

Title: Thursday, March 17, 2005 Legislative Offices Committee

Date: 05/03/17

Time: 12:03 p.m.

[Mrs. Tarchuk in the chair]

The Chair: Good afternoon, everyone. I will call this meeting to order. If you refer to your binders delivered on March 10, today's meeting materials follow the second plain tab in the binder. If I could for the record start with Raj and have everyone introduce themselves.

[The following members introduced themselves: Mr. Ducharme, Mr. Flaherty, Mr. Griffiths, Dr. Pannu, Mr. Strang, and Mrs. Tarchuk]

The Chair: As you all know, the purpose of today's meeting is to review the budget submissions of the offices of the Information and Privacy Commissioner and of the Ethics Commissioner. I wonder if we could have a motion to approve the agenda as distributed.

Mr. Ducharme: So moved.

The Chair: All those in favour? Any opposed? Okay. That motion is carried.

Welcome, Frank. I know that the clerk has talked to you and suggested that you give a 15-minute presentation so that we have ample time to ask questions.

I'd just like to note that Dave Rodney has also joined us.

Frank, if you want to introduce yourself and who's with you, that would be great for our records, and proceed to the presentation.

Mr. Work: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Nice to see you and the Deputy Chairman again. It's some familiar faces, some continuity for us. With me is Suzanne Frederick, who is manager of finance for my office.

I'd like to do just a brief presentation on the office by way of introduction. The office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Alberta administers three statutes: the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Health Information Act, and most recently the Personal Information Protection Act. The province of Alberta, in my opinion, continues to be in front of every other jurisdiction in Canada in terms of its data protection and security measures with these three statutes.

Interestingly, 2005, the centennial of the province, also marks the 10th anniversary of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. For the new members of the committee I thought I would just tell you briefly about the three statutes. The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act pertains to public bodies, typically government bodies – municipalities, universities, schools, and hospitals – and it deals with the collection, use, and disclosure of personal information, and it deals with the ability of the public to seek access to the information of the public bodies. Most of our work under that statute is with respect to access to information.

We also spend a significant amount of time consulting with public bodies on their information programs and policies. Of course, as we move further and further into the information age, the digital age, whatever you want to call it, more and more consultation and discussion is required with respect to the kinds of electronic systems that are necessary to run government in the 21st century. Last year under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act we had roughly 300 cases open.

The Health Information Act pertains to, basically, health care providers. Most of the work we do with respect to that legislation is privacy impact assessments. The Health Information Act requires

that before any health care provider institutes an electronic information system, an electronic patient record, or an electronic health record, they have to prepare what's called a privacy impact assessment and submit that to my office for review. As you can imagine, there are hundreds and hundreds, probably thousands now, of electronic patient records being developed in Alberta.

I think the consensus across Canada probably is that Alberta is in the vanguard of electronic information systems in the health arena. Also, from what you can glean from popular media and from experts in the field, I feel fairly confident in saying that health care providers in Alberta probably have a better overall awareness of security- and privacy-related issues with respect to electronic systems than most other provinces. Of course, I don't want to be taken as saying that the system is perfect and nothing will ever go wrong.

We're also involved in a large number of health information-related committees, particularly with respect to the development of Wellnet electronic health record. Last year under the Health Information Act we also had roughly 300 cases, but as I said, most of the cases under the Health Information Act do not tend to be requests for information or complaints about how information was dealt with. Most of the files we get under the Health Information Act, as I said, tend to be privacy impact assessments being prepared by health care providers. The number of those we get is influenced by a number of factors, such as the Alberta Health and Wellness physician operating system program. If they are able to get a lot of physicians to adopt systems, then of course downstream we get more privacy impact assessments.

The most recent statute we deal with is Personal Information Protection Act, PIPA. We live in an age of acronyms. PIPA pertains to the private sector, organizations which collect, use, and disclose personal information in the course of their business dealings. PIPA came into force on January 1, 2004. I'm proud to tell the committee that Alberta is one of three provinces in Canada that has legislated in the private sector, the other two being Quebec some years ago and British Columbia, which legislated at the same time Alberta did. Very intelligently, Alberta and British Columbia passed almost identical laws, and I think that's good for business to have that kind of consistency. Hopefully, at some point the rest of Canada will see the wisdom of what the two most western provinces have done.

PIPA, as you can imagine, dealing with the entire private sector, has been something of a challenge. We've spent a lot of the past year, often in partnership with the Ministry of Government Services, in trying to inform and educate business organizations about their responsibilities under this legislation.

12:10

We've also had tremendous co-operation from chambers of commerce. You might be surprised that chambers of commerce would embrace this kind of legislation, because it is somewhat onerous, but they have. We've had outstanding assistance from them in implementing it. Similarly with better business bureaus and different industry groups. The petroleum industry has been very proactive in terms of getting their members on-board with this.

In terms of just queries, just questions – e-mail, telephone questions, and so on – we've had about 3,000 queries to date. Under the private sector act we've opened 200 files, and a hundred of them are current.

I think, significantly, towards the end of 2004 as a result of an incident that took place up here where the Edmonton Police Service raided a hotel room that was occupied by people involved in the drug trade – they found bags of paper, commercial paper, credit card return slips, cellphone contracts, things like this, and the police

determined that this paper was going to be used to commit fraud and different kinds of identity theft in furtherance of drug trade operations – we've now become pretty close partners with the police services in Calgary and Edmonton, and we're making overtures with other police services.

The reason for it is that the police have criminal law that allows them to deal with people who commit fraud and identity theft, but we have a law, the Personal Information Protection Act, which allows us to deal with businesses which make this kind of fodder for fraud and identity theft. So while it wasn't in our initial plans, we have now made this pursuit of fraud and identity theft issues a major part of our work, as I said, in partnership with the police. Shortly after the new year we issued three investigation reports on the paper that was found in the hands of those people who had been charged with the drug-related offences.

Just a short word on process. All of these acts have their own processes for how complaints and problems are dealt with. All of them propose in the first instance that the dispute or the investigation be dealt with by mediation, and I'm pleased to tell you that in 88 per cent of the cases the mediation is successful in resolving the matter. That means that in 12 per cent of the cases the matter goes on for an inquiry or some more formal disposition. Mediation, of course, is a somewhat intensive exercise. It does take time, but clearly it is more valuable, probably, in the long run, a more valuable payoff than having to go the full formal legal route. At the same time, the fact that there are legal remedies can't be overlooked, and it is important to get the attention of bodies that have to comply with the legislation.

You have our budget materials, I believe. You'll see that we are looking for a 6 per cent increase. Given the relatively small size of our budget, most of this increase is attributable to one new full-time equivalent in the private sector area. As is our custom, we err on the side of caution when staffing. We try not to hire people we don't need. We try not to build in redundancies. I suppose the good way to look at it is that we have been so successful in implementing the private sector act that we do need another person in that office, and that's before you.

There is a small amount in this budget for a one-time payment we would like to make to the University of Alberta to enable them to complete their core curriculum for what's called the IAAP program, information and privacy management program, and we gave the committee some materials on this.

I wanted specifically to give the committee these materials, Madam Chairman, because this program, which is run by the U of A, Faculty of Extension – it's a remote learning program – is absolutely something Alberta should really be proud of. It is the pre-eminent program of its kind in Canada. The University of Alberta is forming partnerships with several other Canadian universities, one in Manitoba, one in Ontario, and they're talking to a French language university in Quebec. The University of Alberta has gotten the support of the federal access to information commissioner for this program. It's something that people in this province saw a need for, saw an opportunity. They jumped on it, and I think, as I said, it's something that we can all be very proud of.

That's about 15 minutes, Madam Chairman. I can wander on, or if there are questions or comments – I'm in your hands.

The Chair: We can probably move on to questions.

Ivan.

Mr. Strang: Thanks, Madam Chairman. Mr. Work, I guess the one thing I wanted to understand a little better: as I was perusing your information to us, you've got information on education. I'm just

wondering, especially on this business of privacy and that, how are we working on especially the aspect of health information? Are we moving along? Because, you know, that's one of our biggest problems, trying to bring the health budget line in. Are we getting good acceptance from a lot of the doctors in the rural areas and that to get involved in having this type of information online so that we can provide better service as well as looking after the patients? I guess that's my number one concern.

Following up on that one, on the Wellnet, I guess everybody looks at that as something that's going to be great for us, so maybe you can give me an update on that because I just wonder on that Wellnet scenario.

Mr. Work: Absolutely. With respect to the take-up by individual health care providers, it's picked up significantly in recent years. Now, I don't have numbers, but I think the use of information systems in doctors' offices, for example, has been particularly appealing in rural areas due to the fact that, as everyone knows, we have a shortage of physicians in rural areas. So they're usually pretty astute at finding anything that can make their practice more efficient and more effective. Without having the actual numbers from the POSP, the physician operating system program, my sense is that the take-up from rural health care providers has been good.

One example comes to mind. In Airdrie, which is not wholly rural anymore, there was a clinic that moved into the electronic system. Their offices, unfortunately, were broken into, and some desktop computers were taken. As a result of having embarked on this program and done their privacy impact assessment and implemented the security measures, there was no health information on the computers that were stolen. It had all been backed up to a server as it should have been. A small story, but one of those ones that you're really happy about because it doesn't make the media because there was no spill. No one was harmed by that.

With respect to the bigger picture, the Wellnet concept has been around for quite awhile. It's undergone kind of an interesting evolution. I remember when I first started in this area, the grand view for things like Wellnet was we'd have the ultimate electronic health record. The example always was: if you got hit by a bus in Ottawa, just like that your health information could be available. Very, very expensive propositions, as you can imagine.

12:20

I think what has happened in the past six or seven years is a lot of these grand designs have been scaled back to more workable kinds of projects. So what you see now instead of the big, grand silver bullet of health information systems is a lot of very effective, very clean small systems like in ICU units or emergency rooms or neonatal care units, where they develop a very nice, tight system that serves the needs of that particular health care provider.

I suppose the biggest one, the one that Alberta Health and Wellness is rolling out now, is PIN, the pharmaceutical information network. My sense is that that is going quite well. It's going to provide a tremendous opportunity for health care providers and pharmacists to make sure that people are not improperly prescribed, that they don't face adverse reactions to drugs, and I think it will be helpful in terms of catching people who abuse the system and double-doctor in order to get prescriptions and so on.

I don't want to paint too rosy a picture of it. With all these little systems developing, someone compared it to an arena full of spaghetti, you know, wires everywhere kind of thing. At some point there will be issues of interoperability – do these systems talk to each other? – and so on. But I think the fact that it's been scaled back to realistic, useful components is probably the most positive development.

Mr. Strang: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Chair: I had Denis on the speakers' list next, but it appears he's had to leave. Are there any other questions?

Mr. Flaherty: Could I just ask a question of Mr. Work?

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Flaherty: I was just wondering: am I reading this correctly? The Personal Information Protection Act: that was in 2004 that you initiated that?

Mr. Work: Yes, sir.

Mr. Flaherty: I have to confess that I haven't read over your material like I should have in preparation for the meeting. But could you tell me what you do when you launch something like this in terms of evaluation? For example, how do you know once you've launched something like this act that it's really doing the job you want, other than telling us that it's in place and throwing out all these statistics? In other words, in organizations that I've been in, for example, through education, social services, and health, usually you look at an evaluation. Maybe it's too quick on this, a year later. But do you have a system where you evaluate to ascertain that these acts are doing the job for the citizens of Alberta that you think they're doing?

Mr. Work: In terms of formal measurement, no. Once, a few years ago, we commissioned a public opinion poll to try to measure popular awareness of these issues.

Mr. Flaherty: I'm thinking, for example, of the families of some of these people. You wouldn't necessarily go directly to some of the older people that couldn't handle it. Wouldn't it be significant others that use the service or are protected by it, like for their grandparents and that kind of thing that are under care?

Mr. Work: No, we haven't done that. We do have a lot of contact, group by group, with stakeholders. I've done a number of sessions with extended care facilities and nursing homes.

Mr. Flaherty: Would you consider doing it, sir? Would you consider looking at that as a mechanism to look and see how things are going relative to something you implement?

Mr. Work: Yes.

Mr. Flaherty: What I'm getting at is: first of all, you're providing a very valuable service by this act, I'm sure. But, again, we put a lot of money into these things, sir. I'm wondering if we can sometimes go out and ask the client population or the significant others who are using it how they're doing with it and feedback in terms of if it's working and give us some insight into that. I'd find that as a new person here very valuable. I just throw that out to you.

Mr. Work: Yeah. It's a good suggestion. So that would be, like, talking to people who've had contact with our office?

Mr. Flaherty: Well, you might not even want to talk with them. You might want to develop an instrument.

Mr. Work: Sort of a satisfaction . . .

Mr. Flaherty: Well, I'm not sophisticated in research. Maybe Dr. Pannu knows more about that than I do. He's a professor. But I think, for example – let me just give you some feedback, or maybe I'm taking too much time, Madam Chair. For example, the orientation we had for MLAs. We just evaluated it yesterday. I think it was six questions. I thought it was very valuable to give that feedback. I guess they're trying to ascertain if the service is doing the job. Can it be improved? What changes would you make?

I think it behooves us when we spend public money to go out and ascertain how some of this is. I don't expect that done every year, but I think there should be a system to evaluate how we're doing in terms of the things we're trying to do. I certainly think these are good things you are doing, sir – I want to emphasize that – but I think we should have some way of looking at how well they are doing and if there should be some changes. It seems to me that in all the dollars we spend in this government, we should be looking at what bang for the dollar we're getting, how we can change, how we can evaluate it, how we can make a difference.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Work: Thank you.

The Chair: Ivan.

Mr. Strang: Thanks, Madam Chairman. Mr. Work, just another one on your budget. I guess what I'm wondering about is if you can sort of give me an explanation: on your 2003-04 you sort of guesstimated on your budget that you were going to be \$386,500 for your contract services. Your actual in 2004-05 was only \$200,000, but you were at \$255,000. Then I notice that in your out-years, in 2005-06, '07, and '08 you've got quite an increase there. Can you maybe explain why we're moving out on that, other than going with the private information for industry?

Mr. Work: Yeah. That's certainly the budget item that merits some explanation, Mr. Strang. I guess my explanation would start with the fact that under all three of these statutes our office is largely reactive. It's not as if we can plan our activities to a T. I mean, we know to some extent, but the amount of work we do is influenced by the number of complaints we get, the number of requests we get, the number of privacy impact assessments we get, or when I issue orders, the number of times my orders are taken to court for judicial review. So for all of those, as I said, we try not to overstaff, but we have to anticipate that some years we're going to be busier with some of these variables than others. That's primarily what that money is used for.

I'll give you an example with judicial reviews. A judicial review is under all of the laws. When I issue an order, if one of the parties is not satisfied with the order, they can take me to Court of Queen's Bench, and they will review what's happened. As you can imagine, that involves lawyers, and as you can imagine, that becomes expensive. We spent \$26,400 on judicial reviews in the '04-05 year. The previous year, the '03-04 year, we spent \$81,000 on judicial reviews. That's just something that we are not able to predict.

Similarly with privacy impact assessments. We understand, for example, from Alberta Health and Wellness that they're going to put a bit of a push on. We thought it would happen this budget year, but obviously now it's going to have to happen in the next budget year. They're going to put a bit of a push on, and that could wind up with 200 to 300 additional privacy impact assessments for us to review in short order. In those cases we want to use contract services to deal with the load. So that's the explanation for that item.

I would just also point out that there is before you in the Assembly

Bill 8, which will have the effect of increasing the number of organizations that are subject to the private sector act. Again, it's hard to predict how that will play out in terms of actual workload, but I would like the ability to hire people on contract if that additional constituency generates a lot of work, as opposed to hiring full-time staff. I still need the one full-time staff that I'm asking for for private sector, but I'd like the flexibility to use contract people. In fact, we have a contract person in the private-sector area right now. Does that . . .

12:30

Mr. Strang: Yeah, that answered it. I appreciate the answer because, you know, I mean, what we want to do is make sure we do due diligence. When you have those spikes, it's nice to have the contract. I was just wondering why the ups and downs, but I realize that with going into the private sector, it's an unknown. So I appreciate that.

Thank you.

Mr. Work: Yeah. Very, very much so an unknown.

The Chair: I've just got one more question, and that's coming from Raj.

Dr. Pannu: Commissioner, in your introductory letter you draw attention to a surplus of \$267,000 from last year. That, I suppose, one could understand as the result of due diligence on your part to spend every dollar, you know, carefully. But would you explain how it happened? Was it because your budget last year was too generous or you saved money somewhere where you expected to spend it? Let me add to it that clearly the pace of work in your office and the demands on the resources of your office fluctuate in a way which is not entirely predictable. You call it the reactive mode. As a result, you have to react to things.

One of those reactive activities that we threw at you last year had to do with the impact of the USA PATRIOT Act on the privacy issues related to health and others, and I would like some update, a response on that as well, as part of the answer.

Mr. Work: Okay. Maybe I'll deal with the last one first. With respect to the PATRIOT Act, the background to that is that my colleague in British Columbia did a very extensive review of the implications of the PATRIOT Act for what is commonly referred to as outsourcing by government of contracts, pertaining to information in this case.

What we have done in Alberta is that I was of the view that the work that was done in B.C. on the PATRIOT Act, the implications, was pretty good. In fact, it was better than pretty good; it was excellent. The commissioner there got a lot of great submissions from a lot of groups in Canada and the United States, and my feeling was that if I tried to duplicate that in Alberta, those people had been used up, I guess, for want of a better word, in B.C. If I had done the same exercise here, I probably wouldn't have gotten the same number or quality of submissions he did.

What we are doing in Alberta is that we're going the next step from that. We're taking those PATRIOT Act findings – some of them are controversial, and some of them are opinion, and some of them are factual – and the implications that were found in the British Columbia report and actually analyzing what's happening in Alberta in terms of outsourcing. We're doing that in conjunction with the Ministry of Government Services.

I guess you could characterize it as maybe an inventory of outsourcing in Alberta. As part of that we will be looking to see

what the exposure is, whether the amount of information is actually moving outside of Alberta, the kinds of contractual provisions that are in place to protect it, the kinds of relationships that public bodies and private organizations in Alberta have with outsourcers. Coming out of that, we will be making some recommendations to the Legislative Assembly.

So that's the PATRIOT Act.

Dr. Pannu: Just on that, when could we expect in the Assembly to have your report?

Mr. Work: The way it was done initially was that there was a questionnaire, a survey sent out to everyone that we and the government thought would be doing outsourcing, and we asked them for a lot of information about their outsourcing practices. My understanding is that those have been sent out and that the results are still coming in. So my guess would be that it's going to be probably a few more weeks before all those results are in and then probably a couple of months to analyze them – and that's a guess – so I'm thinking end of May, June at the earliest.

On the \$267,000 – I got Suzanne to do the math for me – that represents 6.5 per cent of our budget that was not spent, I suppose. You had some specific things in that question, which I've now forgotten.

Dr. Pannu: I'm saying: explain it. You know, did you get too much from us last time? So were we too generous?

Mr. Work: Well, if for example we had had a bad year in terms of judicial review as we did the year before, we would have spent another \$60,000 on legal fees for judicial reviews. Thankfully, that didn't materialize. Maybe I'm writing better orders, or maybe the people are going away more content with the orders I write. They're not taking us to court.

The other thing was that I did anticipate more caseload for us with respect to the private sector. I got our private sector people to graph it out for me. I don't know if you can see this, but over the year the number of cases, as one might have anticipated in private sector, started out very slow, and by the end of the year was way up there. I had, kind of, anticipated more of this heavy activity towards the middle of the year, in which case we may have needed that money to do either the additional education or hire people to do additional mediation and investigation work. Since that load came towards the end of the year, it didn't materialize.

Well, it's going to hit now, basically. The bottom line is that we had this large lump of cases at the end of '04, they'll be working through the system now, and they're starting to appear for either inquiries or other resolution about this time. So that fact, that bulge in the workload, will now come towards us in '05 rather than late '04. If it had come in '04, I would have used more of that \$267,000 then. I think that's probably the best answer I can give you, Dr. Pannu.

As I said, we do have a backlog of orders under the FOIP Act that we're trying to clear away. We had some trouble finding the people we needed, and we decided to use some contract people to help write those orders, but we had some difficulty finding the people we wanted to do it in '04. A result of a busy economy, I guess: it's a little harder to find people to do contract work. We now have about three different lawyers that have started working since the beginning of '05 on clearing this backlog. Again, I could have used that money in '04 to work on the backlog of orders if I had been able to find the people. As it is, I've found the people now, and they're working on it in '05 instead of '04.

Dr. Pannu: There's a time constraint, but one, just small follow-up if you'll allow.

The Chair: Sure.

Dr. Pannu: Timing of the backlog would be a perennial problem in an office like yours where you don't determine the timing at which a case may come, complaint may come, request may come.

Mr. Work: That's true.

Dr. Pannu: Was the backlog in this year ending now abnormally different from previous years? I'm still trying to get a handle on this surplus, you know.

Mr. Work: It actually was. Interestingly enough, we thought that over time – and as I said, this is a 10th anniversary of this law – it would start to get easier, that people would become accustomed to the rules and when you have to disclose documents and when you don't. Somewhat to my surprise we are actually finding some of the cases now are more difficult and the issues are more complex. Sometimes even under FOIP the volume of paper that's being sought is massive, and that requires much more time for mediation. It also means that if that comes to an inquiry, the issues that are argued in the inquiry become that much more numerous and complex as well. So somewhat to my surprise, yes, the issues have become more difficult, and the number of requests for orders has gone up in '04. I don't know what to attribute that to exactly. I guess, if it happens again in '05, then we will try to analyze that. It may be just a coincidence that '04 was a heavy year for that.

12:40

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much. It would have been helpful to just put this information in for us to look at. You know, then we would save your time and our time.

Thank you.

The Chair: All right. Thank you very much, Frank and Suzanne, for your presentation and answering questions.

At this point I would like to ask that Don Hamilton, our Ethics Commissioner, come forward. I see that Karen South is with him. You can proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Hamilton: Well, Madam Chairman, it's nice to be back here and have a nice lunch. The last time it was Christmas time.

Karen and I have a very good working partnership. When we are faced with a decision, neither one of us tries to have the answer. We discuss it, we have an open, frank communication, and we come to a decision. So our office has a team.

I am sure that you all have pored over the document that we prepared for you. I'm just assuming that, but I will just point out a few highlights, just in case you missed them.

Alberta will be hosting the annual meeting of the Canadian Conflict of Interest Network, which is known as CCOIN, in Edmonton on the dates of September 9 and 10. We were in Halifax at this one last year, but since then we have now invited Dr. Shapiro, who is the new commissioner in Ottawa, and Jean Fournier, the Senate Ethics Officer, so they will be here with us in the fall.

The office of the Ethics Commissioner has a very small budget. Within the funds granted for our office and with our limited human resources, we have achieved the timely provision of advice to members and senior officials, in most cases within 24 hours. One investigation was conducted in '04 and '05. No outside legal counsel other than through our contract for services with the office

of the Information and Privacy Commissioner was retained relating to that investigation.

In my first year I have done 11 speaking engagements up to December '04. The commissioner spoke to groups such as the School at the Leg., and if you haven't done that, you should do it. It's lots of fun; the kids and the teachers are great. All members and senior officials are required to meet with the commissioner each year, and those meetings are an excellent opportunity for individuals to provide us with their thoughts and suggestions for improvements or new strategies to meet our objectives.

Just as an aside, we have been dealing with the newly elected people, and they had lots of trouble filling out the forms. Yesterday was the deadline, and one person in this room was the last one to get his stuff in. I won't use his name because Jack wouldn't like that. But they're all in.

Mr. Flaherty: It was a very difficult day for me, so I'm glad you're not using my name. But I'm going to come over see you and get the football pads on again.

Mr. Hamilton: Both the Ethics Commissioner and the senior administrator attended the annual meeting of the Canadian Conflict of Interest Network, CCOIN, in Halifax in September. These meetings provide an excellent opportunity for confidential exchanges amongst the commissioners and administrators.

The Ethics Commissioner attended the annual meeting of the Council on Governmental Ethics Laws, COGEL, in San Francisco, and I was on two panels.

The senior administrator has also remained active in the Ethics Practitioners' Association of Canada and concluded her two-year term on the board of directors in October of 2003. Along with the staff from the Sheldon M. Chumir Foundation for Ethics and Leadership she organized two half-day workshops in Calgary and Edmonton. They were a great success and well attended.

I just have one last thing. We took note of the comments of the committee members in 2004 and their direction to look more closely at actual expenditures and to budget accordingly. We have attempted to do this in our submission today, and we are asking you for less money than we had last year.

The Chair: This is where everybody gasps.

Okay. Thank you very much.

Ivan.

Mr. Strang: Thanks, Madam Chairman. Mr. Hamilton, I guess the first question is on your technology services. You budgeted \$9,000, but you only used \$1,500. You didn't use \$7,500. So are you upgrading in the out-years?

And then, again, I would be remiss if I didn't ask this question. You were talking about hosting, and I see you covered it in your opening remarks. I was just wondering – with you going with \$7,600, I thought: boy, I hope we get invited there to help you on that.

Then I was wondering: on the bottom line there with materials and supplies next year you estimated another eight grand up, and you're even over and above the amount of money that you spent in 2004-05, yet you had a higher budget. So I'm just wondering what the correlation there on that was.

Ms South: We budgeted the \$9,000 last year for the technology services because we expected to be charged for SuperNet, and we were not. We have been told that we will be charged for it this year. My understanding is that we can expect \$400 a month for that.

Mr. Strang: Okay. Thank you.

Ms South: And with respect to materials and supplies, we are replacing our server this year.

Mr. Strang: Okay. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Hamilton.

Dr. Pannu: Again in the budget, although overall you are asking for less money, you're asking more for travel in 2005-06, \$30,000, unless I'm reading it wrong. The budget for 2004-05 is \$20,000, for 2005-06 it's \$30,000, so \$10,000 difference increase, 50 per cent increase.

12:50

Mr. Hamilton: Under travel we expect to expend the entire amount in our current travel budget. We would like to ensure that we have sufficient funds for one or two staff to attend ethics events that we are not aware of at this time, and we would also like to ensure that there are sufficient funds for the commissioner to travel to speaking engagements that might be held outside the Capital region.

Dr. Pannu: Yeah. Okay. Let me put the question slightly differently. You are expecting more travel this coming budget year than you undertook during the last year?

Mr. Hamilton: No, not really.

Ms South: We're not expecting more. We would like to have the flexibility should he be invited to speak outside of Edmonton or Calgary, which he has not done so far. Additionally, last year we budgeted for two people to go to COGEL, and only one person did go, yet we are expending almost all of our budget. So we would like to be able if we come across ethics events in Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver to send one or two people.

Dr. Pannu: So the commissioner is looking for more work. All right.

Ms South: More education.

Dr. Pannu: And for hosting: again there is a considerable jump. Is it because of the conference that's coming up?

Mr. Hamilton: There is going to be some extra.

Dr. Pannu: Because it says a 1,900 per cent increase.

Ms South: It is primarily for the conference, and we do hope to have, for example, the Speaker perhaps host a luncheon. But we've put it in our budget in case we are the ones paying for it.

Dr. Pannu: But Dr. Shapiro, when he comes, he's going to spend his own money, or are you going to be responsible for his expenditures?

Mr. Hamilton: Well, he will pay his travel and his hotel, and we have a dinner, of course.

The Chair: I see that you've got a lot of these points covered in your reference link as well.

I've got Dave next.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a quick point. I can certainly see costs potentially increasing with transportation considering that when you're newer to the job – it's written right in the report – you're focusing on your duties, and now you have the chance to further educate. So I actually applaud you in that endeavour, and let's face it, transportation costs are going up.

Along similar lines, I'd just like to say that it's refreshing to know that yet again we see an office like yours leading by example. We talk about budgeting on reasonable grounds, and projecting future expenditures on what you've actually spent in the past is quite laudable, and I hope it's contagious to other departments as well.

Thank you.

The Chair: Are there any other questions or comments? No?

Well, thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. Hamilton: Thank you.

The Chair: Our next meeting is next Tuesday, 11:45. Lunch will be served. We will have our discussion about the motion supporting our budget.

Could I have a motion to adjourn? Ivan.

Mr. Strang: I so move, Madam Chairman.

The Chair: All those in favour? Is anyone opposed? Motion carried.

[The committee adjourned at 12:56 p.m.]