attestation of residence, attestation of identity, letter of stay, and then letter of authorization, which we make available. The challenge is that if it's too hard to get over that hurdle in order to get any of these, then that becomes a barrier.

So what we're trying to do is figure out ways not only that we can reduce the barriers but that we're communicating,

communicating with key leaders across the province well in advance of an election, and I think that has been one of the failings of the election management body, that we haven't been communicating on an ongoing basis. I can't make our leaders do this work, but I can facilitate communication and an understanding of the process, and that's what we're trying to do at Elections Saskatchewan.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you very much, Dr. Boda. Before I switch to Mr. Weekes, I'd note that we're joined in progress by committee member David Forbes, and we're also joined by the Saskatchewan teachers' institute on parliamentary democracy. Good to see all these teachers here. They were bright-eyed and bushy-tailed at lunch and they're still looking that way, so good to see them here. Anyway, with that I'd pass the floor over to Mr. Weekes.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Welcome, Doctor. I just want to make a comment about my colleague from the opposition. There certainly is never an attempt or a deliberate attempt to suppress voters' ability to vote in an election, and everything about any change that's been made is about keeping the electoral process fair and transparent and accountable. And I believe your comments spoke to the process about doing just that, so I thank you for your work and the work in the future.

I'm starting to get calls in my office about people who would like to work as a clerk or a deputy returning officer. I told them to check out the website. I see on the website there's a place for them to enter their name and ask if there's a process. Will you be asking the political parties for people to work as returning officers or clerks? Which has happened in the past, but I was just wondering if you were going to do that.

Mr. Boda: — Yes, that would be a former approach that would be pursued not just by Elections Saskatchewan but by other election management bodies. What we will be doing is opening it up to all citizens to encourage them to be part of what we're calling the Take Part campaign. And if you were on our website, you may have seen the beginnings of the Take Part campaign. I wish I had one with me, but we have produced many little Take Part cards which will be distributed across the province and point people initially . . . not asking them to work, sign up to work for us, because that tends to turn people off immediately. If they think they have to, if they have to fill out, you know, three pages of forms in order to just get their name on a list, that tends to turn people off.

So what we're doing is we're instituting the Take Part campaign. You go to the website or you make a phone call to Elections Saskatchewan. We take your name, your email address, and simply your address so we know which constituency you're in, and we're going to begin communicating with our 10,000 . . . Well we hope to have about 7,000 people on the list in advance, and you'll know that we've had trouble with training people in advance because we have a very . . . For the short-term election officials, we have a very short period in which to train them. We're going to begin communicating with them on an ongoing basis. They'll hear from us three or four times between now and election day pointing them to the website so they'll get a better understanding of what a polling site is, what's involved in a polling station, who the officials are, etc. And so what we're

trying to do is do this well in advance through modern means, and we're trying to innovate in the way that we do it.

This coming week we will be sending out 9,000 letters to our former workers. And they will receive in the mail a letter, not only saying, hey, we'd like you to sign up for the Take Part campaign, but they'll have a number of cards in that envelope as well, and we're asking them to distribute it to their friends and colleagues. And we will be working other ways to do this because you will be aware . . . I don't know how aware you are, but increasingly we're having difficulty getting election workers.

And we learned in Lloydminster how difficult it is in the Saskatchewan context. I mean it's one thing in an economy and in a context where things aren't overheated. Of course we've had some economic challenges in recent weeks, but the point is that it is very difficult to get people to work with us. And we're looking at innovative ways in order to touch with them over a period of time.

We're also looking at innovative ways to get to the heart of the fact that this isn't . . . We pay our election workers, but it's really about giving back to your community. You need to give a day for democracy. And so we're focused on that and how we can do that, and how we can encourage people to sign up to work with us. And one of the ways that we're looking at doing that is by allowing people the option of giving their money to a local charity if they would like. And we're trying to institute that for the next general election. We're figuring out ways we can begin that process for the 28th general election.

So these are exciting things. Know that they haven't been done across the country. We're trying to be innovative in the province, but we're trying to get to the heart of what we do so well in this province, and that is we have a very . . . People have very big hearts, and they have the volunteer spirit that I don't see necessarily in other jurisdictions. So we're trying to get at the heart of that. Thank you for your question.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you. That would be very helpful to these people. Another question is about, when will the names of the returning officers be made public? And I assume probably out renting space, but when will the office space be made public? And I ask that because I've already had a complaint, or an inquiry I should say, not a complaint, about, you know, constituencies and having the returning office, you know, at one end of it and the travel. You know, deputy returning officers have to deliver the results and those types of things, the ballot box. So is that something that's available now? Or I assume you're working on that as well.

Mr. Boda: — Well I refer to our cadre of returning officers and election clerks as the class of the 28th general election and it is very much a class which we will hire. And in some cases some individuals aren't allowed to carry it out, and we'll continue to hire. And we have been working on this for quite some time.

What I'd like to do is Jeff Kress is deputy CEO for electoral operations and I think he can answer some of your questions in greater detail.

Mr. Kress: — Thank you, Michael, and thank you for the

question. In terms of making it public, the returning officers are actually put in the *Gazette* when they're hired so there are a number of people that have actually been made public through that process. There are some additional returning officers that we've recently hired. We had a big event last week to try to train them and get up to speed. So as more are brought on board, we make sure that they follow through that process with the legislation and make sure they get put in the *Gazette*.

Now in terms of your second question related to polling locations, what we are doing right now is our team of returning officers and election clerks are working on an assignment that we call the pre-writ assignment. And the purpose of the pre-writ assignment, one of the major deliverables, is to identify the location of the returning office and to identify the location of all the other polling locations, and that's part of the work that they do.

After they complete that pre-writ assignment, the information is then sent back to head office where we do some reviews, go over some things before formal leases and things of that nature are signed. So that process is under way. By the end of May most of that pre-writ assignment that needs to be completed by returning officers and election clerks should be nearing completion.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you. On that same type of topic, in my constituency two examples of a . . . Well I'll use Asquith as an example. The village of Asquith is in Biggar-Sask Valley. The highway is the dividing line between the two constituencies so there's a whole bunch of people with Asquith addresses. My suggestion to you: is it possible to have a polling booth in Asquith for the people that are actually voting in Rosetown-Elrose because they're right there? They live right close to Asquith but they're going to have to travel somewhere else. I don't know where they're going to have to travel. And the same thing in Biggar with the town of Biggar. There's a whole lot of people that live just outside of Biggar and they're in a different constituency. Is there any thought to making that more convenient for voters to vote in the closest town even though it's not in the constituency?

Mr. Kress: — Generally speaking, the goal is to make sure the people can vote within the constituency. That being said, returning officers live in the constituency. They know their areas the best and they know where people go to vote. I believe, looking back at 2011, there was some cases where people did vote outside of the constituency for the reasons that you noted above. I'm not familiar with the specific situation around Biggar and Asquith and what's there.

But part of what's going to be identified as part of the pre-writ assignment is going to be to look and identify polling locations that might work. And so it's possible that there might be some polling locations on the outskirts of the town that might be within the constituency. And so that would be the goal first and foremost, to do that. And if they can't find any locations to rent in a specific constituency or in a specific polling area, then the goal would be to look at what other options are available and to see whether or not some additional powers can be used. But first and foremost, our goal is always to try to make sure that the polling locations are inside the constituency.

Mr. Weekes: — Is there an avenue for people to lobby for that type of change? Because I've had a number of inquiries to my office.

Mr. Kress: — Yes. *The Election Act* does provide us with some guidance on where polling locations should be located, so it's not something that's done typically with public lobbying. One of the things that Elections Saskatchewan does and one thing that I've learned in my short time there that they do really well is really making sure that the returning officers, as required by law, are from that constituency. The returning officers know the locations the best. They know the area that they are the returning officer for, and so that really puts them into a position as part of this pre-writ assignment to be able to identify locations that are appropriate and the most appropriate for citizens to vote.

Mr. Weekes: — If I may, Mr. Chair, just one more question, just for the public. What's the status? Will there be an enumeration of voters and is there a permanent voters list going to take place at some point in the future?

Mr. Boda: — Absolutely, to all of that. There will be a last, a final enumeration of voters which will occur in advance of the coming general election. The new legislation that's being implemented offers the Chief Electoral Officer the ability to implement that last enumeration in a way that is a little bit different than the traditional enumeration because we are in fact preparing to transition immediately to the permanent register of voters. And so, as a result, what will be involved is, it won't be a full enumeration. It will be what is called a targeted enumeration, focusing on areas of mobility so that we can improve the quality of the list.

[15:45]

We will be working through an information-sharing agreement which we have established with Elections Canada through a lot of heavy lifting. We are very pleased to be collaborating with them. We'll be working with them and using their list as well in order to elevate the quality of our list. Our list for the last election, the quality was at 71 per cent, 71 per cent coverage. And we know that Elections Canada, through the use of a permanent register, has been able to elevate the quality to over 90 per cent. And so our goal is to take what we have done in the past and improve on it and get much closer to that 90 per cent level for the coming election.

The permanent register of voters will be in place in advance of the coming election, just in advance. When we print the voters list, the voters list will be printed from the new permanent register of voters, and that will be an historic process. And you know, I guess if you're an election geek, it's very historic. Not for everyone that's out there, I appreciate that, but this is a big event for Saskatchewan, to transition to a permanent register of voters.

So the framework, the foundations of the permanent register of voters are being established right now, which is why we've had such a very busy period over the last six months. I mean, it's been whirlwind. It's been just constant, and we love this. This is what we do for a living and it's good fun, but it has been a very busy period all the way from November until now.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you very much.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Weekes. I see Mr. Vermette for a quick one. We've got a couple of other officers that we'd like to get on the docket here yet but, Mr. Vermette.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And again, I just want to quickly . . . If there is issues . . . And you've said you're going to reach out to the 74 First Nations, the leaders in the province, and some correspondents. And again I thank you for that and I think that's crucial to make sure, you know, we have a large population on reserve that we want to make sure get on the voters list or have a right, should they go to the polls, to not get turned away. We don't want that, and I've heard of that, so I don't want to go into that.

So let's just say somebody wants to contact your office. How would they do that? If a citizen, I don't care, just a leader, an individual out there would like to contact your office say, I'm concerned about this last time I'm . . . this is an issue. Can they contact your office to raise their issues or concerns or get clarification? Are you okay with that and what do you suggest they do that?

Mr. Boda: — They are absolutely able to contact Elections Saskatchewan. We have an 800 number which is available, and so they can by telephone. They can send an email to us, info@elections.sk.ca. And of course our website is there. We have just . . . not just, about a year ago we launched a new website, changed the approach entirely, and focused on who our stakeholders are. So there is an area for voters. There is an area for you as political parties and candidates. There is an area for media. So we're trying to make it easy for you to touch base with us.

And then the next step is, it's one thing to contact us and it's for . . . We need to be able to respond. And as I, when I'm in discussion with the chief official agents of your two political parties that are in the room, they often indicate to me I may not, I may not like the answer, but I get an answer. And that's what we are aiming to do. When we look at that value of service orientation, we're doing our best, given the resources that we have, to serve our stakeholders in a different way than we were able to in the past. We're not going to be perfect, I will tell you that from now. And when of course we're in the middle of a campaign, it's not going to be easy, but we do genuinely want to serve our stakeholders in a very meaningful way.

Mr. Vermette: — Okay. Thank you for that. I have no more questions, and I know there will be individuals getting a hold of your office.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you for that, Mr. Vermette. Seeing no further questions, I'd like to thank Dr. Boda and officials for joining us here today.

Vote 34, Chief Electoral Officer which is found page 119 in the Estimates is statutory. So the Chief Electoral Officer subvote (CE01) in the amount of \$16,509,000, there is no vote as it's statutory. And the non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of \$101,000, non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for information purposes only, so no amount is to be voted.

Thank you very much for joining us here today, Dr. Boda, and I guess if we could prepare for the Provincial Auditor up next.

**General Revenue Fund
Provincial Auditor
Vote 28**

Subvote (PA01)

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you very much. Moving right along, Mr. Speaker, if you could introduce your guests and we'll get under way.

The Speaker: — Okay. To my right we have Ms. Judy Ferguson, the Acting Provincial Auditor, and Ms. Ferguson will introduce her staff.

Ms. Ferguson: — Thank you, Speaker, Deputy Chair, members, and officials that are here today. With me this afternoon is Angèle Borys. Angèle is our chief operating officer in our office here, and also a Deputy Provincial Auditor. She's basically in charge of our support services division. So she's our numbers person, and my right arm that happens to be on my left this afternoon here.

The Deputy Chair: — Any remarks that you might have, and then we'll open the floor to questions.

Ms. Ferguson: — Thank you very much. Thank you for inviting us this afternoon to present our '15-16 budget request. And it's vote 28, Provincial Auditor vote, and it's on page 132 of the Estimates if you're following along at home.

These estimates are primarily based on our business and financial plan. We table our business and financial plan in the Legislative Assembly, and it's also available on our website so that it's publicly available. You'll find that the business and financial plan contains the key information that is required by *The Provincial Auditor Act* in addition to other supporting information. It also sets out our work plan and what we plan to do in the upcoming year.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts, we presented that business and financial plan to them initially in January, and then it was later discussed in February too. So hopefully you've had an opportunity to look at the details there.

I'm just going to give you a quick little overview of the plan. You'll find that the estimates includes two appropriations and that's required by *The Provincial Auditor Act*. The first appropriation is our main appropriation. It's that subvote (PA01). It's got an estimate of \$8.187 million. It reflects the slight decrease from the prior years of \$1,800, and our prior appropriation was 8.205 million.

As discussed with the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on January 14th, we have made a very conservative budget request. Also as noted in page 11 of our '15-16 business and financial plan, our office plans to absorb the cost of inflation, any inflationary increases. So the changes that are presented before you really reflect some adjustments that were in the employee benefits area that the government had made adjustments on, and also the changes in the size of government

and the creation and wind-up of certain entities there.

So the second appropriation is the appropriation for unforeseen cost. It's subvote (PA02) and it's an appropriation of \$555,000. *The Provincial Auditor Act* allows for the inclusion of the second appropriation with the estimates each year. The purpose of this appropriation is to provide our office with resources in order to respond to unforeseen circumstances that may impact our work. This can include requests from the various standing committees of the Assembly such as Public Accounts Committee, and pressures to include the timeliness of our work along with unplanned or unanticipated increases in costs.

When the office uses this appropriation, it reports this amount and the amount used and the reasons as to why we use the amount in our annual report on operation. All amounts that aren't used, we returned to the General Revenue Fund. So it's a protocol that has been in place for a number of years. Consistent with our prior year's estimates, we've calculated the amount in a consistent manner, and it's basically one month of salary and expenses is how we've come up with the 555.

So in closing with respect to '14-15, the year that we've just completed based on our unaudited information, we're expecting to return about 296,000 that remain in appropriation of that subvote (PA01) and all of the unforeseen expenses of (PA02) to the Legislative Assembly. So that concludes our opening comments, and we'd be pleased to respond to any questions you have.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you very much for the informative presentation, Acting Provincial Auditor Ferguson. Any questions, comments, from committee members? Again this is canvassed quite well in other places, but we wanted to get this on the record here today.

So I guess, seeing no further questions, thank you for the presentation. And I'd move to the vote. Vote 28, Provincial Auditor, page 131 of course, Provincial Auditor subvote (PA01) in the amount of \$7,961,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Motion is carried. Unforeseen expenses, subvote (PA02) in the amount of \$555,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Motion is carried. Provincial Auditor, vote 28, \$8,516,000. I'll now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Be it resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2016, the following sums for Provincial Auditor in the amount of \$8,516,000.

Do I have a mover for that motion?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I so shall move.

The Deputy Chair: — Mr. Cheveldayoff. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Motion is carried. Again, thank you very much. I'll turn it back over to the Speaker to bring in our third and final contestant this afternoon.

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

Subvote (IP01)

The Deputy Chair: — Moving merrily along here, Mr. Speaker, if you would introduce Mr. Kruzeniski and officials.

The Speaker: — Yes, thank you. With me is the Information and Privacy Commissioner, Mr. Kruzeniski. I think I've got his name right. I keep putting an "I" in it all the time. And with him he has two staff members which he will introduce and one third staff member which he will not introduce.

Mr. Kruzeniski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With me today is the director of operations, Ms. Pam Scott; and also with me is director of compliance, Ms. Diane Aldridge. And I will, in light of the time, try and keep my opening remarks very brief.

I was appointed July 1st of this year. The office had been under the supervision of Ms. Aldridge for the first three months and then I came along. The first thing we did is develop a plan as to things we would want to do in the next five years, and we embarked upon that plan.

For 2014-15 we found that we had a 24 per cent increase in the number of files opened and we embarked upon a rigorous approach to closing files and getting reports out the door. In the year, out of some 225 files that were closed, 61 per cent of them were closed by early resolution or resolved without ever having to go to an official report. And I think that is a very positive direction that the office is going in. We issued some 74 reports and I can say that about 71 per cent of the public bodies responded with full compliance with our recommendations, or partial compliance. And I think that's also a very positive number for the public bodies. And only 4 per cent said they wouldn't comply with our recommendations. And again, in a sort of way, I view that as a very positive number in the sense that it's so low.

[16:00]

We also set a goal that we would get back to people faster, to the applicants and/or the public bodies, and we set a goal of getting back to people on average in 40 days 80 per cent of the time. By February 7th we met that goal and by March 31st we were getting back to people within, on average, 30 days 80 per cent of the time. I really thank the staff for coming together as a team and supporting me and achieving that goal. We certainly intend in the coming year to continue to give that sort of service to the citizens of the province and to the public bodies who deal with many of the access requests.

I think the final thing we had on our list was looking at making proposals regarding the freedom of information Act as to amendments that ought to occur. We have been working on that document and plan in June to make those proposed amendments public, and probably they will show up in our annual report. I

point that out, Mr. Chair, because I want our annual report to get on *The New York Times* bestseller list if it can.

So I think that is the request, or my comments. I do appreciate working with the Speaker and the Board of Internal Economy, and they were very helpful in approving a couple of our requests mid-year. That is greatly appreciated, so I do ask the committee to approve our request for funding at 1.469 million for the coming year. I'm pleased to answer any questions of you, Mr. Chair, or committee members.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you very much, Mr. Kruzeniski, for that report. Certainly it's in aid of your quest to get on the bestseller list with *The New York Times* that we thought we'd bring you forward here today to provide us with that information.

I'd open the floor to any questions, comments from colleagues for the commissioner or officials at this time. Seeing none, you've answered all our questions right out of the gate. Congratulations. Thank you very much for the presentation.

And with that I would . . . with vote 55, Information and Privacy Commissioner, which is found on page 123 in your Estimates, Information and Privacy Commissioner, subvote (IP01) in the amount of \$1,469,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Information and Privacy Commissioner, vote 55, \$1,469,000. I'll now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Be it resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2016, the following sums for Information and Privacy Commissioner in the amount of \$1,469,000.

Mr. Forbes, always quick on the draw . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Got him by a moustache, there you go. Okay. Mr. Forbes. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Resolution is carried. Thank you again, Commissioner Kruzeniski, and officials, for joining us here today.

**General Revenue Fund
Advocate for Children and Youth
Vote 76**

The Deputy Chair: — Colleagues, if you'll bear with me for just a couple more here. We've got main estimates, vote 76, Advocate for Children and Youth, found on page 117. Advocate for Children and Youth, subvote (CA01) in the amount of \$2,328,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you very much, committee members. Non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of \$180,000. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are

non-cash adjustments presented for information purposes only. No amount is to be voted. But I will now ask a member to move the following resolution on vote 76:

Be it resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2016, the following sums for the Advocate for Children and Youth in the amount of \$2,328,000.

Do I have a mover for that? Mr. Weekes.

Mr. Weekes: — I so move.

The Deputy Chair: — Very good. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Motion is carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — March
Advocate for Children and Youth
Vote 76**

The Deputy Chair: — Moving on to a supplementary estimate under the same portfolio, vote 76, Advocate for Children and Youth, found on page 9. Advocate for Children and Youth, subvote (CA01) in the amount of \$133,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Motion is carried. Advocate for Children and Youth, vote 76, \$133,000. I'll now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2015, the following sums for Advocate for Children and Youth in the amount of \$133,000.

Mr. Tochor. Very good. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — The resolution was carried.

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

The Deputy Chair: — But wait, there's more. Vote 57, Conflict of Interest Commissioner, page 121. Conflict of Interest Commissioner, subvote (CC01) in the amount of \$589,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — I will now ask a member to move the following resolution concerning vote 57 for the Conflict of Interest Commissioner:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2016, the following sums for

Conflict of Interest Commissioner in the amount of \$589,000.

Mr. Forbes. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Motion is carried. Mr. Forbes will come to order.

An Hon. Member: — Okay.

The Deputy Chair: — Okay.

**General Revenue Fund
Legislative Assembly
Vote 21**

The Deputy Chair: — All right. Vote 21, Legislative Assembly, central management and services, subvote (LG01) in the amount of \$3,327,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Motion is carried. Office of the Speaker and Board of Internal Economy, subvote (LG07) in the amount of \$396,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Motion is carried. Legislative Assembly Service, subvote (LG03) in the amount of \$5,544,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Motion is carried. Payments and allowances to individual members, subvote (LG05) in the amount of \$14,916,000. There is no vote as this is statutory. Committees of the Legislative Assembly, subvote (LG04) in the amount of \$372,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Motion is carried. Caucus operations, subvote (LG06) in the amount of \$1,999,000. There is no vote as that is statutory. And the non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of \$68,000. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for information purposes only. No amount is to be voted.

So the Legislative Assembly, vote 21, \$9,639,000. I'll now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2016, the following sums for the Legislative Assembly in the amount of \$9,639,000.

Mr. Cheveldayoff. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — The motion is carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Ombudsman
Vote 56**

The Deputy Chair: — And on. Vote 56, Ombudsman, found on page 129 in your Estimates. Ombudsman, subvote (OM01) in the amount of \$3,203,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — The motion is carried and the non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of \$120,000 which is of course non-appropriated expense adjustments being non-cash adjustments presented for information purposes only with no amount to be voted.

So Ombudsman, vote 56, \$3,203,000. I'll ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2016, the following sums for Ombudsman in the amount of \$3,203,000.

Mr. Weekes. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Motion is carried. One last. We've got a motion to present the report to the Assembly. So committee members will have before them a draft of the 11th report of the Standing Committee on House Services. We require a member to move the following motion:

That the 11th report of the Standing Committee on House Services be adopted and presented to the Assembly.

Mr. Tochor. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — Motion is carried. Mr. Speaker, colleagues, that concludes our deliberations. I'd entertain a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Vermette: — I so move.

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

[The committee adjourned at 16:11.]