



STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
2006**

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Saskatoon Eastview

Mr. Wayne Elhard, Deputy Chair
Cypress Hills

Mr. Lon Borgerson
Saskatchewan Rivers

Ms. Joanne Crofford
Regina Rosemont

Mr. Don Morgan
Saskatoon Southeast

Mr. Peter Prebble
Saskatoon Greystone

Mr. Milton Wakefield
Lloydminster

[The committee met at 19:20.]

**General Revenue Fund
Culture, Youth and Recreation
Vote 27**

Subvote (CY01)

The Chair: — Call the meeting to order. The first item up for business before the committee tonight is the consideration of estimates and supplementary estimates for the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation, found in your budget book on page 49, vote 27.

The minister is here with, I think, some of the same officials. But if you have new ones you'd like to introduce or if you have anything you want to say before we begin questions, go right ahead.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — I'm not sure. I think the good-looking bunch sitting behind have all been introduced and so we're prepared to proceed.

The Chair: — If any of them come up to the mike to answer a question for the first time, if they could say their name so we'll just know again who they are.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Right.

The Chair: — So questions. Mr. Brkich.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Madam Chair. The first question is dealing with centennial year.

As you know, Davidson had been clawed back \$1,300. They were sent a letter. Have you still . . . going to take that money back from them, \$1,300?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Madam Chair, to the hon. member regarding his question, to the best of my knowledge at this moment, Davidson has been advised that they can appeal the decision to the board of trustees of the Community Initiatives Fund. But to the best of my knowledge they've not done that yet at this point in time.

Having said that, it would be my position that when granting monies are made available that, unless the funds are spent on the agreed upon expenditures, that they should ought to be returned. I think that's a very important element in terms of the accountability and the confidence of accountability of the use of public funds.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Madam Chairman. As Davidson was spent on the parameters that were set out by the committee. The only thing is I believe that they mailed their letters maybe I think a month earlier than I guess than the date started. I would say that'd be hardly a chance to penalize the community especially with the centennial, the spirit of the centennial organization. The money is accounted for. It has been spent. It may have just been spent a month earlier. They were under the impression that they could do the mail-out. They wanted to do it early. I hope that you take that into consideration at that end.

The other question I'm going to ask you is, has there been any other money requested from people that received centennial grants in the last year?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Madam Chair, in response to the hon. member, two parts to it. First of all, regarding the information that you provided regarding Davidson's expenditures, you referred to, you hoped that I would take that into account. That won't be an appeal that would come to me. It will go to the board of the trustees of the Community Initiatives Fund and people that I would certainly know as reasonable people. And I'm sure that they will take into consideration the information provided by the town and the parameters that were outlined and will give it a reasonable hearing. I think that's really all I can say at this point in time.

Regarding whether there are others, there will be a handful of others. Now the hon. member will be aware that this is a question that you asked, a written question three days ago I think it was or two days ago, and the response to that written question is being prepared. It's not here; it's not prepared yet and it won't be here tonight, but it will be provided. I'll provide that to you on the day that it's ordered, which I think is Thursday if I'm not mistaken, whatever day that is. So I'll provide that to you in written form.

And I think your question you're asking tonight is the same as the one that you asked in the written question? Yes. Then I'll provide that to you in written form. It will be there within the five days.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Madam Chair. One other question dealing with . . . now if there is other communities, and every organization would have been volunteer. Some of these organizations probably would have disbanded now if the money was spent. What steps would you go after a community that maybe owed you 200, 300, \$500, that there is no committee that exists right now?

We'll use this hypothetical because I haven't run across it yet, but I probably will when I start checking, when I get the information on how many towns or how many groups that may have requests for money back. All of them have spent their bank account because it was spent just on the one-year celebration.

My question to you is, what steps would you take to recover \$1,000 or less from a group that basically had disbanded if they said that we've already disbanded our community, we have no resource to get the money or no bank account to draw from to pay back this money?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Point number one, I don't expect that there are very many cases — point number one. Point number two, until I get the information, I can't, you know, it's impossible for me to be specific. But it would be my impression that the vast majority, if not all of the grants would have been provided to municipalities or organizations that are attached to the municipalities. So the municipality will be an existing body.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Ms. Draude.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you very much. Minister, and your representatives, I have some questions tonight, and some of them are around a different topic. And I'm going to start with protocol. Just a couple of questions.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Okay. Just before you . . . Protocol is a different department.

Ms. Draude: — Okay.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Do you want to lump those together and deal with Culture, Youth and Recreation first or . . .

Ms. Draude: — Sure I can.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Maybe then and allow the amount of time you want for . . . because protocol falls under the Department of Government Relations.

Ms. Draude: — Okay.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — It's the responsibility I have . . .

Ms. Draude: — Oh, okay.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — But it's not in the department before us right now.

Ms. Draude: — All right. No problem then.

I had an opportunity to get the breakdown of funding that came from the federal government, I believe, was 214 million directly to the province. And the breakdown to Culture, Youth and Recreation was 695,300 by the information I've received. And out of that . . . oh pardon me, it might be more than that. Yes, 695,300 is historic places initiative, and I don't see that as a line item in Culture, Youth and Recreation. Can you tell me where it comes into the budget?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — That would be found if you go to page 52 under heritage, then the historic places initiative will be found within the line heritage operations support.

Ms. Draude: — And then does your department have the authority to determine where it is spent, or does the federal government have any say in that?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — The historic places initiative?

Ms. Draude: — On their portion of the money, where their money is spent.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — The federal funds are received from an agreement between the province and the federal government that flows out of a plan that's established by the province and then approved by the federal government in the issuing of the funds that we receive. And so therefore they're used for that purpose, as agreed to in the . . . well in the agreed plan.

Ms. Draude: — So in most government departments if for some reason something happens that you can't spend the

money, where does it go to?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — In the agreement, the province can carry over the budgeted allocation from year to year. But if the money is not spent, then it's not received from the federal government.

Ms. Draude: — So you spend the money first and get the money back from the federal government.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — That's right.

Ms. Draude: — Okay. Thank you very much. I am going to ask some questions on SCN [Saskatchewan Communications Network].

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — On which?

Ms. Draude: — SCN.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Okay.

Ms. Draude: — There was an increase this year of about \$800,000 in the SCN budget, I believe. Can you tell me how that's broke down and what is specifically spent on that amount of money?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — I'll answer just in general terms and then ask Ken Alecxe, whose title . . . What is your title here, Ken?

Mr. Alecxe: — President.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — The president and CEO [chief executive officer] of SCN, to add detail.

It has to do with the continued operations of SCN and largely focused on the production of materials for programs. But I'll ask Ken Alecxe to expand on that.

Mr. Alecxe: — Thank you. I can give a more detailed breakdown, but the funding is used primarily for programming which is the purchase of film rights. We have the ability to broadcast and, in order to broadcast, you need to have something to show. And you acquire that by getting rights to play a film for a certain limited period of time. Usually over four years you get about 16 plays over that period of time.

Our stock was extremely low and because the stock of inventory was extremely low, we needed funding in order to continue the broadcast all across the province. So the lion's share of that money went to programming, to buy those rights.

Another portion of it was allocated to salaries and wages that covered the ordinary incremental increases in salaries and wages for the year. I believe we also increased a position this year.

And a portion of that was also one-time capital funding — be in the order of about 330,000 of one-time capital to allow us to bring our broadcast technology into the modern era where it will be going to a entirely tapeless environment. That will be all server-based, all digitized, and high-definition ready which is the new industry standard.

Ms. Draude: — So two questions out of that. You said it was across the board increase or the required increase in wages. Can you give me a general idea what percentage of increase the staff received?

Mr. Alecxe: — It was according to the government's standards that was across the board. We follow the same salary, wages, and policies procedures as the rest of government. And it was about 2 per cent this year.

Ms. Draude: — And when you said that there was about \$300,000 spent on capital, I take it that means it was mostly computer equipment?

Mr. Alecxe: — It was mostly for servers and information technology related equipment — monitors, cabling, network equipment.

Ms. Draude: — Mostly bought within Saskatchewan or do you have to buy it outside of the province or outside of Canada?

Mr. Alecxe: — We try to buy as much as we can within Saskatchewan. The lion's share of it is purchased within Canada. Some of the equipment is possibly manufactured elsewhere but we procure it within Canada.

Ms. Draude: — There's a statement within the budget book that says that you support Saskatchewan regional film and video industry and encourage Saskatchewan regional video industry. Does that mean financially, when you support and encourage? Is that financial?

Mr. Alecxe: — A lot of it's actually developmental in terms of we work with a lot of small emerging and intermediate film producers. So a lot of our work is developmental in terms of helping them understand what it takes to put together a film project — script development, the kind of talent — crew — timing, how to put together a budget. But it does include a funding as we buy these rights as any other broadcaster, as any other network does in the open market. We too buy rights and that money then goes to a lot of regional, local Saskatchewan producers to produce product for us.

Ms. Draude: — So then basically it's people. You're paying for the services of individuals that will help people develop business plans or that type of thing?

Mr. Alecxe: — I'm sorry. Could I get you to repeat that.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Maybe I'll just add too, SCN's role here is very valuable to the film industry in Saskatchewan because it'll be SCN's involvement that will be in that first commitment that will enable a Saskatchewan producer then to be in a position to attract investment from other jurisdictions as well. So it's that first seed investment that proves very, very valuable to our film industry.

Ms. Draude: — So does that mean you give seed money for somebody to develop films?

Mr. Alecxe: — That's correct. They'll make a proposal to us, a business proposal, and on the basis of that business proposal we'll put in a certain amount of the funding required. In order to

have a film that obtains federal funding under the Canadian Television Fund, you need to have a certain amount of broadcaster funding. Up to 15 per cent of your total budget has to be from a broadcaster. That way they know it's a real project.

So we'll put in some, not the whole 15 per cent but we'll put in, you know, as little as 1,000 sometimes as much as 50,000 into a project, depending upon the type of project and for how long it goes. And then they go to other broadcasters with that same project. So, as the minister says, we're often first in. That then levers other funding into the project from other broadcasters. It could be Bravo, it could be CTV [Canadian Television Network Ltd.], it could be CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation]. And then they also go and apply for funding from the federal government. We tend to lever about \$10 into the province for every dollar we invest.

Ms. Draude: — And are companies that . . . First of all, the companies that do this, is there a list of those companies available or is that private information?

Mr. Alecxe: — Now some of it would be commercially confidential. There's . . .

Ms. Draude: — I'm not asking for the amount of money, just the companies that would have been supported financially.

Mr. Alecxe: — There certainly is a list. If I'm able to provide one, I would.

Ms. Draude: — Okay. If it's something that you are able to do. And also, does this . . . When you're working with these business plans is any of that available for a tax credit, like an R&D [research and development] tax credit?

Mr. Alecxe: — Not R&D. No, they'd be eligible for a credit under say, the SaskFilm credit program, tax credit program for employing Saskatchewan labour, just like any other film project, but not for an R&D credit.

Ms. Draude: — So then these companies would then be eligible for some money from you for development and then the film tax credit as well?

Mr. Alecxe: — That's correct.

Ms. Draude: — Okay.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — And the film tax credit is not under the jurisdiction of SCN . . .

Ms. Draude: — No.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — But is under the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation.

Ms. Draude: — Right. So then . . .

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — By legislation.

Ms. Draude: — Do they have to apply twice?

Mr. Alecxe: — Yes.

Ms. Draude: — So then it's . . .

Mr. Alecxe: — They're separate programs.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Yes.

Ms. Draude: — So then if they're doing this, they're applying twice. There's different personnel would probably have to approve this. So then how many people are involved in determining whether a company is eligible for the tax credits?

Mr. Alecxe: — Well I can only speak for SCN. But for our program we have one program manager who receives the application and that's it. Then we have a clerk who will also take that application and log it. And we also have to provide CRTC [Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission] reports on Canadian content. So there's probably the time, part of the time of . . . could be as many as three staff in processing an application right through the completion to broadcast and reports to CRTC.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — And on the film tax credit there would be one person who is engaged in that who is employed within SaskFilm.

Ms. Draude: — Is the list of companies that were eligible for film tax credits last year, is that available?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — It's reported annually in Public Accounts who the recipients are and the amount of tax credit that they receive.

Ms. Draude: — With the changes in the film tax credit Act last year, what type of an increase are you expecting this year?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — The percentage has increased, as the hon. member will be aware. However with that change in percentage increase there has also been put in place a cap on the eligible amount that a filmmaker can receive for deemed employees. And so with the change in the legislation and the policy, we expect that the budget will be about the same.

Ms. Draude: — And from my understanding, a film company can receive a film tax credit for every film they're working on that year if that's the way it would work. So if they are working on three films and they're eligible, the same employees could just about be covered under every film. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Yes. If I'm understanding the question correctly, the answer is yes. Yes.

Ms. Draude: — Okay. And this may be the silliest question you're asked this year but I'm going to ask it anyway.

We've talked about providing satellite broadcast services for the Department of Learning and the Department of Advanced Education and Employment. Do they actually pay SCN?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — It is provided through the core grant to SCN and there is no transfer of funds from the Department of Advanced Education to SCN.

Ms. Draude: — So then the Department of Learning or

Advanced Education determines who's going to receive the services. It's not SCN.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — The determination of the services are made by the Department of Advanced Education and Employment and by the Department of Learning, and then SCN responds to that.

Ms. Draude: — I had the opportunity to go to Tisdale and they allowed us to be hooked up to a number of classrooms that were interactive and we saw how one teacher was dealing with students in four or five different classrooms. Is that the type of thing that SCN provides with the learning departments?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Yes, yes.

Ms. Draude: — Okay. And so it's up the schools then to ask the Department of Learning if they want to be in on that and then they funnel it through . . .

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — That's right. And regional colleges will be an important part of that picture in much of Saskatchewan. The distance learning becomes a very effective vehicle for increasing the accessibility and reducing the cost when you're living outside the campus communities of Saskatchewan.

Ms. Draude: — I look at this program when it comes to providing teachers in areas where there's a real shortage of professional teachers in remote areas, so they can be hooked up to have a math and science teacher wherever. And it should be working well in some of the regions then.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Absolutely. And also sometimes when, in specific classes where numbers make it difficult to be able to afford the cost of having a on-site, permanent live instructor.

Ms. Draude: — So in order to get the costs of that, I have to go to the other department I would imagine . . . the costs that would be incurred to the school board.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Well not for the cost of broadcasting. That would be SCN.

Ms. Draude: — Does the school board have to pay SCN?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — No. SCN does not charge for carrying the signal. If it's K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] then there won't be a cost. But of course if it's a post-secondary credit course, then there will be the cost that is paid to the university or SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] for the course. So that would be part of the picture.

Ms. Draude: — Okay.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — And just for the member's information, there are 260 sites in Saskatchewan for e-learning so, you know, this is a pretty comprehensive and sophisticated network of learning sites when you compare that to the number of campuses that we have. To me this is using technology in some ways to do the best of what technology can do for a province like ours which has a very large geographical area and relatively small population.

Ms. Draude: — What percentage of increase has this been year over year? Is the response or the request for the service growing, increasing at a larger per cent or is it about the same number every year?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — For the e-learning?

Ms. Draude: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Each of the last two years, the increase in usage would be in the 8 to 10 per cent rate, 8 to 10 per cent per year.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, under capital assets there is, I believe, \$20,000 worth of capital assets. I'm wondering why there would be assets under Culture, Youth and Recreation and why it wouldn't be under SPM [Saskatchewan Property Management].

Ms. MacLean: — Madam Chair, Barb MacLean. I'll answer the question. We actually don't pay for the capital, don't have the capital assets. This is an amortization of the assets over a period of time. So renovations that may have been undertaken in one of the sites are then amortized over.

Ms. Draude: — The assets that are owned by SPM are broken down into each department and you get charged the amortization?

Ms. MacLean: — Lease fees as well.

Ms. Draude: — Okay, thank you.

Can I ask a question on Wanuskewin Heritage Park? Is there somebody here that can ask that? I just have two questions on that. Musical chairs.

I was just curious why there was a loss in the gift shop this year. Last year there was a profit or there was \$20,214 and this year there's a negative \$11,610. Can you tell me why?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — I'm glad you went after the fly and not Milt.

I think you're referring to something when you ... is it the Wanuskewin annual report?

Ms. Draude: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — The relationship between the department and Wanuskewin is that the department provides Wanuskewin a \$500,000 annual operations grant which is just a fraction of their total operations. And we don't have that information with us.

Ms. Draude: — I don't know if you're going to find that out but if you are can you also find out why the Métis employment and training program would also give them money. Do they get their staff covered under a training program from the employment development program from Aboriginal Affairs?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — We'll have to inquire on that. We're simply not involved with that level of information in the operations.

Ms. Draude: — I'm leaving the part that I am really curious

about until last because I want to know what you spend \$3.2 million on under youth, policy and youth it says. What in particular? What are you doing for the youth for that amount of money?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Are you just asking the youth portion of that? That is what you're asking? Yes?

Ms. Draude: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — If the hon. member ... I think you're looking on page 51. Are you?

Ms. Draude: — Yes, I am.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Okay. Under the allocations there's the youth services, the 337,000. That amount is ... that's staffing.

And then the youth employment, the 2.419 million. Those are the employment grants for the Saskatchewan employment experience — the summer employment and the Green Team, youth employment, student employment programs. So those are amounts that are transferred to other parties related to the creation of student summer employment experience.

Ms. Draude: — So this 2.4 million, this money all goes to different government departments, doesn't it?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — No, it will go to whoever is creating the summer employment. And let me just pause and I'll get you a list of who that would be.

Those ones will go to either the public sector or non-profit, community-based organizations. In the public sector, they'll be post-secondary institutions, so it could be university or regional colleges — SIAST, for example — and then the other will be to non-profit, community-based organizations or cultural organizations. So those will be the organizations that are eligible. And what they're required to do to receive the funding is to offer employment to students which makes use of the skills the students are using in their training programs. And they're intended to be high-quality, valuable, resume-useful work experiences that are created.

One of the things that says to me they're working is that the students who participate in these are asked to evaluate the value of the work experience they received, and 97 per cent of the students who participate rate it very highly in that context, that it's not only interesting and challenging work, but work that's resume-useful for them after they graduate.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Can I get a list of the departments where these young people are working and the CBOs [community-based organization]?

And the reason why I'm asking for this is I know this program was changed a number of years ago. It used to be open to the private sector as well. And I know that there is lots of valuable work experience can be gotten from the private sector as well, and this is very frustrating for people who are trying to get summer employment and get the first work experience for young people. And we see one government department or agency or CBO giving money to another one, where the private

sector can do a very valuable job as well.

It was just a signal to industry that government thinks that the work experience they can provide for young people is more important than the private sector. And I happened to be out there at that time and I know that we used to hire people and give them an opportunity to work and get some work experience. And this just sends the message that, well the government knows better than even the industry. I think this is one of the most frustrating parts.

I don't have a problem with what it's trying to do, but I do have a problem with — and so does business — with the idea that government are the ones that are supposed to give the grant. We have government giving money to a government agency to hire people.

I'll be interested to see who is hired in which department, where it's going to, because I know very well that there are businesses out there that could . . . especially in smaller towns where they could take a young person and put them in a welding shop or a saw mill or whatever for the summer. And they will learn. There will be some valuable experience that they can put on their resume, and it will help them, especially if they're going to be going to some of the technical schools. And I guess I shouldn't just say technical school.

But there are opportunities, and it is a frustration level. It just sends, it sends a signal that reverberates, and I guess it frustrates the life out of many people.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Yes. Just in a quick response, Madam Chair. The Green Team employment is available to private sector employers, and it is designed to be available to public sector and non-profits which are not available for the federal student employment grants. So that what the province is doing is responding to a gap in the eligibility for funding for student employment.

It would be my view that it's not good public policy for the province and the federal government to be competing with each other for the same sector for employment grants. And it makes sense to me to take note of what the federal government is doing and then plan what we're doing to complement that, rather than to compete with that.

Ms. Draude: — Just from experience, I can tell you that the federal program, their application, their closing date for, unless it's changed in the last couple of years, is in February and a lot of businesses are not even sure of what they need at that time. They don't have people out of school yet. They don't know who's available.

I think that it's a program that may help some people, but I know that it's not as hands-on as the provincial one was. I think it's something that should be looked at.

And, the other one, the Premier's volunteer sector initiative and it's \$177,000. Like why is volunteer \$177,000?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Madam Chair, in response to the hon. member's question, the monies here will be used . . . There'd be one staff person who's working in this sector. The monies will

also be used for the purposes of research as well as to host forums and that sort of thing. I think all of us will recognize Saskatchewan is the volunteer capital of Canada and that the voluntary sector plays a huge role in the quality of life in every community, you know, tons of different aspects. And the Voluntary Sector Initiative provides a forum for the voluntary sector to communicate with government about what it is that best supports that kind of initiative within the province. So it'll be a combination of those things that will result in the expenditures there.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I don't have any further questions on Culture, Youth and Recreation. I do on the protocol side. But before we go further my colleague would like to make an introduction.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Okay.

The Chair: — Mr. Elhard.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for this opportunity to read this introduction into the record. The committee had the privilege of playing host a few minutes previous to a couple of visitors from the great state of Montana. They were sitting in on our committee this evening but unfortunately had to leave. I would like to make note of the fact that they were here because this too, this also is precedent setting. I don't think we've ever had legislators from other capitals — either in Canada or the United States — sitting in on one of our committee meetings and I thought that it'd be worthy of mention at this point.

We had visiting with us earlier tonight Senator Sam Kitzenberg from Glasgow, Montana. He represents Senate district 18, is a Republican. He's been part of the Senate since 2001. Prior to that he spent five years in the Montana State House of Representatives. And we also had with us Representative Hal Jacobson who is from Helena, representing House district 82, a Democrat from that part of the state. And he's been elected since 2001.

Both these gentlemen have served on various committees of their state legislature and have enjoyed the brief opportunity to dialogue with their Canadian colleagues in the few hours that they've been in Saskatchewan at this point. And this exchange will continue tomorrow. We will have an opportunity to meet more of these gentlemen and some of their colleagues in the legislature tomorrow. But for the time being I thought it would be important to acknowledge their presence in our committee earlier this evening and to thank them for their interest in participation and viewing of this ongoing process. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Elhard. Before we move on, the discussion we're going to have now in protocol, the vote isn't included under Culture, Youth and Recreation as the minister mentioned. So we need, by leave of the committee, to move into that discussion.

Ms. Draude: — Before we do that, can I thank the Culture, Youth and Recreation individuals for helping out? I appreciate their answers and the time we had together.

The Chair: — So by leave of the committee, we can move into the protocol discussion. Agreed. Thank you. To the minister then.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Madam Chair, I'll just introduce the officials who are here with me to assist in responding to the committee's questions. To my right, to the viewers' left is the deputy provincial secretary, Harvey Brooks. And to the viewers' right is Debbie Saum, executive director of protocol and honours at Government House. And seated behind me is Wanda Lamberti, executive director of central management services. And beside her is Brad Lawrence who is the manager of Government House. And I'd be happy to respond to questions that the committee may have.

The Chair: — Ms. Draude.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Minister, and welcome to the officials. Whenever I see protocol, I always know that something exciting is happening in the province, so I'm wondering . . . And I know that we have a new individual in the protocol office. Welcome. I'm sure you'll find the job exciting.

Can you tell me if there's anything a lot different this year, new initiatives within the protocol office? We have a number of new people there. I know money spent is probably less this year because we don't have the Queen visiting, and we don't have centennial projects. But can you give me an idea if anything's changing within the vision and the goals of the office?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — I guess with limitations, it's business as usual. But when you ask what's significantly different this year from previous, there is an increase in the budget that reflects the development and the implementation of the Saskatchewan Youth Award. On the other side of the coin, as you know, the budget has gone down this year. The other side of that coin is that because the centennial has ended, the Lieutenant Governor's involvement in centennial celebrations — and a significant part of that is the Centennial Medal presentations and the like — that's a significant reduction in the budget from last year.

And then the other significant item is there is a reduction because last year as part of the centennial celebrations, Saskatchewan hosted the Midwestern Legislative Conference, which was a one-time event of course and isn't in this year's budget. So with the exception of those sort of . . . The Saskatchewan Youth Award would be an ongoing thing. But the others were one-time events that just don't . . . they wouldn't justify spending this year.

Ms. Draude: — So the Saskatchewan Youth Award is a new project. Can you explain that? And how are people nominated for it? What's the procedure?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — The Saskatchewan Youth Award is still in the final stages of development. The call for nominations will be to the protocol office as it is for other nominations for Saskatchewan awards, and it is expected that it would be in the winter months of the first part '07 that the first awards would be presented.

Ms. Draude: — How many will be presented and who gets to nominate them?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — The nominations will be open to the public, so anyone will be able to nominate someone for the Youth Award. Just to give it a context that the hon. member is familiar with, you're familiar with the Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal or the Saskatchewan Order of Merit. So it's the same structure there. Nominations are public. There is an adjudication body that does exist, makes the decisions, and then it's expected that there would be four or five recipients annually. So this would be an award which would confer high honours by the province on young people who have made outstanding contribution. And there would be young people involved as well in the selection process.

Ms. Draude: — I take it, it wouldn't just be academic. It'll be sports or arts or . . .

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Yes, there's no limit. There will be no limitation as to the nature of the activity of the young people.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. How will this department or this segment of the department be working with the new Lieutenant Governor when it comes to preparing the new person for the job or . . .

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — When Saskatchewan receives our new Lieutenant Governor who will become the Honourable Gordon Barnhart, then the protocol office will be involved in coordinating the installation of the new Lieutenant Governor and then from that point forward will then work on an ongoing basis, as is currently the case, with the Lieutenant Governor on matters related to honours and awards.

Ms. Draude: — Is it up to the protocol office to have some kind of celebration for Dr. Haverstock when she is gone, before she leaves? Or is anything planned, like a surprise party that I'm talking about on the air now?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — You're wanting to have a pre-announcement of a surprise party, is that it? The protocol office is currently, actively working with the current Lieutenant Governor to determine what kind of event or events would be most appropriate. We want to reflect the wishes of the Lieutenant Governor.

And I think we also are very, very conscious . . . not I think, I know we are very conscious of the fact that the Lieutenant Governor has had a significant presence in the province which I think in many ways, for many people was highlighted in the course of her activities over the centennial year. And so we're just currently in the process of defining how that's done respectfully and within the confines of an affordable budget.

Ms. Draude: — Can you tell me what's the date that the new Lieutenant Governor Gordon Barnhart will be taking his place?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — That's not yet been determined.

Ms. Draude: — I have two questions left. Who writes speeches for people like the Governor General when she comes to Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — The Governor General's remarks would be written by her own staff at Rideau Hall.

Ms. Draude: — And this year, there was requests from the War Brides Association to make this the year of the war bride. And I notice that it was spoken about, but nothing has been done on a federal level although I do understand that there are a number of provinces that have done something. I was waiting to see if your government was going to do something to honour them this year, and I've heard that perhaps could be a month. I understand that maybe the month of November will be considered the month of the war bride. Why would it not be important enough to give them the year like we did our veterans? They've made a significant difference in Saskatchewan, and I would have thought that there wouldn't be any reason to even question why it wouldn't be giving them the year.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — You heard correctly. We've been in communication with the War Brides Association here in Saskatchewan. And I think it's probably okay to say that November will be declared the month of the war bride and that it will also be the intention of the province that when we have our Remembrance Day tribute that the war brides will be a significant part of that.

The Year of the Veteran wasn't actually a provincial designation. It was a national designation that Saskatchewan accepted, as did all other provinces, and it is a very rare occurrence to declare a year in honour of a demographic. That's not been the Saskatchewan practice.

So I think there were many people who were of the view that Saskatchewan had declared '05 as the Year of the Veteran because it was very much an active part of celebrations for us in our centennial year as well. And that was enthusiastically endorsed, a federal declaration that was in place there.

Ms. Draude: — But the province did declare last year the Year of the First Nation and Métis Women.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — It has . . . As I say, it is a rare, it is a rare occurrence.

Ms. Draude: — Okay. Thank you very much. I appreciate the input and look forward to doing it again. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much. And I appreciate, Madam Chair, the questions of the committee, and I also appreciate the support of the officials, not only in providing the responses to the questions today, but in their ongoing support of the work in honour and recognition of Saskatchewan people.

The Chair: — Thank you to the minister. And we'll take a brief recess, break, while we change officials.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

The Chair: — While we're waiting for the other members of the committee to return, I have a document presented by the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation that's been circulated. But I'll just table it now officially. But everyone, I think everyone got a copy of it.

**General Revenue Fund
Justice
Vote 3**

Subvote (JU01)

The Chair: — And the next item up on the agenda is the consideration of estimates and supplementary estimates for the Department of Justice (JU01) vote 3 found on page 103 of your budget book.

Welcome to the minister and his officials who look mostly the same as they did last time. Do you have anybody new you want to point out?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Yes, they look mostly the same, Madam Chair.

The Chair: — No one's aged over the week?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — They're the same people, and they look mostly the same.

The Chair: — And you don't have any opening statement to make since you've been here before. So then, questions? Ms. Draude.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you very much. Thank you to the minister and to his officials. I just have one issue that I wanted to talk about tonight — and when I read *Hansard* I realized that you have spoken about this to Mr. Morgan, but I want to talk about it for a moment again — and that is the Special Committee to Prevent the Abuse and Exploitation of Children Through the Sex Trade.

The comments that were made dealt mostly with the children and the numbers of children that were on the street. And they didn't deal with the fact that this committee that I was a member of actually presented to, as an all-party committee, to the legislature a report that had 49 recommendations.

And this was given to the legislature in 2001, and now five years later it disappoints me to no end to say that there is still probably nine-tenths of the recommendations that have not been dealt with — recommendations like zero tolerance for those who sexually offend children, minimum mandatory fines for johns, the fact that we . . . the DISC [deter identify sex-trade consumers] program, the Attorney General creating a five-member special police unit, a creation of a national sex registry, the requesting that the age of consent be changed from 14 years to 16 years, a province-wide tracking system that your government is talking about.

But still there hasn't been anything done on it, allowing children to have . . . We asked for legislation to allow for the involuntary apprehension and emergency assessment of children under the age of 18 whose lives are in imminent danger due to being sexually exploited on the street.

The list goes on and on from a public awareness campaign and efforts with the FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations]. I know that when the member from Humboldt, Arlene Julé, left, we didn't talk about this issue as much. But it's still a

huge issue. It hasn't changed. And some of the things that were done by the government, especially with the johns, and allowing them to seize vehicles — that helped. It did help. The reason why kids are on the street hasn't changed.

I would . . . because there was no real numbers given out or no way we can tell how many kids are on the street, we don't know if the numbers have changed. I don't think the public is as aware of children on the street as they were five years ago when this all-party committee was in the province. And I think that we, that we as legislators and you as a government, have dropped the ball on this issue because it's still horrible. It doesn't matter how many kids are on the street; one is too many.

And the work that should be done across departments and across the province isn't being done. I don't hear about this often enough. And I'm hoping that even though I brought this issue up in Healthy Living, they told me it was only partially their responsibility. I brought it up in Learning, and that's not really their responsibility. Then I find out it's Justice. Justice usually is a crime. A child being exploited, the child isn't a crime. What they're doing . . . the act of the john is maybe a crime, but the child is not.

And I think to say that this committee . . . all the work that was done on this committee is going to be dumped onto Justice is just really wrong. It should be something that's dealt with across every department. It's something that has to be dealt with as a government and not just dealing with the effects of somebody being exploited on the street.

So I'm hoping, Mr. Minister, that you're going to tell me that you are actually going to start working on some of these recommendations.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — First of all, Madam Chair, I agree with Ms. Draude that the entire response cannot be by the Department of Justice. But I also agree with her that there is a crime involved, and the adult that's sexually exploiting a child is involved in a criminal act, so there is a Justice response.

Ms. Pottruff can maybe go into more detail about the response to the recommendations of the committee. I note that there were 49. The province has moved on all but seven of them. One of them is, as Ms. Draude mentioned, in respect to the age of consent, which is a matter for the federal parliament, and there may be a Bill before the parliament in that respect. There seems to be some indication that there might be.

And of course the same is true of mandatory penalties or minimum sentences. Now that doesn't seem to be where the federal government is wanting to go with minimum sentences. They seem to have them set out for a different set of crimes, but there has been a Justice response as well as across-government response in the 42 recommendations that have been acted on. And even of those seven that have not, it would be wrong to say that nothing's happened. The government hasn't agreed with a zero tolerance policy, preferring a strict enforcement policy.

I think we have seen a change for the better in the situation over the last few years. And that would be because of, in part at least, policies of this government including strict enforcement

policy and because of the types of programs that Ms. Draude referred to, including the VISE [vehicle impoundment against sexual exploitation] program.

It is difficult, for reasons that we discussed last day, to estimate how many children are being sexually exploited or involved in the sex trade. And I agree with Ms. Draude that of course, as with many crimes, one is too many.

Something that might give some indication is the VISE program and the use of the VISE program. My most up-to-date numbers are that there have been 345 seizures of vehicles. Now when the number was 302, so probably going back a few months, 14 of those involved children. So something under 5 per cent and the others would have been adults involved in the sex trade or at least not . . . well adults involved in the sex trade, or at least not children if the vehicle was seized without maybe necessarily evidence of who the sex trade worker was.

But 14, I agree with Ms. Draude, is too many. But I think it gives you some idea perhaps of the proportion of minors involved in the sex trade as opposed to adults. And it's somewhat encouraging that it was only 14 out of over 300 as opposed to a higher number. And again there seems to be less traffic, period, and partly I would think because of the VISE program.

Some concern that the sex trade is moving off the street and of course as I said the other day — and Ms. Draude would be aware of this if she's reviewed *Hansard* — one of the motivations for the safer communities and neighbourhoods program was a concern about brothels being set up in neighbourhoods. And we have recently added, by regulation, the exploitation of children as a prescribed use for a building that would found a complaint and an investigation for safer communities and neighbourhoods.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I guess I'm going to, not at this moment but I'm going to ask you how your department believes that you've acted on all but seven of the recommendations because I believe that, just quickly scanning them, there's 30 of them that haven't been acted on. I'll be waiting to see, and I know tonight there isn't enough time to go through it all. There's lots of different issues.

But there is so much work to be done and even just public awareness and the fact that the school system itself isn't dealing with this the way it should be, I think will . . . shows how much work has to be done yet.

I can't say a lot else, except that this issue can't be just left in a committee in Justice because that's the result of it. These recommendations talked about dealing with the causes of it and the relationship between the different departments when it comes to why kids are in the sex trade is huge and that's why it's interdepartment.

The one thing that I do . . . I brought up and you mentioned it too, the age of consent. Is your government going to support the federal initiative to raise the age of consent from 14 to 16?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Well first of all, I'd like to say that I expect that my department hasn't acted on 42 recommendations

because, as Ms. Draude points out, these are recommendations that would be to government and not necessarily to Justice. Some of them might have been to Learning or to Community Resources, as it is now called.

And I agree again that it should not be entirely a Justice response. I sometimes say that Justice is the small filter at the end of the tube. And when the family's failed and the neighbourhood and communities failed and the school's failed and maybe the Health system has failed, the mental health system has failed, then the small filter that catches people at the end is the justice system, and the more people we catch before that the better for them and the better for the rest of us.

So I wouldn't say that my department would have responded to all the recommendations because my department shouldn't have been responding to recommendations that were directed at trying catch things at an earlier filter.

On the age of consent, again there is some issue or some suggestion that this might be coming before parliament. It may very well come before parliament as some other crime measures have without much consultation with provincial Justice ministers or prior to when we next meet, which will be in October. I would need to see what the federal proposal is in some detail. My only concern about . . . or my principle concern about changing the age of consent is the closeness of age exemption which I believe is currently two years. And if the age of consent was to be raised to 16, I would like to see that age exemption expanded or perhaps it can be dealt with in a different way.

But what I think we want to avoid, while we're targeting people who are exploiting children, is not criminalizing behaviour amongst teenagers of which we as parents and adults might disapprove but we don't necessarily want to make criminal.

So that said I have concerns, but they may be addressed by the legislation that's proposed, if legislation is proposed to parliament.

Ms. Draude: — Because I'm not a lawyer, I just needed a black and white answer. Are you in favour of changing to 16 from 14?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — I don't think it's necessary to deal with the issues that we're both concerned about. And if it is done, I think it needs to be done with care so as not to have unintended consequences. So I guess the question . . . I'm not necessarily opposed to it would be the best answer I could give.

Ms. Draude: — So then if there was a . . . if the Minister of Justice federally phoned and asked your opinion, you'd say yes we'll go for it, and then we'll iron out the details.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — If the Minister of Justice asked my opinion, he'd probably get a page and a half letter. But again it would say what I've said now, is that I don't think it's necessarily the best response. We have seen legislation targeting sexual predators of children, and we were supportive of that legislation. And again I wouldn't necessarily be opposed to raising the age of consent as long as we weren't having the unintended consequence of criminalizing behaviour that isn't

really the behaviour that we're after.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. I don't have any further questions, but I look forward to hearing how you feel that you've dealt with all but seven of the recommendations. Thank you.

The Chair: — Mr. Morgan.

Mr. Morgan: — Minister, just a follow-up. If you meet with your provincial counterparts from other provinces and the federal minister this fall, wouldn't it be appropriate . . . You say that you're not necessarily opposed. Wouldn't it be better to take a proactive position and say, yes we would support this legislation if there was a closeness of age exemption, or something that would raise this? I mean couldn't we take a more straightforward, positive approach to this rather than just sitting back and using double and triple negatives to avoid having to take a position? Wouldn't it be appropriate for the province to say something positive in support of it and say, yes we would support that change to the Criminal Code if you did this to the closeness of age?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — If we had a closeness of age exemption of five years, we could probably support that.

Mr. Morgan: — Five years rather than three.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Well you know when I think of a high school, a 19-year-old boy in grade 12 and a girl that's not reached quite 16 yet, and whether that's who we really want to catch with the Criminal Code, I'm not sure that that's who we really want to catch with the Criminal Code. Now again as I said, parents and adults may not approve, but it's not necessarily the behaviour that we want to criminalize.

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Weekes has a question for you.

The Chair: — Thank you. Mr. Weekes.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Minister, I have some questions concerning the farm land security Act and the operations of the Farm Land Security Board. My first question is, I understand there has been at least a partial lifting of the moratorium on Ducks Unlimited purchasing land in the province. Is that true?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — The change in policy is not confined to Ducks Unlimited. It's a policy for what would be considered before, an owned conservation organization of which Ducks Unlimited is probably the leading example.

And the provision is essentially that, upon having an environmental plan approved by the Department of the Environment and having appropriate regional consultations, that a conservation organization would be permitted to purchase without going through the Farm Land Security Board, I believe, up to 100,000 acres in over 10 years now and no more than 3 per cent within a one rural municipality.

Mr. Weekes: — What was the effective date of the change in the moratorium?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — May 1, this year.

Mr. Weekes: — Of this year. So you said this is conservation groups, so not an individual then would be under the lifting of the moratorium?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — No, it'd be organizations whose purpose is conserving land for environmental reasons and, in the case of Ducks Unlimited or a couple of other organizations, primarily wetlands.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you. My next item concerns in both cases Americans wanting to purchase land in Saskatchewan. And in both cases . . . The one gentleman is someone that's very interested in hunting. He wants to buy marginal land for hunting, either wild fowl or deer. And in the other case, the particular ranch in question is actually a game farm, and it's lower quality land. Are there exemptions available for those particular cases?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — In those cases, two cases, the residency requirement would click in. Now they could apply to the board, as can conservation organizations. If their purchase would exceed the 3 per cent of the rural municipality, they would also have to go back to the board. But they could do that.

Mr. Weekes: — So have there been any applications? Could you tell me how many applications in the last couple of years there have been, and how many exemptions have been granted?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — I can, from the 2004-2005 annual report. Saskatchewan Justice Farm Land Security Board can give you some indication. Now these are split into a number of categories but we don't have . . . [inaudible] . . . we only have exemptions granted.

In 2003-2004, there were 52 exemptions granted. In 2004-2005, there were 58 granted. In 2003-2004, there were two denied. And 2004-2005, there were three denied. In the wildlife and conservation area, it appears that there were 28 granted and none denied in both those years, for example.

Now there isn't a category that I see here for game farms, but that's perhaps too small a category. There is a commercial developments category. There were four granted and none denied in 2003-2004 and seven granted and none denied in 2004-2005.

Mr. Weekes: — First question, what is the definition? You had mentioned that they have to meet the residency requirement. What is the definition of the residency in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — It might be helpful — because it's quite complex and apparently legal opinions on what meets residency and what doesn't meet residency — if you could provide my office with the particular circumstances of the two individuals that are concerned, and perhaps we could provide you with a better opinion.

Mr. Weekes: — Okay. I will do that. When you're talking about exemptions, what categories were they? Well they're obviously farm land, but what is the general theme behind the exemptions that are approved?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — I'll tell you what the categories are: a

purchaser intending to reside, so someone buying land with the intention I assume of moving to the province; border farm which I assume is a farming operation that has land in North Dakota or Montana as well as Saskatchewan; intensive livestock; grain farm; ranching; investors in agriculture corporations, of which there was one granted in 2004-2005; commercial developments, as I said; inheritance and estate planning, so a number of applications under that category.

The largest is wildlife and conservation. Now this would be before the policy changed of course this year, but out of 52 granted in 2003-2004, 28 of them were for wildlife and conservation purposes.

Mr. Weekes: — So you're saying they would have to be other than . . . since the change of course with conservation groups, but as individuals they would have to meet the residency requirement before they would be eligible for an exemption? Or could there be somebody that, a US [United States] citizen that is not going to live here or comes to visit for hunting season, is there a possibility of them getting an exemption to buy a quarter section of land or a half or whatever it may be to hunt on their own land or build a cabin or whatever they want to do?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — All the exemptions apply to people who wouldn't be eligible as residents. So to a certain extent I guess it's within the discretion of the board to decide whether this is an exemption that should be granted or not. Certainly wildlife and conservation reasons has been clearly a persuasive reason to grant an exemption.

But it appears that of the people applying, that the majority were successful, at least in the two years that I have a report for.

Mr. Weekes: — Well that leads to the next question. What is the discretion of the board? What is the criteria that they go by? I guess what is the criteria that they could turn down an application?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — I can provide more detail to Mr. Weekes, but I will read something briefly from the report. "The Board . . ." and this is from page 17 of the report if you want to take a look:

The Board has the authority to consider applications for exemption which, if approved, allow non-eligible individuals or non-agricultural corporations to have or acquire a land holding in excess of that allowed under the farm ownership provisions of *The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act*. Denials were primarily based on the Board's conclusion that the intended acquisition would be contrary to the longer term interest of Saskatchewan people.

General categories have been developed for the requests for exemption the board receives.

And I've listed some of those in response to your previous questions.

Mr. Weekes: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. I think I'll leave it at that, and I will get some information to you on this one particular case. And if you could supply me also with the definition of residency, I'd appreciate that. Thank you.

The Chair: — Further questions? Mr. Morgan.

Mr. Morgan: — Yes. We'd started to ask questions last time we met, and I will try and be relatively brief tonight. Police Complaints Investigator, we've developed a new tribunal, and hopefully we will be somewhat more prompt in dealing with complaints.

My question is: what's happening with the complaints that are before the existing or the previous tribunal?

Mr. Sawatsky: — Yes, Madam Chair. Murray Sawatsky. Mr. Morgan, the new complaints process as of April 1 is being handled by the new commission panel put in place. Any complaints that were generated prior to April 1 are being dealt with by Mr. Mitchell who was the Police Complaints Investigator prior to the new process coming into place.

Mr. Morgan: — I'm concerned and troubled by the number of complaints that had sat for some time or languished with the previous process. The timelines that were listed in the annual reports when . . . and listed a number of complaints and there was 40 or 50 per cent of them were in excess of 140 days. And at that point, they went into a category called pending, which means in my view that they had not been dealt with and were somewhere lost in the shuffle. So I'm wondering if we know now how many complaints are still left to be dealt with by the previous complaints investigator and what the department is doing to try and get those processed.

Mr. Sawatsky: — Quoting from last year's numbers, in 2005 and 2006 there were 133 complaints. Of those, 58 — or 44 per cent — are still under active investigation. Pending review are 28, or 21 per cent. And concluded are 35 per cent, or 47.

Mr. Morgan: — Okay. But we still have the ones from the previous year. So we don't know how many from the previous year or the year before that and whether the complaints have sat on those files for a number of years. So I guess my question is, what is the total number that are still to be dealt with by the previous investigator?

Mr. Sawatsky: — These would all be . . . these are all 2005-2006 complaints, sir. So they would all, all of these would be before Mr. Mitchell to deal with.

Mr. Morgan: — Those would be the 2005-2006 complaints. What about complaints from 2004-2003 that, at the end of that report, were marked as being pending? Are those included in that number or are those . . . Because these would appear to me from my reading, and maybe I'm wrong, is that these are new complaints that came in '05-06.

Mr. Sawatsky: — That's right. And I'm not aware of the number that have carried over from the previous year. I can certainly find that number out.

Mr. Morgan: — If you would. I guess that what I'm looking for . . . And I find it troubling and embarrassing that we have complaints measured in the dozens that may be several years old. The complaints are serious for a couple of reasons. One, the complainant has a right to know that the complaint is being dealt with in a timely manner and that they're getting periodic

updates.

But also of significance is the cloud it places over the officers that are involved. A lot of these officers have impending retirements, promotions that are held up. Their careers are somewhat put on hold if it's not there. So we're bringing both ends of our system into question by those complaints.

And I appreciate and hope that the new process, the new tribunal will be able to work in a more timely manner, but I am concerned about the number of complaints that have sat there for several years. So if you could tell us how many complaints there are that are still on the . . . and what the plan is to try and . . . what are the resources that are being applied to that to be dealt with? Maybe the minister has an answer for that now.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Well we will provide the numbers. And I can advise that as well as a new process, Saskatchewan Justice provided funding for three additional investigators. So this commission will, I believe, enhance public confidence in the complaint process in more than one way. And of course as everyone here knows, it's a more representative group.

I think it's certainly got a higher profile than the complaints process has had in the past and has some distinguished individuals on it, but also it has additional investigators.

And clearly, this has become a reform that we're very serious about. Partly because of the expansion of the panel from one to five people and partly because of the addition of additional investigators, I expect that some of the issues around the time it's taken to sort out, resolve particularly complex investigations, complex complaints, will be shortened considerably and that of course, as the member properly points out, will do a great deal to enhance public confidence in the system.

Mr. Morgan: — Well I appreciate where we're going forward. I'm going to come back to the new tribunal shortly, but I'm wondering what plan the minister has and what timeline the minister has to wrap up the existing multi-year-old investigations that are there? I don't think putting a new blackboard in front changes the fact that there is a lot of chalk still on the old blackboard yet to be erased.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — And again with the three new investigators, I expect that we will see considerable progress this year.

Mr. Morgan: — Would it be a fair target to assume that those will be done during this next fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — I don't know. I'm not familiar with every complaint, and I'm not able to undertake that, that they can all be resolved. But we have added significant resources to this process with three new investigators.

Mr. Morgan: — Would you think, Minister, it would be a sign of success if 90 per cent of them were resolved this year?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Well the average time to conclude a complaint now is 155 days. I expect that that period will shorten up considerably. And again without knowing exactly what is

left for Mr. Mitchell to resolve at this point, I wouldn't want to provide him with a fixed number that he's going to achieve because I don't know exactly what the nature of those files are.

Mr. Morgan: — Minister, I'd like to know what your personal target is for this. And if you don't have one, you can state you don't have one. But if you have a target, I'd like to give you the opportunity to tell us what it is. If it's not there then, you know, we'll deal with it as saying the minister has no target.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — The member is free to say whatever he wants. Again we've added three investigators as well as increasing the size of the panel five-fold, and I expect that the pending cases will be dealt with in a timely manner.

Mr. Morgan: — Minister, I hear, you know, that you haven't given us a date or percentage that you want to have cleared by a date, so I will accept that as being your answer.

Moving on to the new tribunal, if I was a complainant with a complaint to the police, I would want to know within days or hours that my complaint had been received and was being looked at and that there was an investigator involved at the earliest possible date so that whatever recollections people had were recorded and taken down. I don't know what the timeline is, but usually those complaints if they're not dealt with within hours or days, you have a difficult time in going back finding witnesses and dealing with it.

And I don't whether your investigative process or the resources that you've provided have that kind of a mandate that they're going to do it. But as soon as the complaint is made, and usually they're made within hours, it places the cloud over the police force. And you have a person that feels very much aggrieved because of the nature of the complaint, and the timeliness is incredibly important to try and preserve the reputation and image and the integrity of that process. I'm wondering whether one of your officials can advise us what the process is and what kind of target timelines are there.

Mr. Sawatsky: — Mr. Morgan, I'm not sure that I'm going to give you the correct number of days, but I'm pretty sure it's 60 days from the time a complaint is received until the complainant is notified.

When the complaint is received, the complainant is automatically given a copy of the form F which the complaint is registered on. And then with . . .

Mr. Morgan: — The complainant is the person making the complaint?

Mr. Sawatsky: — Right. Yes, they can sign the complaint form and then receive a copy of it. And then within 60 days, there's a follow-up letter from the public complaints office informing them of the progress. And then there's continual updates. And I think that first time frame is 60 days. And I'm just searching here to try and find the answer — it's either 60 or 90. I believe it's 60, but I could stand to be corrected on that.

Mr. Morgan: — To me, I think 60 days is an inordinately long time to report back to them unless there's been some investigation taking place. I would think if we want to maintain

the integrity and credibility of the system, there should be some initial interviews with other people that were involved or with the complainant within five to ten days, if not less. And I know that that may not be in all cases practical or realistic in remote areas, but to me, the earlier the complaint is investigated, the better likelihood of a satisfactory resolution for both the complainant and the police force involved would be better. And I'm just wondering if there is a timeline other than reporting back in 60 or 90 days?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — There's a maximum set out in the legislation. My recollection is as well, it's 60 days. Now that's a maximum. That's not necessarily going to be the practice of the commission. And I agree with the member that if they can be done in a lesser period of time, then it should be done in a lesser period of time. But it was important to set out a maximum. I think there is a maximum set out in the Act, and it seems to me it is 60 days. But we'll confirm that.

Mr. Morgan: — Yes. I'm actually . . . you know, I can look up the statute. What I'm actually looking for is what the policy or what the practice is going to be or what the expectations are because I'm sure I will get complaints that will come to my office as a critic responsible for that area. And I would like to be able to reassure people it's the intention of that tribunal to have the investigation undertaken within three days, five days, ten days, whatever. If there is a list of projected timelines that would be, that would be very good.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — The commission is now operating, and I know they've had meetings about the policy and their procedures, and we can certainly provide advice to the committee as to what the commission hopes to do with various steps. And of course they will not necessarily be investigating every complaint themselves.

There's a number of different ways a complaint can be dealt with under the Act, but they probably all would have best practices and timelines, and we can provide the committee with what the commission has determined as their goals in that regard.

Mr. Morgan: — If you would, we'd appreciate that. I think we're trying to do everything we can to restore some credibility to a policing services in this province. And I think having the complaints dealt with in a timely manner would go a long ways in that area. So we'll look forward to your information on that.

In the budget estimates, coroners, there is a \$200,000 increase in budget in that area. I'm wondering if you could tell us what we've done. We had the recommendations from the Stonechild which called for (a) more coroners and more professional coroners and training for coroners. So I am wondering with that increase, what the plan of the department is?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Madam Chair, to correct the member's recollection, I appreciate that he probably doesn't have a copy of the report of the commissioner into matters relating to the death of Neil Stonechild. But the recommendation to the best of my recollection was that the Department of Justice review the coroner's office which we have done, and we have decided to make significant reforms to the office.

Among those reforms are a full-time coroner and addition of forensic pathologists. The members will remember that the chief coroner and the chief forensic pathologist were both introduced to the legislature, I believe in this sitting, in this spring. And the increases to the budget of the coroner's office, which I think were about 30 per cent this year, are as a result of those reforms. And we will be adding, and the intent is to add another forensic pathologist to the office within the province so that we have one located in both Saskatoon and Regina.

Mr. Morgan: — The rest of the coroners throughout the province are order in council appointments and I understand work on an on-call basis. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Yes.

Mr. Morgan: — How many are there in the province right now? And how many of them are doctors and how many of them are not?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — There would be approximately a hundred coroners . . . 116, not approximately, 116 coroners in the province. It would be a cross-section of people acting as coroners. Part of the advantage of adding the forensic pathologists is to significantly increase the training to the part-time coroners in the province.

The three-year plan is partly implemented. We have the full-time chief coroner. We have the chief forensic pathologist. We are looking at recruiting one more forensic pathologist, as I said, along with new regional coroners, some other full-time coroners and intensive training for existing coroners, which training I understand has been completed.

Mr. Morgan: — I'm not sure whether you answered my question as to how many of the 116 are doctors?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — I'm not sure I can answer that today.

Mr. Morgan: — Is that a target to have many or most of them doctors or sort of like what the qualifications are and how they're selected?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — No. The goal is that we would have full-time coroners, that we would have forensic pathologists available for a number of reasons: for training coroners, for cases where forensic pathologists should be used for assisting pathologists in the province in areas where they may not have the specialized training and experience. The coroners will continue to have a cross-section of experience, including medical experience — both doctors and nurses — but also people who have investigative skills, maybe including experienced police officers for example.

Mr. Morgan: — When you recruit coroners, do you advertise or . . . I'm just asking what the process is and what the criteria would be.

Mr. Sawatsky: — Yes. The coroner's program advertises for coroners and then goes through a fairly extensive interview with them, and then makes a recommendation to the minister for an order in council appointment.

Mr. Morgan: — And when you advertise for them, what kind of things would be placed in the advertisement for desirable or sought-after qualities or qualifications?

Mr. Sawatsky: — I think, generally speaking, the qualifications they've gone after are, first-off, in the community because it's very much a community-based program. And secondly, some knowledge and background in investigations so that they can examine records, examine police records, interview perhaps potential witnesses or someone like that if that's required. So there is some indication in the advertisement that they're after someone with some investigative background.

Mr. Morgan: — So an investigative background would be preferred to a medical background if you've got a full-time pathologist and coroner that are doctors. Is that fair?

Mr. Sawatsky: — That could be, but that's not necessarily the case because we do have the medical expertise of course with the full-time pathologist and the chief coroner.

Mr. Morgan: — Most of them would be either police officers or retired police officers or have some police training experience. Is that true?

Mr. Sawatsky: — There are a number of retired police officers, but I don't know what the percentage of the total complement of coroners would be retired police officers.

Mr. Morgan: — The reason I'm asking . . . I don't have an opinion and I'm not trying to express one. I've had some calls as to people that wish to become one and I tell them I don't know. So I wouldn't mind knowing what percentage are doctors and what percentage have got some police training. And you've certainly answered the question to a significant extent so that I at least can be helpful to people.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Madam Chair, the coroner's office and the coroner's program is undergoing an evolution in our province. We took all the recommendations of the Stonechild inquiry very seriously, and we took the recommendation to review the coroner's office very seriously and upon review of the coroner's office have made and are continuing to make significant reforms to that office. And the job of coroner is going to evolve with those reforms.

What I will do is provide to members of the committee, and particularly Mr. Morgan, a breakdown as best we can of the professions and background of what I'm now advised is 150 lay coroners in the province. I should advise that coroners are appointed not by order in council but by minister's order. So that's some information that might be useful to the member as well.

Mr. Morgan: — Thank you. Appreciate receiving that information. I'd like to ask a couple or three questions regarding the maintenance enforcement office, but I don't know what timeline the Chair is under, so I'll . . .

The Chair: — We have agreed, the Vice-Chair and myself, to extend to 9:30. And the committee seems to be okay with that.

Mr. Morgan: — That's fine. For the maintenance enforcement

office, I would like to know the number of files that are currently being administered through that office, the dollar value of funds that are generated on an annual basis through that office, and then what statistical criteria we use to compare the success of that office with other provinces.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — For my official that has joined me, could you break those down into your three questions please.

Mr. Morgan: — Sure. The number of files currently being administered, the dollar . . .

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — One at a time.

Mr. Morgan: — Sure.

Mr. McNabb: — Hi and it's Lionel McNabb. We have close to 10,000 — I think the last count was 9,922 — but it'll be close to that. And the collection rate is 32.3 million at the end of last year. And that graph will show collection rate right from when we opened the office. The first five years we collected around 21 million, and we now collect over 32 million per year. And I think that was a 1.3 million increase over what we collected last year.

Mr. Morgan: — Do we have any way of tracking the number of unsuccessful applicants? I suppose there's no way of knowing what money is not collected because we don't know where people are working, or we focus on what we have collected rather than what we haven't.

Mr. McNabb: — And unfortunately, if you work backwards, you can sort of tell that we collect about 83 or 84 per cent. So unfortunately, if you take the 32.5 million and figure that that's 80 . . . you know, it's a fair . . . I don't have it right in front of me, but we're collecting 83 per cent, 84 per cent. I'm quite sure there's a significant amount that we don't collect.

Mr. Morgan: — So the number we're collecting now, you say, is 83.4 per cent of the orders . . .

Mr. McNabb: — Yes. About 83 to 84 per cent.

Mr. Morgan: — Or 83 to . . . okay. How does that compare with other provinces?

Mr. McNabb: — Actually that one's quite simple. There's a Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics tracks that every year, and I think there's now nine provinces reporting. And Saskatchewan had the highest collection rate for a number of years, and now we're just right neck and neck or a little behind Quebec.

Mr. Morgan: — Okay. Minister, I would like to commend this office. We get calls from people that are going through the process, both being collected from and recipients, and we generally hear very favourable comments about this office and about the success that's there.

Where there is lesser successes, where there's been out-of-province orders or people that have moved between jurisdictions and I think if we're maintaining our status, the staff in that office should be commended. And I wanted to know the comparison numbers, and I want to thank your official

for coming out.

So it's much appreciated and keep up the good work. It's money that goes to people in our province that are most in need — spouses and children. So that's tens of millions of dollars that's going to children and families in our province, so I think the good work that's being done there is . . .

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — And Madam Chair, while we're expressing appreciation, as members will probably realize or some members will realize, the maintenance enforcement office as a group received the Premier's Award for Excellence in Public Service, which award the Leader of the Opposition supported. And if the members of the opposition could pass on our appreciation for Mr. Wall's support, I think the maintenance enforcement office is well-deserving of the award.

Mr. Morgan: — We lobbied him for that. It's one of the success stories in this province, and I think we should give credit where it's due, so.

Minister, when Ms. Draude was here, we had had some discussion about your position with regard to the federal government showing an initiative raising the age of consent. I take it you meet with your counterparts from other provinces and with the federal minister at least once a year.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Not necessarily. I believe there is a meeting scheduled for October. If we were to be sitting at that time, I probably wouldn't go. I wasn't able to personally attend in November, I think. The meeting was in the Yukon the first or second day we started sitting in the fall. But there seems to be a tradition of annual meetings, and it's certainly my intent to attend whenever possible.

Mr. Morgan: — If the minister wants to ask us about that, if it's in the best interest of the province and we can ensure that we have a member attending as well, we may well want to look at that. So I would invite the minister to make a . . . and if it serves the best interest of the province, we would not want to stand in the way of that kind of consultation. Mr. Weekes has indicated he wants to go the Yukon, and if it's in November he's welcome to go . . . [inaudible] . . . warmer coat than I do.

You have not yet met with your federal counterpart I take it then?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Toews and I have communicated by correspondence, and I have spoken to him on the phone, but I have not had a chance to personally meet him yet, no.

Mr. Morgan: — Okay. I understand that the federal government has indicated that they intend to introduce mandatory minimum sentences for violent crimes or crimes using firearms. And I know that the weapon of choice in Saskatchewan, according to the statistics that we have, is usually a knife. But we also have a significant number of armed robberies where firearms are involved, and we do have what is a growing number of offences with respect to firearms.

I would not want to see the province support a firearm registry, but I do have significant concern with offences where firearms are involved in the commission of the offence. And I'm

wondering whether you've taken a position with your federal counterpart supporting some of those initiatives.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — I'm not opposed to the initiatives in general in respect to firearms that have been proposed by the federal government. I am not optimistic about the effect of minimum sentences, but I'm not strongly opposed to what is being proposed in this case.

I have somewhat of a concern with certain particular offences. And I guess the one that comes to mind immediately and perhaps the most important of them is a minimum sentence for break and enter with the intent to steal a firearm. I think that's a crime that takes place in rural Saskatchewan, maybe even more particularly in northern Saskatchewan. The purpose of the theft of the firearm is not gun smuggling or to use the crime in a further criminal offence, but usually to hunt for food in the case of northern Saskatchewan.

And that's not necessarily . . . Now every sentence has to be looked at in the circumstances of the offence and the circumstances of the offender, but that's not necessarily a case where I would want to take the discretion away from a judge to not impose a minimum sentence.

With that — I wouldn't want to say minor concern — but with that type of concern aside, which I've raised with the federal minister and he may want to take another look at that particular offence . . . with that matter aside, I don't have a great deal of concern with the minimum sentence proposals.

Mr. Morgan: — If that's the case, I'd like to encourage the minister to put it forward and whatever the specifics of the minister's concerns are. As traumatic as it might be for somebody to be a victim of an armed robbery with a knife, I can only imagine how much more traumatic it would be if somebody came in with a loaded rifle or a loaded handgun. And in those cases, I would like to ask, would the minister be in favour of mandatory jail sentences for individuals using a firearm in the commission of an armed robbery?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Well I certainly don't have any difficulty at all with jail sentences for people who use firearms to commit robberies.

Mr. Morgan: — Mandatory minimums?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Well again, I don't have any problem with people who use firearms in robberies receiving a custodial sentence. Sometimes . . . well some police suspect — and I share their concern — that minimums can become maximums, that the minimum sentences will not have a significant effect on crime rates in Canada. But again, I have no difficulty with the concept that someone who uses a firearm in commission of a criminal offence should serve time in custody.

Mr. Morgan: — Well my question was more specific than that. My question was, will the minister or will your department publicly support a mandatory minimum, not just that there is custodial sentences issued in some cases, but would the minister be willing to support a mandatory minimum? And so my next question is obviously going to be, what would that minimum be and in what circumstances? So if you want to answer it at once

that's fine.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — And the status quo for the use of a firearm, causing bodily harm, sexual assault, aggravated sexual assault, kidnapping, hostage taking, extortion, or robbery is a four-year minimum sentence. And again no . . .

Mr. Morgan: — That's not statutory minimum. That's the minimum based on what the judges have sentenced.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — That's the statutory minimum. The proposal was to increase not the status quo for the first offence but 10 years on third or subsequent offences. And I certainly have no difficulty with the status quo, and I'm quite willing to support the proposals in respect to minimum sentences.

Again I do have some concerns around some of the offences that don't in themselves involve violence, such as break and entry to steal a firearm, and the unintended consequences of that legislation and the effect that may have on some individuals in some communities where violence isn't part of the offence.

Mr. Morgan: — Your federal counterpart has indicated that he has significant concerns with conditional sentences. And I'm wondering what the position of your department is with regard to changing the Criminal Code in dealing with conditional sentences.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — The national consensus prior to the last federal election on conditional sentences is that Justice ministers across the country had concern about how they were being used. And the national consensus at that time was favouring a presumption against the use of conditional sentences in the case of serious violent crimes, crimes involving organized crime, and terrorism.

The proposal of the federal government that, as opposed to focusing on those violent crimes alone, that conditional sentences will be prohibited for every crime that has a maximum of 10 years or more, pulls in a number of non-violent property crimes. And there may very well be cases where people who commit those crimes should be put in custody. But there may be circumstances where that would not be appropriate.

I would have preferred if the federal Justice minister had proposed to parliament a Bill more like that supported by Justice ministers. And that is a presumption or even a prohibition, although that was not the consensus at the time, against use of conditional sentences in the case of violent crimes and crimes committed by criminal organizations.

The prohibition for all crimes for which the maximum is 10 years or over, pulling in a number of property crimes, is going to have significant effect on all provinces in the costs of legal aid, in the cost of prosecutions, and in the cost of corrections — significant costs that are going to be downloaded on the provinces and the provinces will pay. We certainly don't have any confidence that the federal government intends to pay all those costs or that we'll necessarily be able to reach an agreement on what those costs were.

But in the case of Saskatchewan, I think the proposal that has

been made by the federal government to parliament will have a negative effect on Aboriginal people who are convicted of not violent crimes but property crimes, for which the maximum penalty is 10 years and who will no longer be able to serve their — if the Bill is passed in its current form — no longer be able to serve their sentence in the community but will be required to serve it in custody.

There is of course an alternative that the court can use, and that is to provide probation, but I think that is an irony of what is being proposed. Conditional sentences have a greater degree of supervision than does probation. So where probation is used because conditional sentences are no longer available, the offender will actually be less well supervised, and arguably the public will be less safe than is currently the case. Those are my concerns.

Mr. Morgan: — I'll pursue this later on. I think we're out of time. But I think Mr. Elhard had one.

The Chair: — Mr. Elhard.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Minister, earlier this evening the member for Kelvington-Wadena was talking to you about the recommendations of the commission that studied the issue of child sexual exploitation. There was considerable discrepancy between what you felt your department had undertaken as far as those recommendations are concerned and what the member felt had already happened.

I was hoping that you would give us an undertaking tonight to provide us with a summary of the actions taken by your department on each of those recommendations to identify what has transpired, what actions have happened to date, and what areas still need to be addressed in the future. No need to say anything more than, yes we'll do that tonight.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — I'll say just a touch more than that . . . is the recommendations were to government and across a number of departments. What we will provide is a list of the recommendations and the government response, whether or not it was Justice.

The Chair: — Thank you. Mr. Elhard, is that it?

Mr. Elhard: — That's it in terms of the question. I just want to thank the minister and his officials for giving us the last hour and 15 minutes of their time. It's a long evening in a warm committee room. Thank you for your patience and your attendance here tonight.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister, and . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, we'll see you tomorrow. The committee is now adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 21:32.]

CORRIGENDUM

On page 587 of the May 11, 2006, meeting of the Standing Committee on Human Services, No. 35, the paragraph in the left column reading:

So again if the officials come to the mike to answer the first time, if they could just introduce themselves for the ease of Hansard. So questions. Mr. Elhard.

Should read:

The Chair: — So again if the officials come to the mike to answer the first time, if they could just introduce themselves for the ease of Hansard. So questions. Mr. Elhard.

We apologize for this error.