



STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
2006**

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Saskatchewan Rivers

Ms. Joanne Crofford
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Mr. Peter Prebble
Saskatoon Greystone

Mr. Don Toth
Moosomin

Mr. Milton Wakefield
Lloydminster

[The committee met at 15:00.]

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — November
Corrections and Public Safety
Vote 73**

Subvotes (CP01), (CP04), and (CP06)

The Chair: — Welcome to the afternoon and the committee. We now have the Corrections and Public Safety department up for estimates, and the minister could introduce his officials. And if you have any opening statements to your estimates, you could proceed with those as well.

Hon. Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to make some introductions first and then proceed to some brief opening remarks and then proceed from there to consideration of the supplementary estimates and any questions that the committee might have.

I'd first of all like to introduce on my left, your right, Madam Chair, Deputy Minister Terry Lang; to my right, your left, Mae Boa, executive director at management services. We're also joined today by Karen Lautsch, executive assistant to the deputy minister; Bob Kary, executive director, young offender programs; Tom Young, executive director, protection and emergency services; Brian Krasium, executive director, licensing and inspections; Barry Sockett, director, human resources and . . . Somebody's snuck up behind me. I believe that's . . . Oh pardon me, there we are. And Maureen Lloyd, the assistant deputy minister, adult corrections. Thank you for that correction, Terry.

It's good to have the opportunity to speak today on the work undertaken by Corrections and Public Safety. The work of Corrections and Public Safety is grounded in our strategic plan. The goals for our plan are government and its partners working together to promote and maintain safe communities; reoffending behaviour to be reduced through rehabilitative interventions with offenders; and safe, healthy, and respectful departmental work environments that support learning, diversity, excellence, and accountability.

The additional funding provided in the 2006-2007 supplementary estimates is based for the most part on the work that is done with communities and individuals with claims to the provincial disaster assistance program.

As you know, 2005 and 2006 have been exceptional years for natural disasters. To date in 2006 an additional 64 municipalities have been designated for disaster assistance. As well work continues on completion of claims for 2005. A total of \$8.285 million has been allocated to deal with this damage. As you may be aware, this is a complex program that may require repairs to be completed over a considerable length of time.

To assist individuals and municipalities, we have undertaken the following steps: the hiring of 13 additional staff and improving computer function; working with municipalities to help increase their level of understanding of the provincial

disaster assistance program process and to help them complete the required information that will lead to faster claims processing; introduction of an option where claimants can choose to receive full payment based on adjusters' estimates or to await review of the completed work and accompanying contractor invoices; and assisting municipalities with their claims by providing interim payments where possible.

In the area of adult corrections, we have been allocated a further \$4.886 million to deal with the increased custody account and additional demands for services from our adult probation officers.

In our correctional centres we have experienced an increase in the overall count. As of October 2006, the average year-to-date inmate count was 1,360 compared to our budget of 1,225. The additional funding allocation will go toward management of our facilities to ensure the safety and security of the staff, inmates, and the general public. This funding will also allow us to ensure that the additional offenders have access to elder and chaplaincy services.

It is important to note that while we are experiencing these kind of levels, staff have done a tremendous job of ensuring stability within the correctional centres.

Through our community operations, the department provides a range of services such as supervision of offenders on probation and serving conditional sentences, programming related to risks of reoffending and the needs of those at risk of reoffending, and court reports. This area also provides support to the crime reduction strategies in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert. Additional resources have been allocated to this area to ensure that we are able to provide the appropriate supervision and case planning for offenders in the community.

At this time I would be pleased to answer any questions that committee members might have.

The Chair: — Thank you. Mr. Toth.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Mr. Minister, and to your officials, welcome. I look forward to entering into some dialogue regarding Corrections and Public Safety, and more specifically in regards to the \$13.547 million additional dollars that are being requested by the department.

I do have one quick question though and that's . . . we had a discussion just a moment ago. But public access defibrillation, is that under the disaster program, or is that specifically Health that manages the program?

Hon. Mr. McCall: — That is specific to the health regions.

Mr. Toth: — Okay. Thank you very much. There were just some questions, and I just thought I'd ask the question just to get clarification so we know where we go with that.

Mr. Minister, I have a couple of colleagues who have some specific questions in regards to the provincial disaster assistance program. As you indicated, you're looking at \$8.285 million additional dollars for the program. And I'm wondering, Mr.

Minister, if you could give us kind of a breakdown exactly where most of this money is going and, if there are other areas that there's a need coming forward, whether or not the department is going to look beyond this additional funding.

Hon. Mr. McCall: — I guess at this point we'll ask Tom Young to come forward to provide some additional comments.

But I guess I'll state, at present, 2006 was another exceptional year for damages from natural disasters in Saskatchewan, with a total of 64 municipalities being designated for disaster assistance to date. The budget for provincial disaster assistance program for 2006-07 was based on the initial 2005-06 budget for the program, which was \$550,000.

The activities experienced this year, it's estimated that an additional \$8.285 million will be required. The majority of the damage claims will be from municipal or public damages of 6.2 million to \$8.9 million estimated. The remainder will be for private individual claims which is estimated to be at 1.9 million to 2.8 million. Out of the total damage claims, it's estimated the program will require 8.3 million to cover eligible damage claims, including 800,000 to cover the related, independent claims adjusters' costs.

Again the scale and frequency of natural disasters is fairly hard to predict. We have a document I'd like to table with the committee which outlines the historical data for PDAP [provincial disaster assistance program] from 1975 to 2006. So I guess, Madam Chair, if I could table this with the committee... and I'm not... Thank you. There's Iris, the Clerk. Very good. We'll table this with the committee.

It provides a good representation of just how drastic the impact of the past couple of the years have been in terms of the overall scale of the program and the amount of claims involved in the last couple of years. But again that's attendant to the disasters at hand.

So with that, I guess I'd introduce Tom Young and see if Tom has got anything more to add at this point or if there's some clarification that committee members would like.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, of this money, what types of claims would you specifically have been involved in this year? I know that we have heard a lot about flooding in the Northeast. And outside of the flooding, how many claims will have been submitted to date in regards to flooding in agricultural situations? And is agriculture separate from personal property that you might have in a community?

And secondly, what amount if any is being forwarded to individuals — windstorms, tornados, that type of disaster?

Hon. Mr. McCall: — I guess I'll ask Tom to comment.

Mr. Young: — I don't have the full numbers that you've asked for. What we do know is there's been about 365 claims this year, and of that, we know that 23 claims are for municipal assistance. And the vast majority of them, as the minister had indicated, both in dollar value — well, primarily in dollar value — is with municipalities.

But in terms of the number of claims, there would be a different split perhaps between municipal claims for municipalities and claims for individuals, and certainly agricultural claims are a part of that.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you. I wonder if you could answer whether or not any claims have been refused and, if they have, reasons why claims would have been refused.

Mr. Young: — I'm not aware of any specific claims that have been refused for this year. There may have been some.

Certainly last year, in '05-06, we ran about probably 10 per cent that have either withdrawn their claims or they've been rejected. And of that number, I would say there was a total of about 2,300... 2,400 claims from last year.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you. Madam Chair, a couple of my colleagues have some specific questions regarding disaster, and I'll turn it over to them for a few minutes.

The Chair: — Mr. Huyghebaert.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a couple of questions on the PDAP, what criteria is used to access this fund?

Mr. Young: — The criteria is established in the regulations. Generally speaking the eligibility criteria follow very closely with the federal arrangement that we have on... the disaster financial assistance arrangement with the federal government. And that is quite common across jurisdictions.

The specifics of the criteria, generally speaking — rather than getting into every specific category but generally speaking — it's for a loss of tangible assets that are not covered by insurance and where there is no other program, a federal-provincial program, that covers those kinds of things off. It does not cover all natural disasters. It does cover primarily things like floods, tornadoes, plow winds — those sorts of things. And the specifics in terms of the eligibility criteria, as I say, it's primarily for loss of tangible goods and assets.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Is it necessary for municipalities to declare a disaster before there's access to these funds?

Mr. Young: — Yes. The process that goes through is that when a natural disaster occurs, a municipality, it makes an estimate of what the damages are and passes a resolution and then submits that to the province. And the province, if it meets the basic criteria of either... There's two types of criteria that would be considered. One would be a total disaster, and if it met that criteria of \$25,000, then they would be declared eligible for disaster assistance, or if it met the criteria of \$5,000 on a particular single property.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Now a question that I have is the access to the federal disaster assistance plan. In order to access that, is there a requirement to have municipalities actually declare disaster assistance or declare a disaster and recognized and approved by the province before the federal disaster assistance fund can be accessed?

Mr. Young: — The federal disaster assistance program, generally the way it works is that we work with municipalities. If they are eligible for provincial disaster assistance, we work with them and work to compensate them as quickly as possible on expenses or recovery that they are engaged in. We later assemble all of the costs and approach the federal government for a portion of the amount that we have paid out.

And the portion that we would pay out would not necessarily just be as it relates to provincial disaster assistance program, but it would also cover provincial costs as well. So if there were direct provincial costs other than just the program, we would include that in our submission to the federal government. Now we do ask, in some situations, for interim payment to assist us with cash flow.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Which leads me to my question about how much money do we actually have in the provincial disaster assistance program.

Mr. Young: — Well the budget that was approved was 550,000. And the additional assistance that we're asking for is roughly 8.285 I believe.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Two million?

Hon. Mr. McCall: — 8.285 million.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Eight?

Hon. Mr. McCall: — Point two eight five.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Now who is the determining body or person that actually determines if there's going to be money paid out for disaster? Is there a board? Is it rest totally with the minister or does it rest with . . . Who makes the decision?

Mr. Young: — The decision is primarily made in accordance with the regulations by department staff. If it's very clear that the criteria are met, then the staff will proceed in accordance with the regulations to move the necessary paperwork forward to ensure that an area is determined to be eligible for assistance and then to ensure that the process starts in terms of providing information to the municipality and to the applicants.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — I see. Maybe you can understand the reason why some of these questions I'm asking is . . . I dealt with this fund once before, and I don't know if there's much success with it.

But right now with the drought situation in the Southwest . . . And it is a concern of mine that, in order to access the federal disaster assistance plan, we have to go through the provincial disaster assistance plan or some form whereby the provincial government accepts the fact that these municipalities actually have a disaster. And I guess my question would be . . . Earlier when I asked, does the federal fund have to be accessed through the province — and I believe the answer is yes — and if this is the medium through this department as to whether we could access the federal department . . . the federal disaster assistance fund.

Hon. Mr. McCall: — Maybe what I could do is ask Tom to

clarify the difference between, you know, why is it that . . . you know, how is it that it's Agriculture that looks into the situation in the Northeast or a situation in the Southwest and not the provincial disaster assistance program. There's a difference there between tangible loss and agricultural loss which is the criteria we have to deal with in terms of the federal program and on. But maybe if I could ask Tom to comment at great length on that point.

Mr. Young: — Yes, the minister's correct. Our program focuses on tangible losses. It does not include economic losses or that sort of a thing. When it comes to longer term situations such as drought, drought has historically been an area where federal-provincial governments deal with through the Department of Agriculture or through other means of assistance.

And this program is not meant to substitute for those programs or provide additional funding for those programs. The federal government's DFAA [disaster financial assistance arrangements] guidelines stipulate quite clearly that if there are other programs available for assistance that are disaster . . . or that the DFAA will not cover those sorts of things. And therefore our programs parallel, in terms of eligibility, the federal program.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — My concern obviously is the process that this takes. Who determines whether an RM [rural municipality] actually has a disaster? Looking at the situation in the Southwest and in the Northeast, the producers just don't go to the federal government and say, I need help. There's a process. And that's what I'm concerned about because if you cannot access the federal disaster plan without the province actually agreeing that there's a disaster, then how do we do that through the province? Is there another mechanism other than the disaster program that we have?

And I guess that's why my questions are coming to you, because this is a disaster program and if the only way to access the federal program is through a disaster program within the province that's . . . My question is, how do they, how do producers actually get to access that without going through the provincial disaster assistance program?

Hon. Mr. McCall: — I guess if I could just comment briefly and then ask Tom to comment further. But again the distinction is around agricultural loss or economic loss. So that gets you off into a different bailiwick in terms of how you would address the concerns arising out of the agricultural loss in a place like northeast Saskatchewan or in the Southwest and the drought there.

I mean, we're not disputing the gravity of those situations. But in terms of what this program covers and in terms of how it's in turn backed up by the federal program, it's a different program.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Yes, I understand that, but I guess I go back to what I said about the process. We do not have two different disaster assistance programs to my knowledge in the province, one that looks after agriculture and one that looks after tangible losses. So in order to access . . . If you have to go through a disaster program to access the federal program, what mechanism is there in the province to do that?

Mr. McCall: — Tom, if you'd like to comment further on that, but I guess, they are different matters for different programs, like the program that was offered up in north eastern Saskatchewan was separate and apart from the provincial disaster assistance program and the related federal program entirely.

Mr. Young: — Maybe the only other thing I could add is that the provincial disaster assistance program like the DFAA focuses in on specific events and the kinds of events that I mentioned earlier like tornadoes, like floods. It's not meant to cover longer duration kinds of situations such as drought and those sorts of things. So if those situations arise, it would not be through our programming or our department, specifically that you would deal with the federal government.

The Chair: — Ms. Draude.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you very much. I have a couple of questions again about the provincial drought assistance program. Can you tell me how much of the money the province pays out under this program is reimbursed by the federal government?

Mr. McCall: — Yes, I just . . . and obviously the member meant to say the provincial disaster assistance program. And again we're trying to be very careful about what the program is, as opposed to . . . anyway that's . . .

Mr. Young: — I'm sorry, could you repeat the question?

Ms. Draude: — How much of the money under the provincial disaster assistance program does the province get reimbursed for from the federal government?

Mr. Young: — It's on a sliding scale. Basically the province pays the first million dollars. And from 1 to \$3 million, then the federal government program covers 50 per cent of the cost. And then it goes up to 75 per cent for the next 3 to \$5 million. And \$5 million plus, the federal government picks up 90 per cent of the costs.

Ms. Draude: — I'm going to ask specifically about the flooding in the Northeast, and I was told earlier that each one of the flooding events or incidents was a separate event. There was actually three floods within 18 months. Is there any way that that could be looked at as one event, rather than three, to remove the necessity of paying the deductible every time?

Hon. Mr. McCall: — Yes, just a comment first. There was an undertaking made at that time that these were obviously linked — the situation was linked — and that there was merit in the case being made that this was a linked situation. We're still working on the response to that, but we realize we made an undertaking in that regard, and we intend to live up to that undertaking.

Mr. Young: — I could elaborate a little bit in terms of what we are doing in that regard. We have made a presentation to the federal government for the '05-06 events. Some of the events occurred in June, some of them a little bit later, and then in September and August. We presented an argument to consider all of those events as one event.

Looking at such things as climate, soil conditions, and the amount of water and saturation point of the soil conditions . . . we looked at weather systems in terms of storms and how they're linked and the water flow from Alberta — all of those kinds of factors. And we presented a case, and we're involved in some discussions with the federal government to see where they will present their position on the events of '05-06. And we'll do the same for '06-07 as well.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. I take it then you haven't had a response from the federal government on their decision of whether it would be considered one event.

Mr. Young: — We've had some indication that they are receptive to some of the arguments, but we have not gotten a decision as to whether they'll consider all the events from '05-06 as being one event or two events or three events. But I think there's certainly a lot of . . . And again there's been no firm commitment. But I think certainly the clusters of events that occurred in '05-06, there's very, very strong arguments that we have presented there.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. And I want to assure you if there's any work or any correspondence or even meetings that the local RMs could have with federal ministers or with yourself to add to your case, I'm sure that there would be a lot of people that would be quite willing to do that. It makes a huge dent in the budget of an RM when they have to look at these deductibles.

And the only other issue that I want to bring up . . . and I have had the opportunity to speak to the minister about this, but it still seems highly unfair, that when an RM uses their own equipment to repair the damages that's done in their area, they're only allowed to use any overtime wages and the actual expenses of fuel and other operation expenses in their equipment.

It's a huge undertaking, and the RMs in my area that had to use their equipment to spend most of the last summer and a half to repair the work that was done because of the flooding didn't have an opportunity to use that equipment on what they would have used it for. And instead of receiving the type of funding they should have received, I believe the RM of Porcupine got a cheque for about \$12,000, which is really insignificant compared to what they would have been able to do had it not been for the flooding.

So our point and the RM's point is that if they would have decided to do the work for the RM of Bjorkdale and Bjorkdale do the RM of Porcupine's work, they both would have been paid the full amount for their equipment.

So I understand — and you can correct me if I'm wrong — that it's the federal government policy that makes that issue, that doesn't allow that to happen. And I'm wondering again if there's something that we can be doing because this makes it highly — not just unfair — but it makes it impractical for the RMs to do their own work where they can probably do it best themselves rather than getting someone that doesn't know their area in to do the work. It's a real strain on their budgets, and it's causing a huge problem in the Northeast.

Mr. Young: — Yes, there is a process that provinces and the

federal government have been engaged in to look at matters related to the federal program, and those are being brought forward to the federal government. And the federal government is certainly looking at some of those kinds of things.

I don't disagree with your comments of some of the issues with the program per se. We in the department are looking at the program in terms of all of the different kinds of issues that are being brought forward. With each new event, there's new kinds of issues that crop up that perhaps were not anticipated by the full regulations or the DFAA.

And so we monitor those, and sometimes we don't have a precise, quick answer for people. But we do try to pursue those through the federal system in terms of interpretation of their guidelines to see if something's eligible or not eligible. And as I said, we are looking at the provincial program and the regulations to see if there's some areas there that we can address.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Mr. Toth.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Minister, as we were discussing the provincial disaster assistance program, I remember some discussion, and I think it might be going back two years when former Minister Prebble was responsible as well. We were discussing the amounts and if I'm not mistaken — what was it? — 500,000 asked for. And now we're well over eight point two. And I had asked the question whether or not there should be larger amounts because I was kind of wondering what happens when a disaster of significance comes forward, how you deal with it other than supplementary estimates and going back to government.

It must make the Finance department and the bookkeeping just a little difficult at times when all of a sudden you see that significant a change. I would like to ask however, in regards to disaster . . . And we a moment ago, we talked about tornados, plow winds and these types of things. And when we talk about flooding and drought, I think as was duly indicated, there's two significant differences.

Flooding, yes, can come upon you quite suddenly and be quite disastrous in the agricultural sector and so can drought. But I believe that we already have programs in place, if they were significantly . . . or had the adequate funds and were adequately set up, could deal with that issue. So that your department, when it's a disaster such as a plow wind or a tornado, I think that the public would say, okay that's where that money should be going.

And I guess my question to you, Mr. Minister, and to your department is: what discussion have you had — not only with the province, I know you . . . I've heard discussion you've talked with the federal government — but with the province in addressing some of the issues around agriculture and, for example, the crop insurance program?

It would seem to me that we do have a program that actually works quite well, that with some minor adjustments would probably work very well in addressing issues of flooding and

drought in the agricultural community, and save the ongoing debate as to who's responsible and whether or not people receive adequate compensation for loss when this type of disaster occurs.

So I wonder if you could inform us what discussions you have entered into to maybe try to get these two issues separated so that we're, indeed, your department is dealing with disasters that we have no control over.

Hon. Mr. McCall: — I guess I'll say a few words, and then I'm sure Tom will have much more to expand on.

And I had actually, in preparation for the committee today, read the exchange between yourself and the then Minister Prebble on this score. And at the time, the \$550,000 was arrived at by it being the average of the past, the previous three years. Again we're trying to — in terms of the basic amount that's allotted for the provincial disaster assistance program at the outset — we're trying to appropriately calibrate the amount of money and resources in terms of staffing and what's required with what the historical trend line has been. And again what's happened over the past couple of years has been fairly exceptional in terms of the longer trend line of the program.

So in that context though, there has been an undertaking made that if a situation meets the criteria of the provincial disaster assistance program, the initial line item that's contained in the main estimates of the original budget, that's the starting point, but it's not a maximum. We have made an undertaking that if something meets the criteria of the provincial disaster assistance program that we would be able to go back to Treasury Board and to cabinet to seek additional supplementary estimates — which of course we're here to debate today to make good on that program.

So I guess what I'm saying is that we've tried to reach that balance. We've tried to project in terms of what the trend line has been. Those projections have been made a bit . . . It's been tricky in the last couple of years due to some very exceptional circumstances, but in that context we are trying to make good on the program itself in terms of, if people qualify, making sure that the resources are there to make good on those applications. So that's why we're here today for the large part of the supplementary estimates being requested by Corrections and Public Safety.

But, Tom, did you have any more to add there?

Mr. Young: — Yes. The document that the minister tabled with regard to the trends over the past 30 years in the program I think illustrate the fact that you do get, several years in a row you may get a situation where there's very little disaster assistance requirement. But you will see peaks, and it's very difficult to predict where the peak and what year it's going to happen.

Very seldom do you see a situation, I think, when you look over that period of time, where you see two years in a row where there's been a major, major situation requiring significant amounts of dollars. So we've wrestled with the problem of how do you budget for that? And this year when we went forward, we indicated that we would go on the previous year's budget

and see where things happen after that.

Now in regards to specific discussions with the Department of Agriculture, we have, at the officials' level, had some discussions with agricultural officials on specific claims and specific situations as it relates to agricultural situations.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Young. Mr. Minister . . .

Hon. Mr. McCall: — I think Terry's got something more to add. But additionally, Don, if you've got a crystal ball or a particularly insightful issue of the *Farmers' Almanac* that you'd like to share with us in terms of projecting these things, that would be quite welcome.

But anyway we are trying to work on the historical trend lines to try and measure out our estimates as best as possible. But Terry has something to add on the front of mitigation.

Mr. Lang: — I'm just going to make a comment in terms of your question, Mr. Toth, in terms of what we're doing at the federal level or with the federal government at the federal-provincial-territorial tables, working on a number of them.

But one of them is mitigation and prevention. This is disaster assistance, so it's after the fact. What we're trying to do is work with the federal government so that there is some kind of a financial incentive program for municipalities to be able to do some preventative work, so building of dikes for example in low-lying areas or whatever, so that in the event of a flooding, they can be pretty sure that their towns or communities will be safe.

British Columbia has been very strong on that. And obviously they have a renewed interest in it given some of the storms that they've had.

But that's one of the focuses that we have at the FPT [federal-provincial-territorial] table.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and your officials. I was just looking at the graph and a couple comments I'd just like to make. Over 30 years, yes, there's been a few significant spikes, but it seems we've had a number of years in between. And as soon as I look at this graph, I think green.

And sometimes I look at issues of this nature, and it's the naysayers and everyone on the Kyoto bandwagon keep telling us that the world's tumbling in. But it looks to me like we have had significant changes and peaks over the years and that it — well this year is significant — it doesn't happen all in one year or on a continual basis. And through the centuries we've had significant disasters.

But I just throw that out as an aside in view of the fact that we could probably get into quite a debate on the environment and Kyoto around this table even at this moment. Somebody's making good money on that one.

The other thing that I would like to ask in regards to this \$8.285 million, this past summer we had some significant fires in northern Saskatchewan. And while fires are Environment, the

question I think arises though in regards to two communities — and that name's slipping me right now — where major evacuations had to take place. And I would think that's almost a Public Safety issue.

And I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, what involvement your department had in regards to the safety in these two communities? And what significant dollars may have had to be expended, and what plans you have in the future to address situations of this nature?

Hon. Mr. McCall: — I guess you're quite right in stating that there is . . . say, the difference between flooding and the effect that had on a community like Cumberland House versus fires — the spread of wildfire — and the situation this summer with, I believe, Fond-du-Lac and Black Lake. The aspects of the role with Public Safety do change with regards to how we as a department interface with a situation, a wildfire situation versus that of a flooding situation.

But I guess I'd ask Tom if he'd like to expand a bit more on how Public Safety interacts with those particular situations and indeed the situation this summer.

Mr. Young: — Sure. Our department's role is to coordinate provincial resources and support for communities that face a particular threat of some kind or another. And we — in the cases that you've outlined, specific communities in the northern part of the province threatened by fires — we set up emergency operation centres in conjunction with those communities to ensure that there were the necessary response from within the community to deal with the particular situation.

Under our current legislation, municipalities are supposed to have an emergency plan. And if they don't have that necessarily or it's perhaps not up to date, we will work with the community when they're faced with a situation to organize around the threat that's currently under way. And some of the things that we do get involved with is providing support for evacuations. The Department of Community Resources actually does the coordination on the evacuations and works with the community on that basis, but we coordinate the overall provincial resources.

We have an emergency operation centre here in Regina that we had activated during the fires, and we set up local emergency operations to deal with the municipalities and their response. And the two were interconnected through daily conversations, conference calls, sometimes twice or three times a day. And we ensured that all the different departments that were involved knew one another. What was happening in specific areas, whether it was evacuations or whether it was other situations, highways, or any kind of response that may need some provincial resources, we made the other departments aware what was happening in those other departments and what kind of response was occurring. And if there was a need for support among the different departments, we coordinated that as well.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you. Would there be a financial cost, and what amount would they have incurred as a result of these additional emergency services that arose as a result of these fires?

Hon. Mr. McCall: — There was indeed a cost involved, but

perhaps I'll refer that to Tom.

Mr. Young: — Community Resources is the department that actually coordinates — as I indicated — the evacuations. And they have indicated some costs associated with those particular evacuations and I think that information . . . Has it been passed on?

Hon. Mr. McCall: — Yes, I guess just to clarify, our colleague, Mr. Hart, had asked a question of Corrections and Public Safety in written questions; I believe written question no. 79 referred to Fond-du-Lac. It wasn't our responsibility, but we were able to coordinate an answer from the Department of Community Resources as to what the particulars were in the answer. And I can restate those for the benefit of the committee if the member desires or perhaps not. Anyway . . .

Mr. Toth: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. The question I had, I wasn't necessarily concerned what the other departments were responsible for. I was just wondering whether or not your department, as a result of the coordination of these emergency services, found that there were additional costs that were incurred by the department for your role or responsibility.

Hon. Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that clarification, Don. I'm not quite quick on the uptake here. But, Tom, any additional costs?

Mr. Young: — We did encounter some additional costs. They would be associated with setting up . . . well first of all for travel of staff to some degree in going to the specific locations where those situations occurred. And we encountered some additional costs as it relates to setting up an emergency operation centre in Prince Albert and then one in La Ronge. We don't have a full accounting, I don't think at this point in time, for all of the costs. We as matter of course collect those and collect the costs, as I mentioned earlier when it related to the disaster financial assistance arrangement. And when all of those costs plus our PDAP [provincial disaster assistance program] costs are included, that's when we make the submission to the federal government on all of the costs.

But some of these costs will come in over time. They're not immediate that you can have all the costs in immediately right after the disaster. Some of them come in afterwards, depends on the kinds of billings that we're looking at and stuff like that and how the billings were made.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you. I wonder if maybe down the road we could have a response to the number of employees that would have been involved in setting up this disaster program and the emergency services in these communities and the costs that would have been associated with that specific response.

Hon. Mr. McCall: — On behalf of Corrections and Public Safety, I'll make that undertaking that we'll provide those details as they are available.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Just one other comment on the side in regards to Deputy Minister Terry's comments about dikes and what have you in some of these areas of flooding.

When we talk about drought, there's no doubt that if we maybe made some preparation ahead of time — and I've heard different groups have talked about dams and what have you — of storing water so that it's available when you do have a drought period, that there's some value in setting up dikes or if there's low-lying areas that really don't have a lot of financial value in an agricultural community and in other ways they can just by storing water and then irrigation. So I think there are many means that we can certainly look at in this province of addressing some of the flooding and some of the drought that we have faced over the years.

One of the other areas of particular note in this estimate, supplementary estimate, is adult corrections. And I note you talked about additional funding needed to manage higher-than-anticipated inmate counts in your adult correctional facilities.

I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, when we're talking of inmate counts, what the numbers are in comparison to what the averages would be? What this means in regards to overcrowding? Are most of the facilities overcrowded? And how many more employees would you have to employ to deal with this issue of higher-than-anticipated inmate counts?

Hon. Mr. McCall: — Well I guess, again as of October 30, 2006 the year-to-date inmate count was 1,360. The funded bed space was 1,225. Now the additional resources come into bear where you're using contingency space; contingency space meaning perhaps space that had another purpose initially in mind but will suffice for the housing of inmates.

There's account management issues related to inmate mix and segregation. There were also additional . . . or there were shortfalls related to the operational costs at Pine Grove Correctional Centre with the Sharber unit. But I guess to provide some greater detail I'd welcome Maureen Lloyd, and if you could provide that detail, Maureen.

Ms. Lloyd — Yes, as the minister said, our counts have increased, particularly over this year and more specifically even in the summer where from a base of 1,225 funded beds, we did reach a peak of about 1,420 offenders during that time. And in order to manage that number of offenders we look at a combination of using areas — and I think you've seen them when you've been at some of the correctional centres — using areas that would traditionally be used for other activities. It could be visiting or in the case of Pine Grove, a chapel.

Using areas like that as dorms to house other offenders, that requires extra staffing in order to maintain those. Looking at additional inmates in units could be achieved through double bunking, using areas within units that weren't used for beds typically. That too can require extra staffing.

So it puts an overall pressure . . . and I would just say that there's additional pressure from the mix of offenders. You hear about the issues of gangs, the pressures related then in the correctional centres; the issues of very high-need inmates and the need for supervision of, you know, suicidal inmates; inmates with special needs; and so on. So overall the combination of high demand for correctional space and a high-need population of offenders has certainly put extra

pressure on adult corrections this year.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you. So I guess the question is, why are you seeing such an increased number of inmates over what the average has been? You mention about needs of individuals but what's causing the demand?

Ms. Lloyd: — Well I think you'd look at a number of factors that causes the demand. I mentioned gangs for one. And we have seen an increased emphasis on the part of police to deal with gangs — particularly Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert — with policing specifically directed in this area. That on a weekend, one weekend alone for example, could add 30 offenders into a correctional centre. So additional emphasis on enforcement in those areas. Additional . . . Oh I'm sorry, I lost my train of thought. But anyway that has been one of the areas of significant pressure.

Another area has been an increase over time, although that increase did level out a couple . . . about two years ago. We saw the numbers stabilize and in fact go down a little bit. But there seems to be an upward trend in numbers of incarcerated offenders.

We are seeing a new phenomenon and that's the numbers of offenders in remand. That's a national phenomenon. And Saskatchewan is not at the highest end of that yet but we are looking at about 40 per cent of our offenders now being on remand in our centres.

So what you might get for example is an offender on a fairly serious charge, could be remanded to us for two years if it takes that long to get through the court process. At that time they might receive double credit for their time, which might then lead to them remaining in a provincial correctional centre to serve their sentence. So although they might have been sentenced to, let's say four years, would have been federal time once upon a time, it's now being served in provincial correctional centres. So that's added additional pressure. And a high number of inmates on remand turning over on one end, one to seven days, and then a significant number who remain with us for longer periods of time.

Our provincial offenders stay with us an average of about six months so that federal . . . the shift, from some of those offenders going to federal custody and staying with provincial custody, is also significant for us.

Mr. Toth: — How often do you find the facilities are overtaxed? And I ask that question in relation to an inquiry about a week ago about the number of offenders I think at that time at the P.A. [Prince Albert] Correctional Centre and some issues that were raised by legal counsel for a couple individuals who were incarcerated at the time.

I'm not exactly sure how long their incarceration would have been. But the issue raised about overcrowding, about lack of bed space, about food services, and the safety of individuals. And I think this is a question that's also come up on a number of occasions from individuals working in our correctional centres, from guards, the fact that you have so many people employed to provide security services and kind of manage the facility. And when your numbers go up, the numbers of

correctional officers don't necessarily go up at the same time. And these individuals are asked to deal with greater numbers and the insecurity that they may feel about not having enough staff . . . So I guess there's a number of questions I've asked in that response. But I'm wondering if I could have a response to that please.

Ms. Lloyd: — There's a number of issues that we face at any time in correctional centres, but even more specifically at times of high numbers. And they do relate to safety and security, and they also relate to providing adequate care and supervision of offenders. And it is an area . . . both of those areas we're very committed to in Corrections.

Now I can't speak to . . . Sometimes there are specific incidents where offenders may, due to behavioural issues that can crop up at any time, their circumstances may change. And whether or not that is needing to be segregated, right, and having privileges withdrawn from them possibly . . . I mean we have situations certainly where offenders who often have many possessions in their cells, in their rooms, might have those possessions taken away because it's not safe at the time. So we deal with those. But again we look at safety. We look at the behaviours of the offenders. We look at their needs. We really try to balance those. And we really are committed to providing good services to them.

And it's the same with our staff. We do a lot of training, particularly in the emergency response team area, but overall with our staff in terms of how we deal with serious incidents, how people are kept safe.

Our staffing levels really are predicated by the need for safety in our centres. So if we are in a situation where we're adding additional offenders into a unit, then we will look at unit by unit, case by case, what's the level of supervision that we need in that particular unit? And some of those decisions are made by, who are the offenders in the unit? Very different to look at a community training residence and the type of staffing we'd do there as opposed to a secure segregation unit in a men's correctional centre for example.

So certainly our number one concern always is safety. And that is safety for everyone — the community, the staff, the offender — but also then what kind of program do we deliver, and meeting all of the basic human rights and needs of our offenders.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, I could get into a number of additional questions but I'm going to kind of hold them to the supplementary estimates.

I do have one more question though and that's regarding the new Regina correctional facility, and in view of the question and the response a moment ago to the overcrowding and the number of inmates versus what the average was.

So this new correctional facility, when it comes on stream, will it actually add any more beds than are currently in existence? And is there any money in this supplementary estimate that's actually earmarked for the correctional centre in Regina here?

Mr. McCall: — I guess I'd like to take a stab at that first and

then refer over to Maureen.

The short answer is no, in terms of new spaces. There is a broader answer though in terms of is this the same space or is this better space? And there is a great argument to be made that this is much better space in terms of replacing the 1913 portion and the kind of challenges that portion of the Regina Correctional Centre has in terms of guarding, in terms of security issues, in terms of sightlines, in terms of admission/discharge issues. In terms of the security of the admissions and discharge, the new arrangement will be much more secure.

So in terms of the kind of demands that the current setup places on basic security alone, those will be diminished and will allow for a better emphasis on being able to manage the population, on being able . . . in terms of segregating, you know. Say you've got questions of gang involvement or conflict between inmates, we'll be better equipped to respond to that. We'll be better off in terms of just the basic space for programming. And I guess all of this is to say so we are looking to make better use of space.

But is there a longer term analysis that we're doing in terms of what the capital demands are for the corrections system in Saskatchewan, and do we want to make sure that we're getting it right if we do make additional investments with regards to those demands and where we put those throughout the province? We are doing that work. And we want to make sure that we don't put out resources only to have them stranded. And we want to make sure that we're doing the best in terms of things like working with the federal government at the federal-provincial-territorial table on issues like remand — which are a significant driver within the system — and practices for example like the awarding of double time or triple time. We are working very hard to get some redress on those fronts and have been met with some, I think, receptive response in that regard.

But is there a broader need for more space that we're taking . . . Are we taking a very serious look at that issue? We are. But like I said, refer it over to Maureen to see if she has anything she'd like to add.

Mr. Toth: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister, and just one further question. First of all let me say thank you to your officials for taking the time to come and meet with our committee. I look forward to further and more ongoing debate on a broader expanse next spring when we get into the full budget question.

But my last question is . . . regards to the new Regina correctional facility. Is this facility coming in on budget or are you finding yourselves over budget and by how much?

Hon. Mr. McCall: — Well in terms of the stipulated subcontract that was finally awarded for \$51.5 million, there were different estimates throughout the process that saw . . . Due to change in the parameter of the contract or in terms of the parameters of what was being put out to tender, but primarily through inflation and labour costs, there have been changes, but when the final tender went out it was under a stipulated sum contract.

So the final estimated cost of I believe \$51.5 million, let me just find . . . Oh yes, there we are, \$51.5 million is a hard number but that does represent an increase of \$3.61 million over the previously approved budget of \$47.88 million. But that was not with the benefit of having a stipulated sum contract. That's when we've been able to get to the place in the project where we're able to put the stipulated sum contract out there. We believe 51.5 is a hard number.

The Chair: — Thank you. Thank you to the minister and his officials. And we're now ready to vote off the supplementary estimates. You guys are free to go. Oh unless . . .

Hon. Mr. McCall: — Well I guess if I could wrap up just by saying thank you to Mr. Toth and opposition members on the committee. And thank you to my officials and certainly to government members as well.

Thank you to the committee as a whole and yourself, Madam Chair, for welcoming us back this week later and we'll look to be here again. Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. So we're at supplementary estimates for Corrections and Public Safety, vote 73 on page 13 of your Supplementary Estimates book. Central management and services (CP01) in the sum of 237,000. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Adult corrections (CP04), the sum of 4,886,000. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Public safety (CP06), the sum of 8,424,000. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: —

Resolved that it be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2007 the following sums for Corrections and Public Safety, 13,547,000.

Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — We have a motion to . . . we have a motion:

Resolved that it be granted to Her Majesty.

Could I have a mover? Mr. Prebble. Thank you very much. All in favour? Agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Thank you. That's carried.

[Vote 73 agreed to.]

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — November
Community Resources
Vote 36**

Subvote (CR12)

The Chair: — The next item up before the committee is consideration of Supplementary Estimates for Community Resources, vote 36, on page 12. Welcome to the minister and his officials. If you have anything . . . I think you want to introduce your officials again, and anything you want to say to start us off today. Please proceed.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Just very quickly I'll introduce my staff and then I'll make very, very preliminary opening comments. First of all to my immediate left is Duncan Fisher, deputy minister, and to my right is Darrell Jones who's assistant deputy minister of central administration and housing and of course the president of Sask Housing. And behind me we have Shelley Whitehead who is an ADM [assistant deputy minister] with policy; Don Allen, executive director for finance and property management; Betty West, executive director for community living; Andrea Brittin, associate executive director for child and family services; Lynn Tulloch, executive director for income assistance; Gord Tweed, associate executive director for income assistance; Larry Chaykowski, executive director for the housing program operations; Lynn Allan, regional director, south west region; and of course trusted Brian Williams, director of executive planning and operations.

Very quickly, Madam Chair, the federal government is providing the province with \$50.6 million in funding for investment in affordable housing under the affordable housing trust and the office of Aboriginal housing trust. And the federal government's principle for the housing trust specify that, one, funding is intended to support increased investment in safe, adequate, and affordable housing units. Two, funding is not intended to support ongoing operational funding for existing social housing stock or rent subsidies. Three, funding is not intended to replace provincial investment in affordable housing.

With HomeFirst, the provincial housing strategy in its third year, Saskatchewan is well positioned to deliver the new federal funding. And this funding can be promptly incorporated into HomeFirst's continuum of housing options and support. The province has been discussing the housing trust with First Nations and Métis organizations to ensure that they're engaged in the delivery and management of housing that is developed and enhanced with this funding. And finally, Madam Chair, it is anticipated that delivery with this new funding will begin early in 2007. Thank you very much.

The Chair: — Thank you. Questions. Mr. Merriman.

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Madam Chair. Just so I understand what I heard the minister correctly . . . that there's \$50.6 million that is total federal dollars for these two programs — and we'll talk in round numbers — one split into 24 million for affordable housing and 26 million for off-reserve housing. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — I believe those figures are correct, yes.

Mr. Merriman: — When did we receive as a province those dollars from the federal government?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — What I'm going to do is ask my officials to respond to that, and then they'll give you the exact date.

Mr. Fisher: — The housing trusts were set up and the money sent to the province in November.

Mr. Merriman: — This year?

Mr. Fisher: — Yes.

Mr. Merriman: — In the amount that this is dedicated to, is there a concern with . . . Or is there the ability to use some of this funding, would probably be a better way of phrasing that, to bring the existing rental units up to a better standard, is the best way I can phrase it.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Maybe I'll get . . . The president of Sask Housing, who's been integral in the discussion, will certainly give us more specific information. But certainly I think the money is indeed going to be very, very helpful and, as we mentioned at the outset, that it's got some very stringent conditions put on it. We fully intend to abide and respect those conditions so we can maximize service to the people of Saskatchewan. So I'll ask the president to elaborate further.

Mr. Jones: — Yes, one of the principles outlined in the trust is that funding is not intended to support ongoing operational funding for existing social housing stock or rent subsidies. However that does not preclude the potential for utilizing some of this funding for capital investment in the existing portfolio.

Mr. Merriman: — So to make sure that we're both on the same wavelength with that, that would allow you in some cases to purchase additional houses and then thus bring them up to standard? I don't know if I've got the right terminology here, but I think you understand what I'm talking about.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Yes, I believe that's as indicated. We can do acquisition and some of the modifications and the repair to some of the units.

Mr. Merriman: — What is the current existing volume of affordable . . . or housing that you're portfolio's looking after for, in the province?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — I think we have about 30,000 units. And these are a wide variety of low-income units as well as seniors' units. And again, the president can give us various breakdowns at the region, which I think is really important because Saskatoon, Regina, the North . . . There's a wide spectrum of housing needs and he can very quickly give a quick overview of where the housing units are and what the 30,000 units involve. So I'll get the president here in just a couple of seconds just to give the information as quickly as he can so we have a fair idea of . . . as to what we're dealing with and the amount of investment and opportunity there are to help Saskatchewan with basic needs of housing. So, Mr. President.

Mr. Jones: — So the breakdown of portfolio in terms of Sask Housing Corporation owned social housing is about 15,260. Affordable housing under that portfolio, approximately 3,000, for a total of about 18,000 units.

And then you have another portion of the portfolio that is owned and operated by non-profit and co-operative organizations. And that totals — through a combination again of social housing and affordable housing — approximately 11,600 units, for a total of approximately 30,000.

Mr. Merriman: — Round numbers are fine just to keep it simplistic. With this new additional \$50 million, how many additional units do you believe . . . And I know this will be different . . . regional by cost. But I'm assuming you've known this money's coming so you have a strategy. How many additional homes will this provide to the structure?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Yes, right now we haven't even gotten through cabinet yet to determine exactly how we're going to expend these dollars.

Obviously we're going to try and jump in front of the effort and meet with many First Nations groups. As you probably know, there are a number of organizations that are very active off-reserve when it comes to housing, and the fact is that FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] is also actively involved. They know and are aware that we have these funds, and they obviously want to give us some advice.

So in terms of us making a decision in terms of a CDI [cabinet decision item], the answer's no, we haven't done that yet.

We received the money last month which was roughly a couple weeks ago. We fully intend to consult not only with the First Nations which are of course our important partner. We also want to make sure that we reach out to the Métis community as well, as you know that there are a number of organizations that have — Métis organizations — that have housing portfolios, like the Gabriel Housing here in the city. We have the Sasknative Rentals in Saskatoon.

And from our perspective, developing and establishing a very solid relationship and rapport with the First Nations and Métis people in terms of how best to use this money is very important, and it's the crucial first step that we fully intend to take. But no decision has been made as to how exactly we want to do this.

I can say that the money will be split fairly between what Saskatchewan needs, what the First Nations need, and the Métis community needs based on our population and our stats. And that's partly a pretty good overview of where we're at, at this stage.

Mr. Merriman: — Was this money negotiated with the federal government, or was this just a fall-in-our-lap gift that they gave us this money to do this project? And if it was negotiated, how long were those negotiations going on?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — I could basically tell the people of Saskatchewan and this committee that there was no negotiations. Basically the federal government made this as part of their federal budget, and we obviously — as any other

province would do — we certainly needed more and wanted more. That wasn't the position of course that was taken into account. But I could say that the federal government arbitrarily arrived at this number, and they made it part of their federal budget, and they arbitrarily announced this money and presented it to the province.

One can certainly argue that perhaps more was needed, but I think from our perspective, given our HomeFirst strategy and engagement of the Métis and the First Nations community, I think it's a good first step. And not wanting to look a gift horse in the mouth too closely, we want to move as quickly as we can to try and (a) get the money into our hands, (b) consult with the people, and of course develop a comprehensive strategy to deal with off-reserve housing.

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you for that answer. I'm a little confused in the numbers and maybe that's just . . . We have approximately 24 million in the notes I have here for affordable housing programs and then 26 million for off-reserve Aboriginal housing programs. Are there two separate programs here?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — No they're . . . Well they are, but one is for the general . . . I hate to use the word general population, but for our own needs as a province. We have housing needs beyond the Aboriginal community; that's where you get the 26 million from. And the 24 million are Aboriginal specific, meaning the Métis and the First Nations. And of that Aboriginal specific amount, half of that is going to Métis and half is going to First Nations. And we arrived at those figures based on Stats Canada. And I think this is what the feds of course advised us of.

So again to re-emphasize the numbers, it is a \$50 million trust; 24.2 million is for affordable housing, which is our general needs for all the people of Saskatchewan, and 26.4 million is for Aboriginal housing in general. And that 26 is split basically down the middle, half and half, for Métis and off-reserve First Nations housing needs. Thanks.

Mr. Merriman: — I guess why I was confused, Mr. Minister, when you were talking about, you know, that we're going to meet with Aboriginal groups, we're going to meet with Métis groups, and you went on. At no time did you ever say, we are meeting with non-Aboriginal groups, so I wasn't sure if this \$50 million was just meant for Aboriginal housing. And I guess my question then would be, what other groups are you meeting with that are outside of the Aboriginal community?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Okay, I know that there has been some discussions, and one of the things that I think is important to point out is that there is always ongoing work to meet Saskatchewan's needs in general. And when these housing trusts were brought forward by the federal government, certainly what we wanted to do was to accelerate those discussions with specific groups of people that were identified in the federal budget, namely the Métis and the First Nations communities.

So obviously there has been discussion over the years. There's been a general population that's been also discussed but because of the nature of the money coming forward, that they

were very specific for off-reserve housing and Métis housing. And of course we wanted to make sure that we accelerated and certainly deepened the discussion with these groups.

But for a general overview of the other non-Aboriginal discussion, I'm going to ask again, the president to elaborate a bit. But I can assure you that, whether it's Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, our intent is to make sure we consult with as many groups as possible to make sure that we have the best use of not just these resources but our provincial resources as well. So Darrell.

Mr. Jones: — Just to elaborate, with the introduction and lead-up to the HomeFirst policy framework, specific consultations were undertaken with the community at large. In particular consultation sessions were held in Saskatoon, Regina, North Battleford, and Yorkton on a regional basis.

But in addition, since the introduction of HomeFirst and the delivery of the centenary affordable housing program, we're essentially in, sort of, constant engagement with proponents that are involved in the delivery of housing. So we have, from that routine engagement with the current delivery of housing, we have ongoing consultations with a variety of groups.

Mr. Merriman: — Well, thank you. You know I don't have an issue of all 50 million of this as going to off-reserve housing. But the way the minister said it was, he was just talking about Aboriginal groups. I asked the question, what other the groups? You said you've had meetings with . . . in various locations. Who are you meeting with outside of the Aboriginal community regarding this \$24 million?

Mr. Jones: — Well some of the client groups that we would typically work with . . . Certainly we work with local municipalities. Each municipality, Saskatoon, Regina — larger centres are heavily engaged at the community level. There's non-profit groups that we currently are engaged with where we have operating agreements in relative to the 30,000 some units where we're already funding in one form or another. And so we would engage those types of groups. As examples, in the city of Saskatoon you have an organization called SHIP. We would certainly . . .

Mr. Merriman: — What was that? Sorry.

Mr. Jones: — Called SHIP, Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership. So we have regular meetings with organizations such as that. So we're actively engaged in the housing community on an ongoing basis and meet with groups routinely.

Mr. Merriman: — I guess where I'm going with this, Mr. Jones, is that I want to make sure that we understand that there will be a plan put in place and that these funds will go to create as many homes as possible, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, as possible. And what I'm trying to get to is your strategic plan and how you see in achieving this and whether that plan includes building affordable housing for rent-to-own, whether it's buying existing properties and refurbishing it, whether it's building new. I don't hear any of those comments in any type of plan or strategic plan.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much for the question. I'm going to get the president to explain basically the criteria and some of the issues in housing that you've addressed because I'm sure there's been models that have been incorporated and models that we've experiment with and evaluate in trying to meet this specific housing requirements that you have pointed out.

And just to clarify so there's no misunderstanding as to how we arrived at the 50.6 million, and we'll very quickly go through that. First of all we have, of the 50 million, 24.2 million is for affordable housing in general, which is for the people of Saskatchewan; 13.1 million is for off-reserve First Nations housing; and 13.3 million is for Métis housing needs. And that's a total of 50 million. So there's three tranches of money that has been identified with this federal money. Again 24.2 for the general population for Saskatchewan's needs, 13.1 specifically for First Nations, and 13.3 specifically for Métis housing. And that's how we arrived at 50.6 million.

And there are a wide variety of options as we mentioned. As a minister we did have the opportunity to sit down with SHIP, which is Saskatoon home initiatives partnership, and they certainly discussed from their perspective what they envision are the needs of Saskatoon . . . as we did with other centres. But the specific strategies around what you're asking, I'm going to ask President Jones to elaborate a bit further.

Mr. Jones: — Well I would start out by referencing the HomeFirst strategy. And while we haven't finalized the specific strategies for this funding, HomeFirst establishes a framework for us. And the goals of HomeFirst are equitable access to housing, self-sufficiency in housing for low- to moderate-income households, and efficiency in housing markets. That's three primary goals.

You referenced a number of potential tenures of housing — home ownership, rental — and certainly those are program vehicles that are available under the current housing policy framework and help achieve with equitable access to housing, self-sufficiency in housing for example, specifically relative to home ownership programming.

So certainly if we're to move forward consistent with the HomeFirst policy framework, those vehicles then would be available through this trust funding.

Mr. Merriman: — What I'd like to get to — and obviously you don't have it today, but I'd certainly like to get to it sometime — is how many units that this is physically going to put into the arena of the 30,000 that you have.

One of the concerns I have is that, with the existing 30,000 units certainly — and I can speak to Saskatoon better than probably provincially — one of the big issues is sustainability, of keeping these homes to a level of acceptance if you will. And unless we know that (a) the feds or (b) the provincial government is going to continue to put money into this program for the sustainability, you know, we're adding new but the old isn't getting brought up to standard . . . So I'm majorly concerned on the sustainability of this program. And how many units do you estimate that this \$50 million is going to provide?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Well to be very specific . . . As you can appreciate, there is going to be a wide variety of options that we'd look at in concert and consultation with some very valuable partners such as SHIP as I mentioned earlier, such as FSIN, and some of the Métis organizations that are out there.

But through the options of acquisition, the options of perhaps purchasing or developing rental units, between new builds where you're developing brand new houses, and the sustainability, it's very difficult for us to put a price tag on what we're able to . . . I shouldn't say price tag, but number of units as to what our objective is in terms of a target. I would point out that it is very, very important that we are going to try and maximize these dollars as best we can. And there's some very good ideas out there, some very profound ideas that certainly we are sharing with people and people are sharing with us.

So the trick here is to talk about partnership. It is to talk about engagement. It is about talking about advice in the preliminary stages. And then once we begin to determine how best to use this money and to maximize the dollars available, and then of course to bring that forward to cabinet as soon as possible so we're able to move quickly. And I would point out that, again to the people of Saskatchewan and folks that might be listening, it'll be very difficult for us to come up with a figure because that has to go, we still have to take this forward to cabinet.

But based on some ideas and some discussion — we have acquisition, rentals, new builds, and sustainability — all these issues will be addressed. And we've done some of that work, but more work needs to be done. And the moment we have that information, certainly sharing it with the public and sharing it with the Assembly and with the opposition, is something that we intend to do.

Mr. Merriman: — We, you know, we have the need in the marketplace. The need has been there for quite a while. So not having a plan in place, should the money come or even having to do it from provincial coffers, I don't believe is an excuse that we don't have a plan.

We have 30,000 units. We must know the average cost per unit is X. If X is \$40,000, does that mean that we can build, you know, whatever it works out to — 1,200 units. I mean, that's the question that I'm asking. I don't think it's that difficult a question. What is our goal to put a number of units in the field?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much for the question. I would point out that we do indeed have a plan. It's not as if we were approaching the program or the project willy-nilly. We know that some of the costs are for new builds. We have an idea what the costs are for rental. We have an idea what the costs are for acquisitions. It's just the sustainability, the partnership, some of the unknown variables that are out there that we want to use the current opportunity with these trusts over the next three years. That's the time frame the trusts are active. And if we are able to again maximize that opportunity, then we want to be able to investigate that opportunity so we can use this money to complement our current plan.

There is a very aggressive plan in place right now. We have had a number of very solid initiatives within this department and certainly with Sask Housing. If anything, Sask Housing

certainly has been a big part of the solution to what ails Saskatchewan when it comes to our social agenda — everything from issues such as the remote housing program, some of the new projects that we built for affordable housing. It is a fairly comprehensive plan and if I had three or four hours I'd be able to explain that plan again as to what exactly we're trying to do on many of these fronts.

As the Minister Responsible for Sask Housing, I'm quite proud of the work and the planning that certainly the president and his team have put together and we've certainly made that well-known. I would again point out that we want to use the 50 million to complement our plan as best we can. And again you're right; we do have some information. We know what some of the acquisition cost range would be. We know what some new builds would be. But we want to make sure that we hold that information to the best of our ability to the right time so we attract good partnerships and some good thought and advice from our partners out there, and we then approach the cabinet with a CDI to unveil our plan.

But there is a larger plan out there. We're just trying to use these dollars to complement the good work that's being done out there with Sask Housing.

Mr. Merriman: — Well sorry, Minister. You were the one that in the beginning had said that we just got the money and we didn't have a plan and we were meeting with Aboriginal organizations to develop a plan.

You also said in your comments just there something that triggered to me, is that over the next three years . . . and that cabinet is making a decision. Does that mean that this project is a three-year project on implementation and that cabinet will decide how much money is spent in each year of these three years? Is that what I'm hearing?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Well let me clarify in terms of the actual statement that I did make. If I confused you, well then it's my fault. But as I pointed out at the outset, we have no preconceived notion as to how we want to spend this money. We have some good ideas. We do have a plan. It's a good plan, as I mentioned a couple seconds ago. But in terms of us determining how best to use this money, we want to consult with our very valuable partners that are out there as to what they think we can do to complement what Sask Housing is doing overall and to try and meet some of their needs as well.

So we have a plan, we have some new money — this \$50 million trust. We're going to ask advice of our partners as to what they think is the best use of this money and that will maximize some of the net effect of this new money to further add to our master plan, so to speak.

So yes, there is a plan. But no, we haven't had any decisions on the 50 million. We have some good ideas to share once those ideas are written and put down to . . . pen to paper and put forward to cabinet through a CDI. Then we'll unveil the plan and share the information as to where the \$50 million is going and how that complements the overall HomeFirst strategy that Sask Housing has. So it gives us another layer of opportunity to really build on what Saskatchewan Housing has been doing over the last number of years.

Mr. Merriman: — You had said . . . And the one part of the question, Mr. Minister, you didn't answer, was over three years. Does that mean that this is an implementation strategy over the next three years, as decided by cabinet, as to the amounts in each of the three years?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Yes. I want to clarify. Yes, it is a three-year deal. We can move as fast as the industry and the partnership allows us to move and it is a three-year trust and is quite clear that the money has to be used within three years. And that's effective immediately and that's why I think it's important to note that we do have the money in our hands and we want to move as quickly as we can. And three years is not a long time. As you know, industry is a key player to be able to, you know, have to have the capacity to respond. If there's new builds we'll have to prepare for that as well.

So I think our intention is to move as quickly as we can, in the meantime being cognizant of the fact that we have partners that are out there and industry as well needs to allow us to move as fast as we can so they need to be engaged as well. So it is a comprehensive strategy and we do have to respect the three-year time frame.

Mr. Merriman: — Well as we know, the cost of housing is rising and we would hope that that would . . . we would put as much into the first year as possible. If this is in a trust for three years, is this a trust that will bear interest to this project?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Certainly from the perspective of Sask Housing, if the dollars are transferred to Sask Housing the monies are placed within a trust with Sask Housing, then that will be earning some interest. The exact estimate, perhaps the president would like to take a stab at the estimate, but since I don't have that information, I can't share it with you.

Mr. Merriman: — No, the question wasn't the amount. The question was, would those funds create interest for the addition of this program and not for other programs? That was my question.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Again I would point out — and I want to underline if — if it's transferred to Sask Housing and we are able to place it in a trust and there's any interest earned, it would be used for sustainability and for the actual program itself.

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you. Well I certainly have a major concern on the sustainability portion of it, as we have 30,000 units now. And what would you estimate that the number of those units in those 30,000 today would need upgrades, changes, code changes to bring them up to market level?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — We would point out that the portfolio per se is in relatively good shape. And again without backing myself into a corner there, we can be safe to basically estimate that about, as the president pointed out, about 25 per cent could be used for enhancement to the current portfolio in a wide variety of options.

Obviously there are some units, as an example use Sasknative Rentals, they've certainly identified that they have certain needs and they've let us know that they have certain needs and some

of that talks about assisting some of their current portfolio. Again we haven't made any determination nor have we made any commitment as to what those dollars might be.

But again it's a fair guesstimate that based on our assessment of the current stock and the condition of our housing stock, that we can probably guesstimate — and again I hope you don't hold me to this — but about 25 per cent of the new monies could be used for improvement to the current stock.

Mr. Merriman: — I don't have an issue with that at all, Mr. Minister. I think that's a necessity. One of the problems I had is when I first heard . . . [inaudible] . . . it was for new housing. It wasn't for . . . I think that was even a question I asked: was it for repairing? — and probably didn't articulate it properly — or bringing them up to a standard? And at the beginning of the conversation my understanding was that that wasn't the way the monies could be used. But now . . . And I don't have an issue with this being 25 per cent going into this, because it's needed. I'm not arguing. I'm just trying to understand, in order to create sustainability in the existing file that we have of 30,000, you know, 25 per cent may be light to bring them up to a point where they can get another, whatever, three to five years of wear and tear before they have to be refurbished again.

Mr. Jones: — Just to respond to that. Yes, one of the things that is allowed under the trust is that capital improvements . . . there's nothing in the principles that would prohibit the province from undertaking capital improvement to existing product. And relative to, you know, a percentage or an estimation as to what capital improvement is needed at any given time, relative to the sustainability of the existing housing stock on a marketplace basis, you can anticipate at any given time that you would have . . . 25 per cent would be in need of some form of capital improvement, whether that's within the public housing stock or outside of the public housing stock. And so capital improvements is something that's ongoing and it's something that would have to be considered.

Mr. Merriman: — In some of the meetings I've had with some of the groups that we call partners, you know, their major concern is the ability to get funding to do what they would call normal maintenance process: railing broken, whatever; toilet bowl, whatever these things are. And the major concern was that with this funding or any funding given to your portfolio, that we be able to sustain all of these homes to a level that is livable.

And you know and I know — we've been in some of these homes — that's questionable; that they need to be brought up to a standard. And that's why I'm asking the question. And the 25 per cent, I don't know if that's an acceptable number or not acceptable number, because I don't know the magnitude of the issue. But it would seem to me that we need to get what we have up before we start building new. I mean it just, I think it's just a fool's errand to build more until we repair what we have people living in today. And again I can only speak to Saskatoon, but I would assume it's a pretty constant theme.

Mr. Jones: — Well we would certainly agree with your observation. And one of the elements of the HomeFirst strategy that was put out a couple of years ago, one of the key cornerstones to that strategy is the sustainability of the existing

portfolio. It's a priority. We have to ensure that the existing portfolio is maintained to the best of our abilities and sustaining that existing portfolio is a potential option available.

When you look at it from a property management perspective, any investment into property will alleviate the overall pressure on that property in terms of if you make capital improvements, that means there's maybe more then rent revenue available for operating and maintenance. So regardless of the particular funding, where it goes into a particular project, it would enhance the sustainability.

Mr. Merriman: — I would agree with that and especially when, you know, for most of these people such a large portion of their disposable income is going to rent. Is there any money available in this program for disabled persons?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — What I would point out is that that's a very good question because obviously it is a target group for our HomeFirst strategy. And being the fact that we are . . . As the Minister Responsible for Disability Issues in Saskatchewan, it's a good mix having Community Resources and Housing and Disability Issues all housed in one portfolio. And certainly it is our endeavour to try and use the wisdom of our professional staff to design a program that incorporates all of Saskatchewan's needs.

So the answer clearly is yes, the disabled community is active and certainly is being considered as part of the dollars because it is under our HomeFirst strategy. And I think that we could certainly point out that consultations and ideas are being received. And again, as soon as we determine how best to use this to maximize benefits to all people, including the disabled community, we'll certainly announce that as the time approaches.

Mr. Merriman: — The one specific that I'd like to ask a couple of questions on is Valley View Centre in Moose Jaw. Is there plans for a portion of this money to go to that facility to allow it to remain open, to enhance itself?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Yes, what is very, very clear in the agreement is that — as stated in my opening comment — is that funding is not intended to replace provincial investments in affordable housing. So we've got to be very, very careful that we follow the conditions to the letter in terms of what the money is to be spent on. So we want to make sure and be very careful and to be very clear that we meet the mandate of the intended dollars. And if we don't, then of course we would be not following the agreement and therefore would not be doing Saskatchewan a great service.

In reference to Valley View, our intention — as I've said time and time again — we're not planning on shutting down Valley View. And just to make sure that people out there understand that these dollars that we're getting talk about housing and so on and so forth, they're specific in terms of how we're able to spend it. And certainly the feds could construe any money that we spend on Valley View, that these new dollars, if we spend it on Valley View, they could certainly interpret that as spending this money on operational funding or to replace provincial investment in affordable housing. And since they don't allow us to do this, Valley View would not be considered.

Mr. Merriman: — Well we're contradicting ourselves, because we said for capital. And if there's capital requirements for the facility, it can be done because we just said that we're going to spend 25 per cent of that on our stable of 30,000 units, which is provincial run. Is that not true?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Valley View is not considered part of the 30,000 units that we spoke of.

Mr. Merriman: — Is any of this funding going to other projects for housing such as foster families or Oyate?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Just to be clear, on the Oyate question the answer is no. None of this funding is going to Oyate.

Now on the issue of foster families, in terms of supporting foster families, as I've indicated time and time again, foster families need to be appreciated more. And perhaps, based on their income, perhaps some foster families may be benefactors in some capacity, whether it's through a First Nations housing trust or a Métis trust. Perhaps there may be some connect there. But in terms of Oyate the answer is no.

And on foster families on a case-by-case basis, there may be some foster families that may be eligible for supports, and of course as a minister I'd want to encourage that and encourage a lot of the foster families to look at this. So if they do and are eligible and they do benefit from it, great.

Mr. Merriman: — I certainly don't have an issue with that, Mr. Minister. The question is, is to the plan and where you're going with the plan. And you hadn't mentioned foster families in any of your preamble or our discussion, so I wanted to bring it forward to make sure that this is definitely a group that we need to take into consideration. And they, like the other groups, should be at the forefront of discussion and there with what they require to do the critical job that they do in our community.

Madam Chairman, I don't have any other question. I'm going to turn it over to my colleague for a few brief questions. Thank you, and thank you to the people who came down. And Mr. Jones, Mr. Fisher, thank you very much for your responses.

The Chair: — Mr. Elhard.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Madam Chair. Good afternoon, Mr. Minister. You have left me a little confused and I'd like to get the confusion sorted out here. You've referred frequently to having a plan, and yet you indicated that you had no preconceived notions as to how to spend the money that had come from the federal government. So I guess what I'd like to know, for the record, what is the plan? And is the plan the HomeFirst strategy? And, if so, can you delineate that strategy and any other component parts?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Okay. Just to try our best to avoid further confusing you, I'll just maybe try and explain as briefly and as simple as I can. First of all if you were to . . . We spoke of HomeFirst, and if you look at HomeFirst, it's an umbrella plan. It's a five-year plan which was incorporated in 2004 to 2008. And HomeFirst has a number of components to it. And we're going to be spending over that period of five years \$200 million. So HomeFirst strategy is there. It's kind of an umbrella

agreement.

Now we're in 2006. This money comes along, this income trust money of 50 million comes along. So we're going to use that income trust money to complement what we're doing on HomeFirst. And again, there may be some rental units being built. There may be some new bills being built. There may be some co-operative housing being built. There's all kinds of these different options that we're looking at for HomeFirst.

So just to very quickly clarify, it's a five-year HomeFirst strategy started in 2004 and in 2008. It's a \$200 million agreement that we put in place. And here we are in 2006 — almost halfway there — it is new \$50 million. We're using that money to complement what we're doing in HomeFirst. So you can see a further enhancement.

Obviously it's very crucial and valuable that the housing trusts that we're trying to incorporate into our HomeFirst fits the criteria that we're developing, so that helps. It is very, very helpful. So that being said again it's... HomeFirst is the master plan and this new money is complementing the master plan.

Mr. Elhard: — So is it your expectation, Mr. Minister, that this additional money will accelerate the plan or just broaden it?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — I think it will do both. Obviously a three-year time frame doesn't give us a lot of time. We're trying to move as quickly as we can because obviously as you would know — and many others would know — that it's important to try and get housing needs met ASAP [as soon as possible]. So I would think that the money that we've... were successful in getting from the federal government, I would say would not only broaden but hasten some of the efforts we have out there to get housing needs finally met.

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Minister, we talked earlier about existing programs being in place, a variety of different organizations and community groups, and so forth, playing a role in the effort to meet the social housing needs of our province. And I'm wondering if you can identify some of the CBOs [community-based organizations] that provide the most effective use of public dollars.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Well I'm going to get the... both my deputy and the president of Sask Housing to elaborate after I'm done with a few comments. What I think is really, really important — and I'll use this money that I'm talking about, the 50.6 million as an example — the money's earmarked for off-reserve housing and FSIN is aware of the money we're getting and they are now looking at... So here we are sitting with FSIN and, as I had the breakdown here for you just a while ago, if FSIN is getting X amount of money and it's for off-reserve housing... And say for argument's sake it's 13.1 million.

So this new money we would approach FSIN and say, look, we have \$13.1 million over three years to spend on a housing strategy for off-reserve — not on-reserve, for off-reserve. We would like you to use that money and work with us as partners. Because even though it's given to the province to spend — because we are responsible for it so we have to make sure we're integrally involved — that we want to reach out to you and start

talking about ideas and how we could maximize that money. Ideas on how we could help you with your current stock, ideas on how we could develop a housing management plan that FSIN may have.

The whole theory behind helping them develop capacity to manage their housing stock, to develop new housing stock, to maintain their current housing stock, is that as we lessen the pressure off-reserve I think somehow that will lend itself to support some of the efforts that the First Nations have for on-reserve needs. So really to me, I think the value that we look at when you talk about CBOs and the success that they've had, we can certainly talk about the examples of the past.

But some of the new examples that I see happening is to really mimic the success of the former CBOs. And people need to know that we're not just dealing with FSIN of course but they are basically the political body. They're aware the money's coming and they have some ideas. And one would be foolish not to listen to advice. You don't have to use all the advice you get but it's important to listen to it.

And in terms of your question on the history of CBOs, what are some of the successful models, I'm going to ask Darrell to elaborate. So, Darrell.

Mr. Jones: — Well we've certainly had some very good experience over the last few years — well historically as well, as you can appreciate with the number of CBOs that we have managing that 11,000 unit portfolio. We have a substantial partnership, I think, somewhere in the neighbourhood of 450 different non-profit organizations and co-operatives that we work with regularly.

But one of... What I can give to you is some examples of some CBOs we've been working with in the delivery of the centenary affordable housing funding. So the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association] in Saskatoon, we've undertaken an initiative with them; YWCA in Regina; Central Urban Métis Federation Inc., CUMFI as it's referred to in Saskatoon; Quint Development Corporation in Saskatoon; River Bank Development Corporation in Prince Albert; South Saskatchewan Independent Living Centre here in Regina; the Dene Empowerment Centre, I believe it's in La Loche; NORTEP [northern teacher education program] out of La Ronge; Transcona Park Housing Association here in Regina; P.A. Community Housing in Prince Albert obviously. The list goes on and on here. We've had numerous, numerous relationships established. Bethany Manor, through the Saskatoon Mennonite Care Services in Saskatoon. I don't know if you want me to keep going or not.

Mr. Elhard: — I don't think that's necessary. I think you've made the point that you have a substantial number of organizations involved with housing provisions in the province. But with 450 different ones, does that not complicate the housing issue more extensively than possibly necessary?

I guess where I'm come from is, I think my colleague asked questions about the cost per house, if you've got figures related to, you know, the cost per housing unit. And we didn't get a firm number there.

But given the extent of the issue, given the demand, given the need, and given the limited resources it would seem to me that our first response ought to be, how do we meet this demand in the most effective way possible? And how do we get more units built quicker so we can meet some of this need? And it seems to me that if that isn't our first consideration, then we're probably missing the mark to some extent.

And, I guess where I'm going with this questions is, is the quick provision of quality housing to meet the need the first criteria? Or are there other considerations that come into play that kind of bog this process down a little bit and waylay our success?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Well I'd point out that what's really important is that — that's exactly my earlier statement — is that we don't want anything to bog this down. We want to get ready and start firing on all cylinders as soon as we're able to do so.

As the minister, it's imperative that we respond as quickly as we can because the housing needs are now. They're not two years from now; they're now. And so I think that's one of the steady messages that I have for the officials is that as minister I want to see action, and I want to see action fast. And so I think that's a pretty straightforward response to your question.

And absolutely, when you say we need to try and maximize the opportunity, that's exactly what I am saying. And by maximizing the opportunity, what we don't want to do is say, okay here's what we want to spend in new bills, here's what we want to spend in acquisitions, here is what we want to do with, you know, some of the renovations of some of the units.

We can give you those figures you know, but they won't do anything unless we determine with our partners how best to maximize this money, so the figures might be misleading. The whole intent as I indicated, we have a HomeFirst strategy; we want to get moving on this thing, so those housing needs are met right away. And how best to maximize that money is to engage a partnership and see what they think to make it the most effective use of any kind of money to get housing needs met. And that's what we intend to do, but we don't have six or seven months. We have a lot less time frame than that to get things moving.

So Darrell can give you some very rough estimates as to what the costs in each of the categories you gave. But those figures, again, may not be useful unless we determine exactly how many units are going to be new, how much are acquisitions, how many will be renovated and so on and so forth. That's where the rubber hits the road in terms of our overall strategy. But if you want those figures, we can give them to you.

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Minister, I don't think it's necessary to have the figures, but let me just summarize my concern here. I am surprised to find out that there's upwards of 450 different groups and organizations that are interested in housing issues in the province. In view of the size of the problem, in view of the size of the challenge and the need to move quickly, I'm wondering if, given the experience of the department, if they can't identify three or four or half a dozen or even a dozen of these CBOs and organizations and other entities that have really been dynamic when it came to meeting the obligations and expectations that were placed on them to provide housing. If

you spread \$50 million over 450 organizations, there's a likelihood that a big part of that money is going to be lost in administration. Even in community-based organizations, they've got administrative costs associated with them.

That's why I'm wondering if you can identify, as a minister, as a department, which of those 450 groups are the best at delivering finished housing units in quick time, in good quality, and availability for the people who desperately need the housing.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — We certainly concur with the fact that obviously if you have 450 groups that you're seeking advice from, it's going to be an often confusing task, and that's not what we want to do. As I mentioned, as the minister, I want to see us move very quickly on this particular file and get the housing needs met ASAP. So we should clarify that of the 450 groups that you referenced, the vast majority of them are not involved with delivery. They're basically involved with management of some of the units. So I need to clarify that and eliminate that particular group of people from the consultation phase.

Obviously there are target areas. We will be doing some calls for proposals from various groups. And I think governments like to mimic success. There's certain groups out there that are actually delivering and are very effective at that, then obviously we need to consult with them as well.

So just to clarify, the 450 groups that you alluded to, the answer is no, we're not going to all of them. The vast majority of them are just primarily property management organizations. The ones that have a good success rate, we'd like to get some advice from. The target areas, the call for proposals — those are the methods we would use to seek that consultation and that advice.

And again as I mentioned to you, speed is of essence in this particular effort. What I don't want this to become is a cumbersome, advice-seeking process. In the meantime there's housing units that need building and housing units that need repairs. We need to move fast. And I've emphasized that time and time again, and that's the intent.

And again the \$50.6 million is certainly, it certainly be very helpful. It complements our \$200 million HomeFirst strategy. And in all the work that we've done, seeking advice and getting consultation is important, but sooner or later we have to provide leadership, and that's exactly what Sask Housing and this minister intends to do on this file.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. We'll be watching with some interest the success of the program and the housing numbers as we go forward. I think it's important, as I indicated, that we have some significant success given the extra shot in the arm that this \$50 million will provide. Thank you for your time and attention.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much for your questions.

The Chair: — Seeing no further questions, and thank you to the minister and his officials, am I ready to vote off this supplementary estimate?

On page 12 of our book, Community Resources, vote 36, Housing (CR12) \$49,953,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Then could I have a member move that:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2007, the following sums for Community Resources, \$49,953,000?

Mr. Borgerson: — I will so move.

The Chair: — Mr. Borgerson, thank you. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Agreed. Thank you. That's carried.

[Vote 36 agreed to.]

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — November
Advanced Education and Employment
Vote 37**

The Chair: — The next item up on agenda is the supplementary estimates for Advanced Education and Employment, vote 37, on page 11, when you're ready.

Okay. Student support programs (AE03), 2,474,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Post-secondary education (AE02), 57,978,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Training programs (AE05), 9,973,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Career and employment services (AE04), 1,045,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Could I have a member move that:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2007, the following sums for Advanced Education and Employment, 71,470,000?

The Chair: — Mr. Borgerson.

Mr. Borgerson: — I will gladly make that motion.

The Chair: — Thank you. And all in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Agreed. That's carried.

[Vote 37 agreed to.]

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — November
Culture, Youth and Recreation
Vote 27**

The Chair: — The next item up then is Culture, Youth and Recreation, which is on page 13, vote 27. Central management services (CY01), 1,500,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Culture (CY03), 84,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Community Initiatives Fund (CY06), 126,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Building communities (CY11), 20,000,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Heritage (CY07), 400,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Could I have a member move:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2007, the following sums for Culture, Youth and Recreation, 22,110,000?

Mr. Prebble: — I will move that.

The Chair: — Mr. Prebble, thank you. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[Vote 27 agreed to.]

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — November
Health
Vote 32**

The Chair: — The next one is Health which is on page 15, vote 32. Central management and services (HE01), 400,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Provincial health services (HE04), 4,000,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Regional health services (HE03), 15,000,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Medical services and medical education programs (HE06), 9,000,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Drug plan and extended benefits (HE08), 2,000,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Can I have a mover then:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2007, the following sums for Health, 30,400,000?

Is that . . . a mover?

Mr. Borgerson: — I will so move.

The Chair: — Thank you. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That's carried.

[Vote 32 agreed to.]

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — November
Learning
Vote 5**

The Chair: — The next one is Learning which is on page 17, vote 5. Pre-K to 12 Education (LR03), 22,230,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — A member move please that:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2007, the following sums for Learning, 22,230,000.

Mr. Prebble: — I will so move.

The Chair: — Mr. Prebble. Thank you. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That's carried.

[Vote 5 agreed to.]

The Chair: — Did I get them all? Everyone has a copy of the

seventh report of the Standing Committee on Human Services then in front of them. It looks like this. We need to have a member move:

That the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Human Services be adopted and presented to the Assembly on December 5, 2006.

Mr. Prebble: — I will move that motion, please.

The Chair: — Mr. Prebble. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That's carried. This concludes the agenda business of this committee. We will now stand adjourned.

Mr. Elhard: — I so move.

[The committee adjourned at 17:23.]