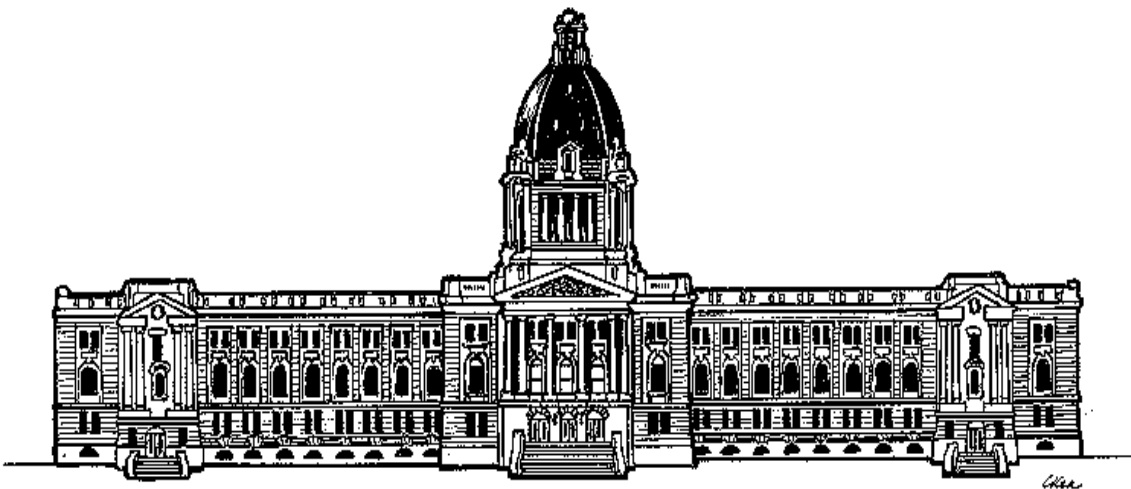




STANDING COMMITTEE ON CROWN AND CENTRAL AGENCIES

Hansard Verbatim Report

No. 18 – April 9, 2013



Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

Twenty-Seventh Legislature

STANDING COMMITTEE ON CROWN AND CENTRAL AGENCIES

Mr. Greg Brkich, Chair
Arm River-Watrous

Ms. Cathy Sproule, Deputy Chair
Saskatoon Nutana

Mr. Bob Bjornerud
Melville-Saltcoats

Mr. Darryl Hickie
Prince Albert Carlton

Mr. Gene Makowsky
Regina Dewdney

Mr. Scott Moe
Rosthern-Shellbrook

Mr. Roger Parent
Saskatoon Meewasin

[The committee met at 18:58.]

The Chair: — Welcome. Today we're having the Crowns and committee are meeting. I want to welcome and introduce the members. We have three substitutions. Substituting for Mr. Moe is Bill Hutchinson; substituting for Cathy Sproule is Warren McCall; and substituting for Darryl Hickie is Warren Steinley.

I believe members have a copy of today's agenda. If members are in agreement, we will proceed with the agenda. The time is 6:59 right now, and before we get into the agenda we also have six documents to table today.

I provided a list to members of the documents that are to be tabled. Pursuant to Rule 146(1) the estimates and supplementary estimates for the following ministries and agencies were deemed referred to the committee on March 28th, 2013, March 20th, 2013 respectively: vote 13, Central Services; vote 18, Finance; vote 12, Finance - debt servicing; vote 82, Growth and Financial Security Fund; vote 151, Municipal Financing Corporation of Saskatchewan; vote 142, Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority; vote 152, Saskatchewan Power Corporation; vote 153, Saskatchewan Telecommunications Holding Corporation; vote 140, Saskatchewan Water Corporation; vote 150, SaskEnergy Incorporated; vote 195, change in advances to revolving funds; vote 175, debt redemption; vote 176, sinking fund payments - government share; vote 177, interest on gross debt - Crown enterprise share.

**General Revenue Fund
Central Services
Vote 13**

Subvote (CS01)

The Chair: — The committee now will be considering the main estimates for the Ministry of Central Services. We will begin with our consideration of vote 13, Central Services, subvote (CS01), central management and services.

The minister, Ms. Heppner, is here, so I'll ask her to introduce her officials and if she has any opening comments with that. Thank you.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to be here tonight to speak about the Minister of Central Services and its role in ensuring effective government operations and program delivery.

Joining me this evening, to my immediate left is Ron Dedman, deputy minister, Central Services; Richard Murray, assistant deputy minister, property management. To my right, Shelley Reddekopp, assistant deputy minister, corporate services; and behind us, Greg Lusk, executive director, commercial services; and my chief of staff, Cole Goertz.

Central Services is a newly formed amalgamation of government's three core service providers. The Information Technology Office, the Public Service Commission, and Government Services have united under a single ministry to

provide support and services to government and its employees. This ministry is the hub of essential business services in government initiatives. Central Services helps recruit and retain the employees of executive government. It ensures the necessary IT [information technology] infrastructure, security, and supports are in place across government. It manages the workplace, vehicle fleet, and operational services required to keep government in business, the business of serving the people of Saskatchewan.

We also provide programs and services to the public through our career centre, which provides job seekers with all the information they need to apply for executive government jobs, through SaskTenders, which is the online hub for the business community to bid on government tenders, and through the Saskatchewan air ambulance program where our planes and pilots provide service to critically ill or injured patients.

Providing support and services to government ministries and agencies is our primary function and the core of what we do, and we've had some great accomplishments this year. We worked with Social Services to develop a new system to track clients and protect at-risk children. The new Linkin system will have positive implications for the people working in the social services sector and their clients.

We completed an enterprise-wide upgrade of our government email service, which brings us forward nearly 10 years. This successful project has reduced risk and mitigated future operational expenditures of maintaining an outdated system. Our IT division has assessed 600 applications that our client ministries have identified as critical as part of an initiative to rationalize and inventory all applications in government.

We hosted the 2012 Business Opportunity Expo. This was a great event that brought 25 public sector agencies at all levels of government together with over 400 business community representatives from across the province. Events like this demonstrate our commitment to network, learn, and seek new relationships with the Saskatchewan business community.

We helped transport more than 1,300 critically ill or injured patients to receive the care and medical attention they needed through the Saskatchewan air ambulance program. Central Services is responsible for the air ambulance planes, pilots, and hangar space.

We've continued to pursue third-party environmental certifications for the construction and design of new builds and the operation of existing facilities. Currently we have four buildings registered for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design or LEED certification, and three buildings that have achieved LEED silver. We also have 12 buildings that have been certified as BOMA BEST, or Building Owners and Managers Association Building Environmental Standards, an internationally recognized certification that acknowledges our buildings as being operated in a sustainable way.

We implemented recommendations to better support employees who are returning to the workplace. This will help ensure employees are fit to work and will increase their productivity.

We've successfully managed the corporate mentorship program to provide career and professional development opportunities to public service employees. We worked with other ministries to develop a health and safety strategy for all government ministries to ensure safe work environments for employees.

One of the most exciting highlights from this last year was our success at being recognized as a top employer in Saskatchewan. This put the government of Saskatchewan's workforce in the same category as Cameco, Mosaic, SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance], and SaskPower, and helps to position us as an employer of choice.

These are just some of the many examples of how we've been helping the province's ministries to better serve the people of Saskatchewan. Heading into next year and beyond, we must continue with these services and make them even more efficient and effective for our clients.

In this year's budget we are operating in a business environment that is drastically different than it was 10, 25, or even 2 years ago, and we need to keep pace. Online and interactive initiatives are core to business success. We need to keep on top of new trends and IT processes and responsibly manage our IT networks to protect sensitive information. In this budget, we have allocated \$1.5 million for IT architecture renewal to upgrade IT operating systems from Windows XP to Windows 7, and also have an additional \$500,000 for an enterprise security program to begin to scope a multi-year, multi-phased approach to security risks in the IT environment.

In terms of the government workplace, it's changing as well and requiring our teams to adapt accordingly, and changing the way we approach people management. And through that changing landscape, we want to engage with key groups to help grow the skills of the next generation of employees and create opportunities for a more diverse workplace. That is why we will continue to invest in offering a student employment program to over 1,000 students each year to assist students in gaining valuable work experience to build successful careers, offering work placements through groups like the Open Door Society and others, so we can help people like new immigrants gain job skills and competencies that will help them establish a career in our province.

We also have a responsibility to ensure that we are reducing government's environmental footprint and the impact that it has on our province. Managing our physical workspace with sustainability and safety in mind are part of our core business. That is why this budget includes \$1.3 million to continue the strategy to reduce government's space usage and save on accommodation costs. This initiative will help us turn back much-needed space to the commercial real estate market, and as an example the market in Regina is less than 2 per cent vacancy.

There is \$8.6 million for capital projects which include finishing the parking lot at the Conexus Arts Centre. Approximately \$500,000 will be spent on upgrading Swift Current Court House, with a total project cost of \$3 million and will be completed next year. \$500,000 is earmarked for upgrades to the Norman Vickar Building in Melfort. Total project cost is approximately \$3 million and should be

completed next year. \$400,000 will be used to retrofit the Kramer Building in North Battleford with upgrades to the electrical and mechanical, exterior and interior. Total cost of this project is \$7 million and this is the final year of that project. \$300,000 will go to renovating the Gemini Warehouse. Central Services purchased this building in 2011-2012 and will begin construction this year to upgrade the electrical and mechanical, the roof, and improve the site. Total cost of this project is \$4 million.

Other budget highlights include more dollars related to supporting government's network and data centre operations, and \$250,000 to purchase and implement an electronic bid submission software program for SaskTenders. This will make it easier and more efficient for suppliers to bid on government tenders by automating the process, eliminating the need for multiple copies of tender documents, and reducing the opportunity for errors in bid submissions. Currently we have \$192 million in goods and services being procured annually via SaskTenders.

Central Services is also leading or involved in many government-wide initiatives such as public service renewal, workforce adjustment, and the lean initiative. Lean is the pillar of the public service renewal and is focused on the continuous improvement of service delivery by eliminating unnecessary steps, streamlining processes, and providing better value for clients and customers. Lean has expanded to include not only the health sector and executive government but also the education and post-secondary education sectors.

To date, lean initiatives have resulted in a net savings of \$9.3 million through projects in all ministries, as well as countless examples of reduced processes and increased efficiencies such as reducing the turnaround time for oil companies applying for horizontal well licences by 67 per cent. Each horizontal well drilled in the Bakken play represents an approximate additional value of \$3 million to the province. Designing hospitals though a new process that will likely save millions and greatly improve patient care and comfort. And reducing wait times for charitable lottery licences by 67 per cent, which assists all non-profit organizations.

Workforce adjustment is heading into its final year. This program is on track to meet the goal of a 15 per cent reduction in FTEs [full-time equivalent] over four years, resulting in \$197 million in accumulative savings. The ministry's main budget priorities will continue to focus on infrastructure renewal and providing cost-effective support services for government. Central Services is here to ensure government has the tools, processes, and people required to operate in the most effective and efficient manner. Our goal is to serve and support ministries and agencies so that they in turn can serve the people of Saskatchewan.

You might not think of Central Services when you think about clearing snow on provincial highways, but Central Services ensures that shop space is in place to have snowplows and other equipment for Ministry of Highways.

You might not think about Central Services when you think about removing barriers to private sector growth, but we're there following the New West Partnership and other trade

agreements, and providing a one-stop shop for government tenders on SaskTenders.

You might not think about Central Services when you consider how critically injured or ill patients get the care they need, but Central Services is there flying patients to receive that medical attention.

I'm very proud of the work that this ministry has done, and I would be happy to take questions from members. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister. Questions? Mr. McCall.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, Madam Minister, officials. Good evening. It's a pleasure to join you for these consideration of estimates. I'd like to do something a little unorthodox off the top, Mr. Chair, and ask for leave to introduce a couple of guests.

The Chair: — Sure. I don't think, it's not . . . the Chair, I don't have to ask. I will let you, give you leave to introduce guests, Mr. McCall.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. In the Speaker's gallery we're joined tonight by Donnie MacKay and Draydin Cyr. They're right up there, left of the clock. If you could give us a wave, Mr. MacKay, Mr. Cyr.

I should, by way of explanation, Donnie is the mentor for Draydin. And Draydin and his family live a couple blocks over from where I live near Cameron and 7th Avenue, over on Retallack and 7th. And Draydin attends school, is in grade 7 at Mother Teresa Middle School.

Anyway we all know the importance of good mentorship relationships, not just getting through education but through life, and Mr. MacKay and Mr. Cyr have come tonight to watch the proceedings as a part of that mentorship. So I'm sure that they're not that far away from either sitting in your chair or mine, Mr. Chair, or perhaps the chair of the ministers someday. But getting started like this can only mean good things for the future.

So it's really good to see you here tonight in your Legislative Assembly, and I thank members for allowing me to introduce these special guests. I've never had guests for committee estimates before, Mr. Chair, so it's an extra special evening, not just to have a neighbour in the House, but returning to the matter at hand, Madam Minister, thank you very much for the opening remarks.

General Revenue Fund Central Services Vote 13 (continued)

Mr. McCall: — Certainly it's been an interesting evolution for Central Services over these last years. The new configuration is fairly interesting. Tonight we'll be focusing on the central management and services property management functions of

the new configuration as well as transportation. Information Technology Office and the Public Service Commission will await future estimates, so we'll not have all our cake quite at once, Madam Minister. But I guess the . . . So there'll be some overlap in terms of lines of questioning between the areas of the ministry, but certainly that will be the main focus for the two hours that we have here before us this evening.

And I guess in that regard, Madam Minister, the FTE complement last year to the year ahead, could you take us through what's happening with Central Services in terms of the overall full-time equivalent employee complement attached to Central Services, the people that get the work done for your ministry?

[19:15]

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you for the question. As you can well understand, putting all of these separate pieces together into this year's budget there was a lot of restating that was done. I think during budget process, it probably gave the officials at Finance as well as some of the folks here a bit of a headache putting that all together, pulling these pieces together.

Total FTE count restated for 2012-13 was 1,318 FTEs. And for I'm sure all the people who are watching at home, FTE does not necessarily mean people. It's a full-time equivalent. One position could be filled by two or three people depending on how that all works out. So these are not people within the ministry but an FTE count. So it's 1,318, 2012-13. Restated in our budget for this year going forward, our target is 1,145. There is efficiencies and savings to be found with the amalgamation of three separate entities into one, and so we're going to be looking for those efficiencies in the year going forward.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Madam Minister. So again I believe the overall reduction for one year is 13 per cent, thereabouts, in terms of the FTE complement. The four-by-four, the four-year civil service reduction program was, I think, 15 per cent over four years. It's a fairly significant reduction of the staff complement in the ministry, Madam Minister.

So I appreciate that you combine three entities; there may be some efficiencies to be arrived at. But if you could tell us a bit more about how these efficiencies are going to be arrived at. Will you be having fewer associate deputy ministers or managers, or how does that work? Where are those efficiencies going to be found in the new entity?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you for the question. And you are correct that we have an overall goal of reducing the size of the public service by 15 per cent over four years. That doesn't necessarily translate into 15 per cent per ministry over four years. There's obviously going to be some ministries who can do a little bit more than others. So it's an overall reduction. The numbers in Central Services are higher than some ministries for reduction for this year.

And as I said in my previous answer, there are savings to be found through the organization on the administrative side. But we're taking a top-to-bottom approach to find the positions to fulfill the targets that are laid out for us this year. In the

Ministry of Central Services we do happen to have a higher average age of employees within the ministry. So we'll be looking at finding these savings through vacancy management, attrition, that sort of thing.

And I want to make it very clear, I think it's something that our government's done a very good job of over the four years that we've had this plan in place, is that we are eliminating positions, not people. I know under previous government there were a lot of pink slips delivered on budget day and we are doing all that we can to make sure that that is not the approach that we're taking, that the actual physical, breathing people that work for ministries across government aren't being affected. They are positions that are being eliminated.

And I do want to publicly compliment all the deputy ministers that have been involved in this process to ensure that we're making sure that people have jobs but we can get rid of the positions where that is possible without reducing or compromising front-line service and service to the people of this province.

Mr. McCall: — Well I think if, Madam Minister, one of the front-line . . . a lot of the front-line folks in the ministry, you know, would be, say, the cleaners attached to the property management function of the ministry. I guess in terms of, and just so the committee has a more precise idea of where those full-time equivalent positions or the actual employees, if the minister would like to consider it like that, if the minister or officials could give an overview for the committee just how the staff is deployed in the ministry. And again, those concentrations of employment would seem to suggest where the ministry would be going in terms of finding that 13 per cent reduction in one year. But if the minister could provide that overview for the committee just to give us the context of the decisions to be made around staff reduction in Central Services.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you for the question. As my deputy minister pointed out, my office is leading by example. I have, I think, three staff in my office plus myself. So my own minister's office is run very efficiently, and I think that's important to be leading by example.

The member had asked for a breakdown of where FTEs are currently within the ministry. In central management and services there are 60.5. In property management there are 408.5. In transportation and other services — which includes, obviously, CVA [central vehicle agency] fleet vehicle services, air services, mail services, telecommunications, that sort of thing — 157.9. In ITO [Information Technology Office], 225, and in the Public Service Commission are 293.1, for the total of eleven forty-five.

And as I said, we're working to reduce the number of positions within the ministry, using retirements and vacancies wherever possible. We do have a year to put our plan together. As I said, there were no layoffs on budget day. There is no pink slips. We are taking a long-term, very careful, balanced approach to our FTE reduction in government. And during the course of this year, while we're implementing our reduction or working on the plan for these reductions, we'll also obviously be using turnover and vacancies where we can.

Mr. McCall: — So, Madam Minister, the 408.5 FTEs attached to property management, could you tell the committee a bit more about how they're broken down? What's the division between front-line service delivery, management? And what sort of opportunities, I guess, by the mandate put before the ministry in terms of vacancies or managing the reduction goals through attrition, what sort of opportunities exist there for the property management component of the FTE complement for the ministry?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you for the question. I do want to let committee members know, when it comes to the Ministry of Central Services — the member had asked about front-line delivery and front-line services — we actually have one of the smallest complements of management within executive government. Less than 8 per cent of employees are out-of-scope.

The vast majority of the employees working within Central Services are delivering programs to clients. In that particular vote, under property management, about half are in operations and maintenance of property, obviously the buildings that our clients — and when I say our clients, it's other ministries within government — use. So it's our responsibility to operate and maintain those properties for them.

And then the rest are program delivery and client services. And as an example of what would happen under that ministry is we're responsible for leases, lease renewal, and negotiating leases, that sort of thing for our clients. And again our clients are other ministries within executive government.

[19:30]

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Madam Minister. So in terms of . . . What kind of contemplation is being made to alternate service delivery or contracting out for example the maintenance and operations function in property management? Where is the ministry going to wind up in the year ahead on that question?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you for the question. Under that particular line, operations and maintenance of property, there's currently a mix already of contracted workers and employees of government. It's been like that for several years. As an example, we would have say a plumber on staff that works within the ministry and can service particular buildings, but we don't have plumbers to service every building that the government is responsible for. So in that situation we would contract out. I was just told that we actually put a job posting forward for a plumber in the North, and no one even applied.

In the trades we do have tradespeople on staff, but as our economy continues to do well, we are losing those to the private sector. And so we will replace where we can with employees within government, but I think it's just a reality of how the province is now that we're going to continue to have to contract out some of those services. We can't always compete with the private sector, and people are going to choose the positions where they want. And as I said, we're losing tradespeople already, and if we can't hire internally, we'll have to continue to contract out.

Mr. McCall: — I guess, and it would be further on in my line

of questioning, but the ministry's already got a fairly well-identified problem with employee retention. I guess what I'm interested in knowing is, with the goal of reducing 173 FTEs on top of whatever reductions have gone before, this being the fourth year of the four-year civil service reduction plan, I don't think it's a matter of the market dictating that you've got problems retaining plumbers or people aren't applying for plumbing jobs in the North.

Well I guess first of all, what of the half of the 408 FTEs attached to the property management component that's deployed for operation and maintenance, how many of them would be tradespeople?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — About 50.

Mr. McCall: — So again the pretty significant majority of the people working in operations and maintenance wouldn't fall under what the minister has described in terms of the problem of getting tradespeople hired by the ministry. They would be in other parts of the ministry.

So again in terms of introducing contracting out in a much more aggressive fashion or for a much larger impact in the ministry, is that the main plan for the ministry to make up the 173 FTEs that it's got to come up with for the year ahead?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Well as I stated, we are not going to be looking to reach 173 reduction in our FTE count through simply contracting out, as the member has stated. It is going to be vacancy management, attrition. We don't know today how many folks in the ministry will be retiring. We can't know today how many will leave to pursue other opportunities. And as I said, on the contracting out, it's been like that for some time. And where we can hire, we will.

And the point of the workforce reduction strategy is not to starve government of essential services. It's to downsize where we can. I would note in the last few years of the previous government, as the population of this province declined drastically, the number of public servants went up, which doesn't make a whole lot of sense.

So I think the point behind the strategy is to have the right people, the right complement in the right places doing the right job for the people of this province. And as I said answering questions so far this evening, when it comes to the overall reduction within the ministry, it's not just this vote that we're looking at tonight. Obviously we're going to be looking at Public Service Commission and ITO at a future evening and not this evening. There will be reductions in those two areas as well. So it's across the ministry, not just in the Government Services or what's traditionally been called Government Services part of this ministry.

Mr. McCall: — Well I guess that's what we're trying to figure out from the opposition benches, Madam Minister, is this is the fourth year of the workforce reduction program for the ministry, for the government at large, with 15 per cent having been the overall reduction. And your ministry is up for a 13 per cent reduction in one year. So it's not that we're trying to play favourites with aspects of the ministry, and certainly we'll get to consideration of the other components of Central Services.

But just looking at the FTE complement and how it's deployed across the business items for the ministry, it would seem that property management, with their 408.5 FTE complement, it's . . . That the minister won't rule out some kind of large-scale contracting out of the operation and maintenance function in the property and management component of the ministry is interesting because it would seem that that would be . . . You know, if you're going to reduce employees, you go where the employees are.

So the minister has an opportunity to rule that out tonight in terms of getting the great many men and women that do that hard work day in, day out some kind of security or peace of mind in terms of what's going to happen in the year to come, and the minister and officials are refusing to do that. So I guess if the minister won't do it tonight, when do the ministry, the people that do the hard work of the ministry, when do they find out who's going to be in the 173 FTEs that are reduced?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Well I thank the member for the question. And I don't want to get into an argument with him, but I just very clearly stated, when he said that I won't rule out contracting out positions, I just stated in my previous answer and the answer before that that we currently do contract out through that particular line item where it is feasible for government to do that.

We can't necessarily hire positions everywhere in the province. We can't necessarily hire every trade that we need. I just gave the example of putting out a job posting for a plumber in the North, and nobody applied. If you can't hire the employee and the work needs to be done, you're going to contract out those services. So I'm not going to rule it out. We're already doing it. I think that the member is trying to fearmonger where that's not necessary.

I've also stated that when budget day came down, there was not one pink slip from any ministry that went out that day, which is a far cry from how the NDP [New Democratic Party] operated. Hundreds of people were laid off on budget day under the NDP. I've had the opportunity over the last couple of years to speak to folks that worked in the public service when the previous government was in place, and they have told me stories about what it was like on budget day. People just sat at their desks and waited to see if they had a job by the end of the evening once budget day was done. It's not what's happening under our government.

So if the member wants to fearmonger and raise the fears in government employees that there's going to be massive layoffs and job abolishments and people out of work and on the streets, it's absolutely not correct. I think our track record is pretty clear on that front, that we are eliminating positions, not people. And if there is a position where somebody retires and that position doesn't need to be filled, we won't fill it as long as the services that the people of this province and our client ministries need, if that work still can be done without that position being there, then that is the plan that we are going to have in place.

At no time is our plan to have massive layoffs. The other government did that and maybe that's why he's suspicious of us. People tend to be suspicious of actions of others when they know what their previous actions have been. And I think that

we've taken, as I've said, a long-term, balanced, responsible, and respectful approach when undertaking this workforce adjustment.

I absolutely value the work that the folks in my ministry do. When I was minister of Environment, I know what the employees in that ministry did. They worked very hard. We are very thankful of the work that they do, and our position is not to go in and just start firing people to meet our targets.

And as I said too, if the member's concerned about the numbers that have been presented in this budget for the Ministry of Central Services, the 15 per cent over four year reduction plan is government-wide. And as I said, some ministries can afford to give up more than others. There are some ministries that can't give up as much as others, and where front-line services are needed, we've done that. I would point to Social Services that they've been able to hire extra staff to make sure that the most vulnerable people in our province are looked after.

So we are not starving front-line services. We are not starving public service of essential employees. And as I said, I think this is a very balanced approach.

[19:45]

Mr. McCall: — Well I guess the minister will have to understand, Mr. Chair, if I disagree with her characterization of a number of things in that answer.

I guess what I'm trying to understand is how the math of this works, how the numbers add up, and in terms of the target that is put before us tonight in these estimates that we're to consider and in terms of where the employees are in the ministry for which the minister is responsible and for the men and women that do the work day in, day out at the ministry. And of course these jobs need to get done whatever the FTE complement is and whatever targets have been set for the ministry by Treasury Board and by cabinet.

And so if the ministry is up for a 13 per cent reduction in one year, I don't understand how that works without some kind of large-scale trip down the road of contracting out. So I guess if there are that many vacancies to be managed and there's that kind of attrition to lend itself to the minister's cause, could she tell the committee how many vacancies there are in the ministry right now and whether or not that's going to get her to 173.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — At December 31st — and I apologize; I don't have numbers that are right to date — but at the end of December, there was about 80 vacancies.

Mr. McCall: — So even if you used every single one of those, Madam Minister, you'd still have 93 FTEs to go. So where are the other 93 coming from?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — As I've said, we have a year in which to reach our targets. Within that year, it's difficult to pinpoint an exact number on retirements, folks who will leave for other opportunities, what kind of vacancies will come up within that year. But as I've said, we're also looking at savings because of the amalgamation between the ministries. So there's administrative savings in those sorts of things too. But we do

have a year to put this in place. We don't have every FTE labelled and written down today as to where the 173 are going to be coming from. We do have a year to put that together.

Mr. McCall: — So would the minister have the committee to believe that, you know, that 173 reduction, there's no progress on the planning to accomplish that? There's nothing been done. It's just been pushed off for some later date. Is that what the minister is telling the committee?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you for the question. Obviously with the amalgamation of these ministries, we're still working through that and streamlining the process, as I've said, to find efficiencies with all of these different groups and groups of people coming together. There's program reviews being undertaken to see if we can do things more efficiently, and we would obviously have, I would expect, some numbers coming out of that. And because we are a more aged ministry, because of the retirements that are likely to be coming up, we have to look at doing things more efficiently because of that as well.

The implication in the member's question, that we are just pushing this off to a later date, that is not correct. What I have said is that we have a year to accomplish this goal. The work is being undertaken now. What I said is, we don't have every single 173 FTEs marked down on a sheet today. We have a year to get that work done. But the work is currently being undertaken.

Mr. McCall: — So how does the minister characterize the completion of the work outstanding? Twenty per cent? Fifty per cent? Again, the minister has said a few things about how people find out about their work status. So there are a number of people that didn't find out what their future is on budget day, but their future is drawing ever nearer in terms of the 173 FTEs that the ministry has identified as needing to eliminate.

So again, can the minister inform the committee as to what the timetable is for that, or is that something that will be announced in the middle of summer? Or will it be announced on the Christmas Eve? Or perhaps before the next budget? Can the minister provide some details as to what the plan is for that 13 per cent of the FTE complement of the ministry?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you for the question. Mr. Chair, I'm not quite sure how much clearer I can be about this. We are taking a different approach. And again, I understand why the member is suspicious, considering his government just issued pink slips. That is not our approach. We are not looking to achieve the targets that have been set for our ministry by laying people off or firing them. We are eliminating positions, not people. So if he wants to continue to fearmonger and lead the public service to believe that there's going to be massive firings in this ministry in order to reach our goals, that is not our approach.

Again, I don't know how much clearer I can be about this. It is the elimination of positions, not people. I can keep saying it if it helps. So if the member is asking when these pink slips are coming out, whether it's summer or Christmas Eve, I would say neither because that's not our approach.

Mr. McCall: — Can the minister . . . And I guess, Mr.

Chairman, I'll keep asking the question till I get an answer. But you know, if the minister prefers, we can characterize it as 173 positions. When will the announcement be made on which of those 173 positions are going to be eliminated?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Well there's no announcement date. As I've outlined in the process that the ministry is seeking to undertake, when there's vacancies, retirements, and we feel that those positions don't need to be filled and we're not compromising the work that our ministry's been mandated to do, positions just won't be filled. We are not going to issue a press release every time we do that. It's just the ongoing work of the ministry in order to reach these goals and targets.

I've also stated that we're doing program reviews, and as those are completed throughout the year, that will also indicate to us which positions do not need to be filled, but there's no announcement date. It's, I would say, is the regular business of the ministry. This is part of what the ministry has been mandated to do throughout the year, but I don't expect announcement dates or press releases every time a position is not filled.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. Maybe if the minister or her officials could tell us how the number 173 was arrived at? What's the rationale that went into deciding that 173 was a decent number for the ministry to proceed in eliminating positions? Is there a rationale for 173 or is that yet to come as well?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you for the question. I would like to point out, and I know that our Premier and other folks in our government have said this before, if you don't have goals, you're never going to reach them. So we set targets. The Premier did that four years ago with the workforce adjustment.

Part of the reason of the amalgamation of PSC [Public Service Commission], ITO, and Government Services into one ministry was to look for those efficiencies. We should at all times strive to do things more efficiently. As Margaret Thatcher said, as I was reading through her quotes yesterday, there's no such thing as public money. Government doesn't have money. We have taxpayers' money that's been entrusted to us, and I think it's our job to make sure that we do things as efficiently and effectively and cost-effectively as possible. So that was much of the impetus behind the amalgamation into what is now Central Services to begin with.

There is a deputy ministers' committee that has worked through this process, and it's a collaborative effort to have everybody discussing what each ministry is capable of giving up for this goal of 15 per cent over four years. And as for the 173, it was felt — considering the amalgamation, what the Ministry of Central Services looks like, the efficiencies that are going to be found, that sort of thing — that this number was an achievable goal for our ministry.

[20:00]

Mr. McCall: — I want to thank the minister for the reminder that this is an exercise about getting that accountability for the public's money, the people's money. And part of getting that accountability in a committee process like this is making sure that you've got an understanding of how decisions are made by

government.

And usually there's some kind of rationale in terms of savings that are identified or efficiencies that can be achieved through this combining of the three ministries. And if that work has been done, then the minister's got a more precise answer for the committee other than, we'll do program review and we'll find out when we find out.

So again for the minister: is she saying that that work hasn't been done and that the minister and officials don't know where the 173 FTEs are coming from? Or is that again a number that was set for the ministry, and the ministry is going to make it up as they go along?

The Chair: — I'll cut in for a second. I want to welcome the South African delegation that has joined us. They're here today. They've been here for a week to watch our parliamentary and our committee structure. And I hope that you find this committee meeting very informative, and again I welcome you here to our committee tonight. Thank you.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Chair, as I said, there are a number of factors that went into this. I trust my deputy minister to understand how his ministry works, and that he's not going to offer up something that is not doable. We have a goal. We'll be working towards that.

I've already stated that this ministry is relatively new. We're still working through that amalgamation process. That does not happen overnight, to continue to find efficiencies, to see how all the pieces fit together, what positions are necessary, and which ones we can do without. The program reviews are being undertaken and are ongoing. That work has yet to be done. And as I've said, we have a year to reach this goal.

I do not have a list of 173 FTEs today that I can tell the member specifically which positions they are. There's work to be done. We have a year to do that work. The budget just came down two weeks ago. Two weeks ago? Two weeks ago. And also with vacancy management, retirements, those sorts of things, there's still a lot of work to be done in this ministry as it is relatively new. It's less than a year old. So the work will be undertaken.

Mr. McCall: — Again though, we're here to consider the estimates for this year's budget, and the minister's describing a scenario like this sort of fell out of the sky and confronted the government and, you know, what are you to do about a new department. The deputy minister has been the deputy minister for a fairly significant period for Government Services and is certainly no stranger to government, period. And the minister herself was appointed in May — last May — for the new ministry. And again what we're trying to arrive at tonight is an understanding of how the positions that have been identified as expendable, as open to reduction in the year ahead by this government, what's the rationale that went into that?

And the minister herself, having I believe served on the Treasury Board benches and as part of cabinet, knows that there's a fairly significant process that goes into how these positions are identified and what's possible in the ministry. So for the minister to say that there's no sort of plan and that it's

all put off to program review, but at the same time 173 is a rational number — it's hard to have it both ways, Madam Minister. Either you've got a rationale and you've got an idea of where these 173 positions are going to come from or you don't, and that to me defies belief. So which is it?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. As the member pointed out, my deputy minister has a great amount of experience in this particular ministry. And as part of the deputy minister's committee, I trust his oversight on this project to come up with a reasonable target for the Ministry of Central Services.

Because of the amalgamation, which I've said repeatedly that we're still working through . . . You look at things like corporate services and communications, there's three different entities that have come into one. There will be savings there and efficiencies to be found if everything is housed, centrally located to deliver those services. We will be using retirements, vacancy management. I've already said administrative savings. There are some savings to be had in PSC through technology solutions. ITO contracts out certain amount of work. Those sorts of things. There is the program review.

I honestly don't know how else to answer the member's question. I think I've been as open and honest and transparent about our goals as possible. To date, the three separate entities over the last several years working on this project have achieved over a 175 FTE reduction. And I will say, with no layoffs. It's not the position of our government to do this through pink-slipping people. And if there are more efficiencies to be found, it's incumbent upon us to do that. And again, if you don't have a goal, you're never going to reach it. I have to set out a target.

So through all of the things I have already stated, we'll be working through this over the next year. We have a year to reach that target. If we wanted to reach it today, we could do exactly what the NDP did and pink-slip people on budget day. Could have had it done like that. It's not the approach that we're taking.

Mr. McCall: — Well again the minister is not answering the question. And I guess, you know, I'll note for the record, Mr. Chair . . .

The Chair: — I would . . .

Mr. McCall: — . . . that I won't be surprised when there's some kind of large-scale contracting out . . .

The Chair: — The Chair . . .

Mr. McCall: — Engaged in by the minister. But you know, if the minister is not going to answer the question . . .

The Chair: — Whoa.

Mr. McCall: — I can move on to other areas of questioning. But does the Chair have other advice for the committee at this time, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: — I have some advice for the member. This

question's been asked numerous times. The minister has provided the information. What you have between the two is a disagreement. I believe the minister has provided and answered the question that you've asked, and I will ask you now if you have other questions of the minister to move on to them, and thank you.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Moving through the central management and services, and perhaps this is where we can get a better picture of the great administrative and communications savings that have been identified to get the new ministry to their goal of an overall 13 per cent reduction.

In central management and services, could the minister or officials describe the expenditure under executive management and what is entailed therein?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you for the question. Under central management and services, there's a few separate line items there. As an example, executive management would be the DM's [deputy minister] office and my office. Central Services would include things like corporate services, internal audit, finance, communications, our own IT [information technology] — not ITO, which is separate, but Central Services IT — that sort of thing.

Mr. McCall: — You've got approximately \$6 million in salaries attached to that component of the vote of (CS01). Again how many FTEs are there? And you've got three directors of communication, I would presume. Given the minister's answer, that you can . . . get you towards your overall reduction goal, or how is that going to work?

[20:15]

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — There are 60 FTEs within that count. And to the member's statement about three directors of communication, there actually aren't; there's one. And another example for directors of finance, there are not three; there are one. So part of that amalgamation and the efficiencies are already being found.

Mr. McCall: — So I guess that 173 isn't impacted by the current state of affairs in the ministry. Is that what the minister is saying? To further explain, I mean, earlier the minister said that savings would be found administratively, communications-wise, so again to use the two examples that the minister has put forward, those savings aren't there and can't be used to go towards the overall reduction of 13 per cent of the FTE complement of the ministry. Is that what the minister is saying?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — To the member's question, there has been 10 FTEs identified already in that particular vote that will go towards the 173. And as we go further into this process to find efficiencies, program reviews, the things that I've mentioned previously, we're expecting to find more. But there's been 10 towards the 173 so far.

Mr. McCall: — So to be clear, that's 10 out of the central management and services (CS01) subvote. Well maybe the minister could enlighten the committee right now in terms of, if you've got those 10, have you got any others identified?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — As I said, there's been 10 identified so far and as we work through the processes that I've outlined previously, we're hoping to find more. If the member's asking to know exactly how many and which positions today, I do not have those identified.

Mr. McCall: — Well I guess, Mr. Chair, I asked for evidence of progress in terms of reaching the 173 positions earlier. The minister said that there's a program review to be undertaken and that that number couldn't be provided. Now we find out that there are 10 of the 60 that have been identified under central management and services.

And I guess it shouldn't be like an egg hunt, getting the answers for the questions, Mr. Chair, in terms of what is a straightforward proposition as to how the money under consideration here for the ministry is being spent, and how the men and women that do the work in the ministry, how the positions that they are filling are to be treated by the ministry and what the rationale is for that.

So is the minister saying that they don't have . . . that 10 is it and the others await the program review, or is she changing her answer yet again?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Chair, I take exception to the fact that the member says I'm changing my answer yet again. He had asked previously for me to identify 173 FTEs today when the budget came down only a few weeks ago. What I said to him very clearly is that I do not have an itemized list of 173 FTEs. My answer still stands on that. There are other things that are going to be happening throughout this year to reach that target.

I think we're going back to the same line of questioning we've had previously. I have the 10 that we've been able to identify so far. As I said, it's been only a few weeks since the budget came down. There is work yet to be done in the ministry. There is a year within which to reach these targets. I don't believe my answer's changed on that one.

Mr. McCall: — Again, Mr. Chair, through you to the minister, I think the record will speak for itself in terms of the answers that the minister's been providing.

In terms of the central management and services, will they all be quartered in a central location or are they still dispersed through various locations?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Of that subvote, obviously other than my office which is part of that subvote, they're here, but the rest have been centrally located in the Central Services main office which is on 1920 Rose in Regina.

Mr. McCall: — I thank the minister for the answer. Moving into (CS02) property management, obviously as per the earlier line of questionings, operation and maintenance of property is a substantial part of the government's or this ministry's business. In terms of the first expenditure under operations and maintenance of property, can the minister or officials describe what is entailed in the \$155.9 million of expenditure under consideration?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — In that 155 million the things that are included in that are salaries, utilities, supplier and other payments, minor maintenance, appropriated maintenance, major maintenance, design funds. And under the design funds — I had mentioned that in my opening remarks — it's our ongoing efforts to reduce the size of government by reducing the square footage per FTE within government.

It also includes lease payments, amortization, and there is also a reallocation, I think because of the restating of the ministry. And that's what I had said earlier too about this being a bit of a headache for Finance. So there were some funds that were shifted over from a previous subvote into here just when the Central Services were restated after the amalgamation.

Mr. McCall: — Can the minister characterize, so what takes the lion's share of the \$155.9 million? What are the majority components of that expenditure?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Well, the majority falls into basically two categories. The first one being maintenance, whether minor, appropriated, or major maintenance obviously is a big part. And then our lease payments also takes up a large portion of that.

Mr. McCall: — So under maintenance, what of that would be ongoing? What of that would be responding to repairs or occasional requirements?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Minor maintenance, that allocation is for emergency situations, things that are kind of unforeseen that happen throughout the year. Appropriated maintenance is maintenance on things like this building where we don't actually have a client to charge back to. Central Services is responsible for the Legislative Building, and obviously no clients. Their clients are ministries that you can charge back to for these things. So appropriated maintenance would take that into account.

Major maintenance are repairs to buildings such as replacing boilers, replacing windows, electrical, mechanical, that sort of thing.

Mr. McCall: — And again using the categories the minister has outlined, what's the dollar figure involved of the 155.9? And how does that break down along those categories?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Under minor maintenance for '13-14 is just under seven and a half million. Appropriated maintenance — I'm just going to round — is about 1.5 million. Major maintenance is about 28 million.

[20:30]

Mr. McCall: — I thank the minister for the answer. In terms of the design fund and the space per full-time equivalent, referring to page 10 of the plan proposed for 2013-14, 2010, the standard of 200 square feet was adopted. In the one metric provided by the ministry in the plan, 2010-11, that average was 256 and it actually went up in 2011-12. Can the minister talk about how it's going on that front?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you for the question. Part of the

reason, well I guess the main part of the reason that the square footage per FTE actually went up — I do want to say we're still committed to realizing the target of 200 square feet per FTE, but considering we just had a discussion about FTE count — as the government has fewer FTEs, at the same time we have lease agreements and square footage already paid for. Fewer FTEs, your square footage per FTE is actually going to go up. It doesn't mean that we're renting more space, it's just the ratio between the two.

So it's going to take a while for those things to catch up. As we go into renewing leases, obviously we can have that leased space within the guidelines that we're looking at. But it is going to take a couple years for all of those things to catch up. I agree that the '11-12 numbers are higher than '10-11. And I was asking if we have the numbers for '12-13 for the member, and I don't have those today, I apologize.

Mr. McCall: — I guess that's the point of the question, Mr. Chair. The minister and officials has given the action and the targets on FTEs. We're just wondering, given that 200 square feet was set out as the target in 2010, you know, three years ago now, when does it catch up? When does that target align with the moves made on FTEs for the government? When do the leases . . . What's the, I guess, what's the schedule in terms of leases expiring so that the goal can be realized? Or does the ministry have a handle on how that's going to happen?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — I don't have an exact date when this is going to catch up. Part of the problem is we have some leases that are five years, some that are longer. I will say though when acquiring new space for leases or doing renovations, the new standard, the 200 square feet is the standard that we use for the acquisition of new space or those renovations. But I would expect over the next several years, we will catch up to have that goal met overall. Like I said, having been locked into leases, it's going to take a while for that to all work itself out.

Mr. McCall: — So approximately, in terms of the applicable type of space in question here, office space, about how much office space does the government currently lease or utilize?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you for the question. I was raised on imperial and not metric so this doesn't . . . I have a hard time computing what this means. And my apologies, I'm not sure how your head works. But it's currently 300, just over 337 000 square metres. And again, I have a hard time comprehending that because it's not in square feet, but 337 000 square metres.

Mr. McCall: — How much of that would be under the new standard? What percentage?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you for the question. Currently we are just under 10 per cent that are meeting the new square footage standard.

Mr. McCall: — In terms of the average length of lease, would length of lease be on average 5 years, 10 years? Is there a standard in terms of the new length of lease agreements being negotiated? Can the minister or officials tell us about the kind of undertakings being made on the people's behalf by the ministry?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — I do want to clarify the 337 000 square metres includes both owned and leased. That's total government footprint. We don't have necessarily a set standard for our lease lengths. Recently we've been entering into longer lease agreements, as I'm sure you can understand, with rental markets being what they are and the tight commercial rental market, particularly in Regina. Our lease lengths tend to be a little bit longer so we can lock them in at a set price instead of going back out to the market every several years. And within those years, the rental prices are likely to be increasing. So we're signing onto longer lease lengths because of that as a cost-effective measure.

I had mentioned in my opening remarks as well, \$1.3 million that goes towards this reduction in footprint. And that would go towards things like government-owned buildings to do renovations, to have that smaller square footage per FTE count within the buildings that we own.

Mr. McCall: — So in terms of the new leases entered into in the last year, is it possible for the minister or officials to characterize how many leases were entered into, what the value of those leases were, and what the average length a lease would be? Are we talking 5 years, 10 years, 20 years? What's the pattern in terms of leasing activity on the part of the government?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — I won't be giving out the dollar values or our lease values. It's not something typically that the ministry does. But I can let the member know that over the last year, kind of our typical average lease renewal is for about 10 years for the reasons that I've outlined. We have a number of leases expiring and coming due over the next several years. In 2014 there's about 12; 2015, 15; and then between 2016 and 2019 there's a total of about 10 spaced out between those four years. So in the next few years we've got almost 30 that are going to be coming due.

Mr. McCall: — I thank the minister for the answer. Of those 30, what kind of percentage does that constitute of the overall leasing requirements for the government? Would it be in the majority, or what does it mean in terms of that overall impact?

[20:45]

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — To add to that, apparently there is about 12 leases coming due in 2013. With everything I've listed, between the 12 in this year up until 2019, these are for Regina only, it would constitute about 75 per cent of government office space in Regina.

Mr. McCall: — So that's 42 agreements overall in terms of the 12 plus the 30 the minister had earlier referenced or . . .

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — 49.

Mr. McCall: — I will get that converted to imperial yet, but there we go. Okay in terms of the . . . Is there any particular strategy that guides the . . . I'm sure there's goal around getting value for dollar, getting appropriate space and on. But is there any sort of strategy still guiding the leasing activity of the ministry, looking downtown or particular regions in the city of Regina? And does that sort of activity hold true for other areas

in the province around leasing activity on the part of the ministry? Can the minister or officials describe that for the committee.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you for the question. As I've said the market, particularly in Regina, is tight when it comes to commercial space. And it's not always easy for us to find alternatives. It used to be a buyer's market, and now you're kind of a bit at the mercy of the market. So we obviously try to find value for money. I also think adopting the square footage per FTE policy is going to help us in the long run just because we will require less space. We've also been, where possible, moving more folks into government-owned space so that we're not looking at leases for all of government. Obviously we have quite a few square footage in owned space, but where it's possible we'll move them back.

And through these different things, whether it's square footage policy or moving folks back into government-owned space, and since 2010-11 we've actually been able — and this is in square feet — we've actually been able to give back, well give back 186,000 square feet basically back into market.

Mr. McCall: — I thank the minister for the answer to the question. Moving on to the next subvote, transportation and other services, (CS05). Vehicle services, the first one of the allocations, again a fairly significant portion of the particular subvote at \$35.394 million, where is it at in terms of fleet renewal? And are there pressures coming down the line in that regard, or is the fleet fairly up to date? And are there any other sort of policy changes coming in terms of the allocation of the vehicles under the old CVA?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you for the question. About three or four years ago, the criteria was changed for CVAs. The age of the vehicle and how many kilometres was increased to 14 years or 300,000 kilometres use on a vehicle. The average age of the vehicles within the fleet is about seven years. We're currently working with ministries to rightsize the fleet, to make sure that the ministries have the right vehicles for the right use. And I think that would, that will probably help us in the long run to potentially to reduce the size of the fleet, just to have a more accurate reflection of the needs for each ministry.

Mr. McCall: — There's no savings anticipated for that number of yet, that work remains to be done. Am I understanding the minister correctly on that front?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Before we made these changes about three or four years ago, the annual cost to that was . . . annual amount that was spent on fleet replacement was about 18 or \$20 million. And as you can see in this budget, it's 7.4 million.

As to the rightsizing exercise with ministries, I don't have a dollar value or an expectation of savings for you today.

Mr. McCall: — Moving along to air services, again with an 11.5 million expenditure, can the minister talk about the current mandate before air services and any sort of changes anticipated in the work that air service and, I'm presuming, the associated work of air ambulance. Or if that is not the case under this expenditure, if the minister could make that clear, what's happening with air ambulance. But if the minister could talk

about air service, the fleet, where it's at, any sort of needs coming down the line there, and how air service, air ambulance, is represented in these figures before us.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — There were three planes in the executive air fleet and three in air ambulance. And I would imagine that the member's aware there was an accident with one of the air ambulance planes. To backfill that while that one went on repairs, we took a plane out of the executive air fleet, did a little retrofit, and gave it to air ambulance.

Their service is not declining. It's increasing quite significantly. In 2012-13 they flew over 1 million kilometres, which is up, year over year. So obviously they needed to have the third plane with them.

The fourth plane which was air ambulance which was the accident plane, is getting fixed. And we're currently looking at the status of air ambulance and their future needs, whether that plane that was borrowed from executive air is going to go back to executive air or stay with air ambulance. Our executive air flight time has been drastically reduced over the last several years. So I don't have a decision on that fourth plane today, where it's going to go, but I am happy to say that the air ambulance service wasn't particularly disrupted because of the accident.

Mr. McCall: — I thank the minister for that answer. Again under the subvote, if the minister could describe what's happened with telecommunications services. Again in the overall scheme of things, the 2.9 million expenditure, not terribly large, but going up from 467 million the year previous. Has the minister got any comment on the cause for that?

[21:00]

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you for the question. Because we do things for our clients, other ministries, one of the things that we hoped that we could have SaskTel do was bill for telecommunications services directly to ministries. They aren't going to be doing that, so that 2.9 reflects the telecommunication costs, but because we bill back to ministries, it's actually a net zero for Central Services.

Mr. McCall: — I thank the minister for the answer. Glad to hear it wasn't her roaming fees or anything like that . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Good to hear, good to hear or glad to hear. Anyway we've reached the agreed-upon hour of conclusion, so I'd thank the minister and officials for the time we've spent considering these estimates before us. I thank fellow committee members and turn it over to the Chair at this time.

The Chair: — Thank you, member. Does the minister have a closing remark or not?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to thank the members for being here this evening and to the member from Elphinstone for his questions. And also to the folks from the ministry for being here and helping me out tonight as well, thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister, and I want to thank you

for appearing before this committee. Now I would, now the questioning be done, I would ask a member to move a motion of adjournment. Mr. Parent has moved a motion of adjournment at, I believe, at 9:03. And I want to thank again the committee. And this committee stands adjourned until the call of the Chair.

[The committee adjourned at 21:03.]