



# **STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

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## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

Mr. Glen Hart, Chair  
Last Mountain-Touchwood

Ms. Judy Junor, Deputy Chair  
Saskatoon Eastview

Mr. Denis Allchurch  
Rosthern-Shellbrook

Mr. Cam Broten  
Saskatoon Massey Place

Ms. Doreen Eagles  
Estevan

Mr. Serge LeClerc  
Saskatoon Northwest

Mr. Greg Ottenbreit  
Yorkton

[The committee met at 19:00.]

**The Chair:** — Good evening, committee members. I'll call the committee to order. We have a fairly busy evening this evening, committee members. We will be reviewing the supplementary estimates for the Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing; the Ministry of Advanced Education, Labour and Employment; also supplementary estimates for the ministries of Social Services and the Ministry of Health.

Before I call upon the minister to introduce his officials, I would like to notify the committee that we have one substitution. Mr. Yates is substituting for Ms. Junor. With that, we have Minister Hickie and his officials before us this evening.

And for the benefit of committee members, but mostly for those people viewing the proceedings tonight, what we are doing here this evening is we are reviewing the supplementary spending estimates of the various ministries. The ministers and their officials appear before the committee as witnesses. The committee then will deliberate, and at a later, vote on the supplementary estimates.

Also I would just like to remind committee members that all the ministers and their officials are prepared to answer questions on the supplementary spending. It's been the normal practice that we try to confine as much as possible our questions and comments with regards to the supplementary spending estimates. The minister and his officials are prepared for that area. They may not have the appropriate officials to deal with a whole range of questions. So I'd ask the committee members for their co-operation.

And with that, I will call upon Minister Hickie to introduce his officials and we will get the evening under way.

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

**Subvotes (CP01), (CP04), (CP07), (CP06), (CP10), and (CP09)**

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well it's a pleasure again to be here in front of the committee, the second of three times I understand. We're going to meet for about an hour. So with me again to my left is my new deputy minister, Mr. Al Hilton. To my right is Mae Boa, the acting assistant deputy minister in corporate services. Next to Mae is Mr. Bob Kary, the executive director of young offender programs, operations. To the rear back here we have Tammy Kirkland, executive director of adult corrections, Murray Sawatsky, executive director of policing services, and Tom Young, way in the very back there, executive director of protection and emergency services. And I also have my chief of staff, Mr. Rob Nicolay, with me as well tonight.

So I guess to start off with, I understand from Mr. Yates that we are going to be looking at young offenders. And preamble I'll talk about is, what are we spending, why are we asking for

1.478 million? Well the increase over budget is due to a \$383,000 increase for community-based organizations related to government-wide increases of 2.3 per cent effective April 1, 2008 and a 7 per cent effective October 1, 2008; and three months transitional costs for CBO [community-based organization] reductions in the 2008-2009 budget process.

We have 620,000 required for mandatory salary top-up, approved nurses' salary supplements, and mandatory training; \$50,000 is required for increased costs related to incident management and facilities; and 425,000 is required for estimated costs related to outstanding legal actions.

If you want the breakdown for the CBOs we are going to have for young offenders, 113,000 is 2.3 per cent effective April 1; 180,000 is a 7 per cent government-wide increase to CBOs effective October 1; and we have a 90,000 three-month transition funding to CBOs whose programs were eliminated in the 2008-2009 budget process.

And in so much, that's the reason we're going to look at supplementary estimates for young offenders. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — I recognize Mr. Yates.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. I just want to follow up with your last comments about the 2.3 per cent represents 113,000 and 7 per cent represents 180,000.

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Yes.

**Mr. Yates:** — Unless math changed since I was much . . .

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — First I'll go through the dates again. The 2.3 per cent government-wide increases to CBOs is effective April 1 — that's 113,000. The 180,000 is a 7 per cent government-wide increase to CBOs effective October 1, 2008.

**Mr. Yates:** — All right. Thank you very much. That clears that up, Mr. Chair.

You indicated that a portion of the costs were going for nurse salary top-ups. Could you tell me what process you use to top up the salaries and to what level you top them up to?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Okay. The answer to that is that it was based on a recommendation from the Public Service Commission to keep our nurses' salaries at par with the SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses] nurses in the province.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. How many nurses are currently employed in young offenders facilities in the province?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Most of them are permanent part-time so we want to make sure we get back to you with the right number on that one.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. Next I'd like to ask some questions regarding some of the costs. I'd like — if you would share with us, Mr. Minister, or your officials — the current number of youth that we have currently in custody in each of

the facilities. And we wouldn't mind a breakdown with remand, sentenced, and those that would be open custody.

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — I'll have my official, Bob Kary, answer that question for you.

**Mr. Kary:** — Thank you. If you're looking for each of the numbers, year to date — and that's the number I have before me is the year-to-date average daily count for each sort of sector of custody that we do — we have 47 open custody males, 10 open custody females, 72 sentenced, secure custody males, 10 secure custody females, 82 remand males, and 16 remand females.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. Is there an increase in remands, as we've seen in the adult system, a corresponding increase in the youth system as well?

**Mr. Kary:** — Yes, there is an increase in remand. If we look at the number in 2004-05, it was 70, an average annual daily count of 72, and the year-to-date average annual daily count is 96. So that doesn't seem like a really large increase, but proportionately it is quite large. It moves from 12 per cent to 42 per cent because of the reduced custody counts.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. Are there particular areas of the province where the increase would seem to be greater than others?

**Mr. Kary:** — Not with respect to any one type of custody — whether it's remand, open, or secure . The trends really are pretty much across the province. Certainly some parts of the province have more young people coming to us.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Are the current facilities then adequate to deal with the projections moving forward?

**Mr. Kary:** — Presently they are adequate. If counts continue to increase by 4 per cent annually as they have in the past couple of years, we will need to look at an additional unit in about a year or so.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. Where would that unit optimally be placed?

**Mr. Kary:** — We have a strategic capital plan that is contained in the budget. So it'd be difficult to discuss that here.

**Mr. Yates:** — So we can expect to see, in the spring, some indication where the new infrastructure would be required. That's fine. We'll wait till spring to . . .

All right. Have there been any increases to staffing requirements as a result of the increased count?

**Mr. Kary:** — There has been some increase in staffing requirements, not so much as a result of the increase in count because we have facilities that are capable of managing that count, but more so because of the changing profile of offenders, where we have a client that is higher risk to offend and is more likely to have a history of violent offending.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. Has that resulted in any permanent full-time employment then or is that additional part-time utilization in those facilities?

**Mr. Kary:** — At this stage I think the larger increase is around more permanent part-times. But nonetheless, as we receive permanent full-times through the budget process, we do certainly staff those positions permanently.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Has it resulted — the increased numbers in remand — in any requirement for increased programming to deal with those offenders?

**Mr. Kary:** — The increased programming again has to do with the profile of the offender, whether they're on remand or sentenced. When we look at remand in young offenders facilities, what we do see is that many of the remanded young people are also sentenced offenders. So they have a dual status which really means that, as a sentenced offender, they will be receiving treatment programming.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. Is the trend as well with more remanded youth, is there a trend also to see an increased period of time in remand, longer periods of time?

**Mr. Kary:** — I can't answer that question specifically. Certainly the more serious charges right now warrant much longer periods of remand because of the additional time to process in court. There have been somewhat longer remands as well because the legislation that came to force in 2003 required more stages, more work in the court itself, meaning that there are generally more court appearances lengthening the remand, especially for more serious offenders.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. Do you have any statistical information or data as to how many of the youth today that are involved in these serious crimes and remanded have dependency or problems with alcohol and drugs?

**Mr. Kary:** — We have, in the recent past with offenders in custody, have taken a look at their profile. And about 85 per cent of that population have serious issues with addictions that affect them pretty much every day of their lives.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. With 85 per cent having serious issues with addictions, is there any plans to move forward with additional programming for addictions within the facilities?

**Mr. Kary:** — We currently, and over the past couple of years, have been increasing the amount of addictions programming for young offenders in facilities. This has occurred through working with and contracting with the regional health regions that are in the locations where custody facilities are located. And so essentially there we do have addictions services, and in several facilities specialized addiction services for young offenders.

[19:15]

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and Mr. Minister, for the answer. Do you routinely or would you regularly transfer inmates from facility to facility for specialized

programming?

**Mr. Kary:** — I guess we need to start by talking about we have four different cohorts of custody, and that is open, secure, male, and female. And of course those populations do not mix. In the sense of do we, would we want to transfer a young person, for example, from Kilburn Hall to Paul Dojack Youth Centre for treatment programming, that would not likely be the reason for that transfer. There may be reasons by virtue of that one facility may be nearly full or full, and we would have space in an additional facility to move that young person. But it wouldn't be specifically for treatment purposes.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. Would you move youth who, for reasons of family connections or family support, would you routinely move them from one facility to another?

**Mr. Kary:** — As much as possible we would. We try to keep young people in the nearest custody facility to where their family lives so that that contact and those relationships can be strengthened and maintained, for sure. Sometimes we need to, because of some capacity issue in one location, we may need to move young people. And then we may need to move them back again when space becomes available.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. If a family requests for reasons that a youth be transferred to another facility, how would they go about initiating that process?

**Mr. Kary:** — Families do that quite regularly and request young people to be moved. And they can do that either by contacting their community youth worker, which they do from time to time. They can contact the assigned custody worker, and if they have a special issue or a special reason, they might in fact contact the facility director. So there's various places in young offenders custody facility so that they can contact to have their questions answered or to make a request.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. If they make a request at the local facility or to the youth worker and it's denied, is there an avenue of appeal?

**Mr. Kary:** — Certainly. They can always contact the custody facility director.

**Mr. Yates:** — And if it's denied at that level, is there any place to . . .

**Mr. Kary:** — They can contact the director of custody facilities or the executive director.

**Mr. Yates:** — Okay. Thank you very much. Are there many instances where families are denied transfers when requested?

**Mr. Kary:** — I am not aware of the exact number of times that families are denied. I do know that there are times that young people are moved because of space issues at a particular location. And when a family makes a request, what we will do is we will attempt to move that young person back at the first possible opportunity that we can do that. Sometimes they may need to wait a while because the facility that they wish to be transferred is full and has a number of remand individuals who are going back and forth to court or may be of a high security

that need to remain in that facility.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. My next questions have to do with . . . You have stated that we don't, the system doesn't allow for mixing open and secure male and female offenders or youth. Is it within policy to house a remanded youth in an open custody facility?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — I'm going to let my deputy minister answer that question.

**Mr. Hilton:** — I understand it's a long-established policy of the Government of Saskatchewan not to allow remand inmates to be held in open custody. And I think I know where you're going with this. This has been brought to my attention that this indeed happened on one occasion. It was brought to my attention 20 minutes ago, and it raises a number of issues. And I'll just identify a few of them.

How was it allowed to happen? How can we prevent it from happening again? Perhaps more disturbing for this deputy minister is how it is that these kinds of internal emails and memos find themselves in the public realm. In my twenty-seven and a half years as an official that would strike me as being something that would represent a pretty significant challenge for a deputy, and it shouldn't be happening.

So I'll have a real interest in understanding how this particular incidence happened, how we can prevent it from happening again, and how this information seems to be getting out of the ministry. And if public servants are doing things that they shouldn't be doing, I'll be interested in finding out and then dealing with that.

And the other thing I'll be interested in in finding out once I read through the file, is whether or not there was any identifiable information in any of the correspondence because I, as a deputy minister, don't want to know the names of young offenders, and I don't want identifiable information even shared with me. And if I find out it's being shared inappropriately, I'll probably have something to say about all that too.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. So if such an incident occurred, what would be the procedures you'd undertake to find out why it occurred?

**Mr. Hilton:** — Well I'd begin by talking with my executive director, and he would probably then talk to the people who work for him. And we'd try to ascertain exactly what happened in this case and why it happened. And if it did happen, as it did in this particular case, it shouldn't have.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. As you, I'm sure, are aware that those types of issues raise concerns among staff and others, I would like to assure you that in nothing I've ever received from anybody would there ever have been a young offender's name or any of that type of stuff — it's always blacked out. There's never been any of the type of information that would identify an individual or anything ever included, and just so that may put your mind at some ease.

But there are always concerns when policies aren't followed and there's attempts made to deal with the issue or identify the

issue, and people feel it's not being dealt with. That's normally when information gets into the broader public realm. I just wanted to share that with you because I think there were attempts, or at least indications of attempts, to share that information through the proper channels. At least that's the indications I have.

**Mr. Hilton:** — Well, Mr. Chair . . .

**Mr. LeClerc:** — I've got a point of order.

**The Chair:** — Mr. LeClerc, would you . . .

**Mr. LeClerc:** — I'm not quite sure, Mr. Yates, that this is supplementary on where you're going and possible allegations and other things about young offenders. This is supplementary estimate in terms of, Mr. Chair, and I just, you know, what would you do if and whatever and I never received this — I think we're really off track here. And I don't think it's fair to the deputy minister's staff to kind of conduct what-if witch hunts for whatever reason. I feel that the questioning is somewhat inappropriate and off track.

**The Chair:** — Mr. Yates, would you like to respond?

**Mr. Yates:** — We have before us an estimate dealing with young offenders facilities, additional money going in. There's been a long-standing tradition here that you've been able to ask questions. If that's the type of new funding that's going in and involves those institutions, you're allowed to ask questions about those institutions. I simply pointed out some of that information to the deputy so he was aware that there was not anything being released with young offenders' names in it.

**The Chair:** — I would ask that members of the committee tie their questions into the estimates. I realize we are dealing with young offenders. Perhaps we could, as much as possible, stay away from hypothetical cases. And certainly it would be very inappropriate, although it hasn't been done, to raise specific instances with names and that sort of thing. I would just tread carefully in that area. Mr. Yates.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, in the new funding, the \$870,000 that's being provided for young offenders facilities, is any of that money ongoing base funding, funding that would be required year over year?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — The two items or dollar values that will be part of the base are the 383,000 for CBO increases and the 620,000 for the mandatory salary top-up for nurses.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. As you would be aware, we will see continual increases in nursing salaries over the next three years. Is that now going to be a mandatory, automatic top-up as that occurs or each time will it have to come back through the Public Service Commission?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — One second. On an annual basis the Public Service Commission will be reviewing that and will be advising that to this ministry if the salary top-up's required, yes.

**Mr. Yates:** — Okay. Thank you very much. Has there been any consideration to tying those salaries? With the difficulty I

would think that you would have in hiring nurses at a competitive disadvantage, has there been any thoughts of tying those salaries — when one goes up, the other goes up — to avoid what might be several months in lay time?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — As I thought, it's not a ministry initiative. It comes from the Public Service Commission, so that question will have to be asked of that particular minister at the time. They provide advice moving forward to ministers on that issue.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. So the salary supplements given to a particular group of people isn't initiated by the ministry?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — The recommendation comes forth from the Public Service Commission based on what's happening in the markets, so then that comes to the ministry and the ministry then provides a top-up, as I understand it.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I know I didn't ask this under corrections, I . . . [inaudible] . . . young offenders, but was the same process used in the adult facilities as well?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Yes. In the adult corrections system with nurses, yes, it's the same process as this and it becomes part of the annual appropriation moving forward then.

**Mr. Yates:** — Okay. Thank you. Currently of the 90-plus remanded youth, where in the province do we remand female?

[19:30]

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Young offender operations will answer that.

**Mr. Kary:** — We have remand units located in the Paul Dojack Youth Centre, the Kilburn Hall Youth Centre, and Orcadia Youth Centre.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. For youth coming from the Far North, where would they normally be remanded to?

**Mr. Kary:** — Are we speaking directly of female young offenders now?

**Mr. Yates:** — Yes.

**Mr. Kary:** — They may be remanded either in Kilburn Hall or they could be remanded in any one of these three centres.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you. So somebody from as far north as Buffalo Narrows or La Loche could actually be remanded in Regina?

**Mr. Kary:** — They're more likely to be firstly located at Kilburn Hall in Saskatoon, but that is yes, they might.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. Are youth who are remanded for fairly long periods of time offered the opportunity to continue their studies or in any way schooling while they're remanded?

**Mr. Kary:** — Yes. All young offenders regardless of status have opportunity to continue their schooling or be involved in programming that moves them into employment.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. For those who are remanded, is it the same or different opportunities than those sentenced?

**Mr. Kary:** — It is the same school structure and it's pretty much, it is the same opportunity. The piece that might be different is if young people are coming in for two to three days, there's not a lot of opportunity to connect with a home school and set up a, you know, studies that will actually continue their moving towards their particular grade level. So many remands, as you know, are very short-term and so that may have an impact on what programming they get in a short period of time.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. When an individual is remanded and may be sentenced and moved to another facility, are they able to continue their studies without interruption at the same levels if moved?

**Mr. Kary:** — We have schools in all secure young offenders facilities. And if young people are housed in open custody facilities, they attend community schools and we have teachers that will bridge them to move there into the community schools if they need a period of time of study in the facility. So the intention and the process is for the teachers to contact and determine where the young person is with their current course of studies to design a remedial course of studies so that they can stay on track with their grade level, or actually, a remedial course of studies oftentimes that they pick up grades and grade levels and subjects much more quickly than they do in the community because of the intensive schooling that they may receive in a custody facility. Custody schools, secure custody schools, operate 12 months of the year.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. What assistance is provided for transitioning youth from custody back into the community to assist with their studies?

**Mr. Kary:** — We have a working arrangement with school boards, many school boards across the province, to help young people transition back to the communities, to the schools in the communities from which they come. So it depends on the location in terms of the exact, sort of, transitional service they would receive. But they certainly are placed in schools that match their capacity, that match their school level, and the most appropriate classroom that is available in the community that they're returned.

And in the larger centres we have supports that stay in contact with not only the school, but may in fact provide mentoring services to help them develop more of healthy lifestyles as they are transitioning back to school. In any event, no matter where a young person is in the province, they have a community youth worker that continues to follow them, place them in school, monitor their school attendance, and attempt to keep them in the most appropriate school program.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. Would the same be for other programs youth might be involved in, alcohol and drug treatment programs and other resources that they may have

access within the facility?

**Mr. Kary:** — That is correct. It is very similar.

**Mr. Yates:** — Okay. Thank you very much. Currently in the youth facilities, how many of the managers are in acting positions and how many would be in full-time permanent positions?

**Mr. Kary:** — We're talking about in-custody facilities?

**Mr. Yates:** — In-custody facilities, yes.

**Mr. Kary:** — Okay. I don't have that information on my fingertips right now, but we can certainly get that to you.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. In those situations where there may be acting managers, is there plans to fill those positions on a permanent basis?

**Mr. Kary:** — Yes, there is. Where a position becomes vacant for whatever reason, we attempt to fill those positions with full-time permanent people as quickly as we can. There is, I recall, one instance in the province right now where a person is on leave and during the period that the custody director is on leave, we would have someone acting in his place until his return.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. In a facility like the Paul Dojack Youth Centre or the North Battleford youth facility — two of the larger facilities — how many out-of-scope or management employees would we have in those facilities?

**Mr. Kary:** — In the North Battleford Youth Centre there is currently two out-of-scope positions. In the Paul Dojack Youth Centre there is currently three out-of-scope positions.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. Would you know offhand how many out-of-scopes there would be at Kilburn Hall and Orcadia?

**Mr. Kary:** — There are currently two out-of-scope positions at Kilburn Hall and one out-of-scope position at Orcadia.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. Mr. Chair, I think I have just one more line of questioning regarding the youth facilities. It goes to the issue of recruiting. And in today's market are we having any difficulty recruiting employees to work in youth facilities?

**Mr. Kary:** — Yes, we are. It is somewhat sector related. The first place that it's difficult to keep a full contingent of staff is permanent part-time staff in custody facilities. The reason for that maybe is that it is possible today to get permanent full-time work in various locations, so it's harder to keep people who maybe aren't granted a full-time shift or a schedule of shifts. So people who are waiting to get called are harder to keep employed.

We also have more difficulties in some locations. In more northerly locations, it is more difficult to recruit staff. Community youth workers in the North such as Buffalo, La Ronge, Creighton — it is difficult to recruit and retain qualified

staff. So we do have a higher rate of turnover. We do manage to recruit, but our rate of turnover is high.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. What attempts are made to recruit Aboriginal, Métis staff in the facilities?

**Mr. Kary:** — Each one of our facilities has a committee that looks at recruitment and retention of different equity groups. We certainly do attempt to at least employ staff at a percentage that is within the population, and we would go much higher than that if we can. We often have concurrent postings. We will post for a particular equity group; as well if we can't find someone who is qualified in that equity group, then we will fill from the general population.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. Do you use the exact same staffing standards for permanent full-time jobs as you do for permanent part-time jobs?

**Mr. Kary:** — Each position that we have — level 5, level 8, level 9 — have a set of qualifications that are quite specific to that job, and we attempt to recruit to those qualifications in each of those positions.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. As it becomes more difficult, or if it continues to become more difficult to hire, will that have to be re-examined?

**Mr. Kary:** — We are currently working with the Public Service Commission and also to look at retention, recruitment and retention issues in various places because we are not the only ministry with recruitment and retention issues. So we are looking at ways of providing support to staff to come up to qualifications, ways of bringing staff in and training them to qualifications. And so I would say we have various kinds of initiatives that we are working on right now that will allow us to recruit qualified people, then to train people to become qualified and move from lower to higher positions, as well as to retain the qualified people that we have.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much.

Would you know offhand the percentage of those in custody, youth in custody, would there be of Aboriginal or Métis ancestry?

**Mr. Kary:** — The resident population, right?

**Mr. Yates:** — Approximately. I don't need . . .

**Mr. Kary:** — It's approximately 75 per cent.

**Mr. Yates:** — Is that staying relatively stable or the same over the last number of years?

**Mr. Kary:** — It has, yes.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much.

How many of those who are on any given day in custody would be from the Far North, from areas in which there no institutions? I mean approximately.

**Mr. Kary:** — I don't have that information in front of me right now. I can say that on a per capita basis the young people that come to custody out of the North is higher than the provincial average.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much.

When a young person is returned from custody to his home community in the North, are there the same level of supports provided from youth workers as we're able to provide in more southern areas of the province?

**Mr. Kary:** — Certainly we have the same level of assigned workers for the northern population as we do in the South. There are limitations in, specially, isolated fly-in communities with the frequency that we can get into those communities. So that is one limitation. The second limitation is that one of the initiatives that we have to support young people at a community level is to contract programs with community-based organizations as well as contract with individuals in communities, that are part of those communities, to provide supervision and support to young people.

In northern communities it is far more difficult. First of all, there are fewer community-based organizations; and secondly it's far more difficult to recruit and find appropriate persons, individuals to provide that supervision and support. We have an initiative right now that we have ongoing that we are trying to, that is intended to, recruit more of those individuals and to provide more of that support.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much.

If you could just briefly outline for me where we would have community youth workers in northern Saskatchewan. Which communities?

[19:45]

**Mr. Kary:** — The communities they are located in are Buffalo Narrows, La Ronge, Creighton, Prince Albert. And the isolated communities like Wollaston, Black Lake, Fond-du-Lac, are fly-in communities. And so there's no youth workers that live there, but they do fly into those communities. They go in every two weeks.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. In any of those communities, are there other government service providers that may be able to be of assistance?

**Mr. Kary:** — Yes, they are. It is different in each community, as you may know. Certainly most northern communities have, in addition to a municipality, they have a First Nations community. And there are often resources in the First Nations communities. They're busy, busy people.

Some northern communities have health region employees, and those employees certainly are our assistants. And as we said, some communities may in fact have a community-based organization, and that too would provide assistance if we can contract with those agencies.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. Are we looking, and do



we have, contracts with agencies like those and others?

**Mr. Kary:** — We don't have a lot of contracts in the North with community-based organizations. We have from time to time, when the agencies have the capacity and the willingness, we will contract with them. And we always attempt, through case management, to work in conjunction with the band workers and the health authority workers.

Many times, especially if the young people are going back to live on a First Nation, then of course we would be working with the health workers there, with the addictions workers there, because they are also service providers and they are also providing services to those young people. The same with the health regions in northern communities — they may be providing support, they may be providing addictions services, so it is important to work with those agencies.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. Mr. Chair, that would wrap up the questions I have for young offenders programs.

**The Chair:** — Good. Are there any other questions from committee members? I see no other members that have questions for the minister and his officials, so I would like to thank the minister and his officials for appearing before the committee this evening.

And we will stand recessed till 8 o'clock, and at which time we will have the Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour and his officials before us. So we'll have a recess till 8 o'clock. Thank you very much.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

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

**Subvotes (AE03), (AE02), (AE06), (AE04), and (AE08)**

**The Chair:** — I'll call the committee back to order. The next item on our agenda is the consideration of estimates for the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour, vote 37. We have with us Minister Norris and his officials. I'd like to welcome them and ask the minister to introduce his officials.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. What I'd like to do is reintroduce, for many of you, officials who have joined us tonight. As many of you will know, Wynne Young is here, our deputy minister; Reg Urbanowski is back in behind just on the other side; Rupen Pandya, both assistant deputy ministers; Karen Allen is here, executive director of our corporate services; Jan Kot, director of career and employment services. Giovanna Pirro is here as well, director of community partnerships and settlement; and Mr. Kirk Westgard is here, manager of Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program.

Mr. Chair, as I said last week, my ministry's expense forecast is projected to be 106.1 million over the amount originally identified in the '08-09 expense budget. This represents additional mid-term investments in higher education, workforce

training, research, and innovation — important areas to help move the province forward in areas to help meet our talent challenge. As well it provides important additional funding to our community-based organization partners that offer employment and immigration services. And I'm of course happy to take questions posed from members of the committee.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Minister. I recognize Ms. Atkinson.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you. Mr. Minister, welcome to your officials. I see that there's an additional \$73,000 for immigration. Can you outline in some detail what you anticipate this additional \$73,000 will be used to support?

[20:00]

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Happy to do that. This is a 7 per cent lift that has gone to 20 community-based organizations. And I'm happy to get you some additional information in details, but you may have some follow-up questions from there.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Can you indicate what this lift represents, the 7 per cent lift, what you anticipate these 20 community organizations are going to do with this additional revenue? And can you provide the committee with a list of those 20 organizations?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — To the last question first, if I'm not mistaken, Mr. Chair, during our last session, for the record I think I made it all the way through those community-based organizations that are receiving funds that are doing work for us on immigration. I'm happy to go through that again, and I'll come back on the first part of that question.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Okay. Thank you, Minister. So can you tell what the 7 per cent lift will be used for?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — A broad categorization would be relating to recruitment and retention, but it would expand to other areas of operation within those organizations. Again I'm happy to address questions that you may have, based on that categorization.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Okay. The 20 organizations, just to recap, it's the Filipino-Canadian Organization of Saskatoon; the German Canadian Concordia Club of Saskatoon; Global International Community Help Association; International Women of Saskatoon; Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise; Moose Jaw Multicultural Council; Prince Albert Multicultural Council; REDA [regional economic development authority], Saskatoon; the Regina Immigrant Women Centre; the Regina Open Door; Saskatchewan Abilities Council in Yorkton; Saskatchewan Association of the Immigrant Settlement and Integration Agencies; Saskatchewan Capacity of Internationally Trained Professionals; Saskatchewan Intercultural Association; Saskatoon Open Door; the Beth Jacob Synagogue; the Global Gathering Place; the Ukrainian Canadian Congress. And then . . .

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — On the Congress, it's the provincial council, Regina branch and Saskatoon branch.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — And then you go on to the Canadian Mental

Health . . . I don't think you're talking about the Canadian Mental Health Association are you, Minister?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Up until the last one relating to immigration, which relates to the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Saskatoon branch, there are other community-based organizations that are included in the lift. But it expands and extends out beyond the work that we're doing relating to immigration.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Can you provide the committee with a breakdown of how much in additional funding the organizations will receive in terms of this 7 per cent lift, which represents \$73,000?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Some of these contracts are still being finalized. And what I would propose, Mr. Chair, and to the members, is that as they are finalized, we can provide the list to the committee members. It wouldn't be appropriate . . . We're in the midst of some negotiations right now. And if that would suffice, then as those negotiations are concluded, we can ensure the committee members receive this through your good offices.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Okay, that's fine. Minister, can you indicate which organizations will be receiving funding for the first time this year?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Three stand out — READ Saskatoon, The Sask Abilities Council, and the Regina Immigrant Women Centre.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — So you're indicating that Regina Immigrant Women had never received any funding from the province in the past?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — This would be a renewal. I think '07-08 that organization didn't receive any, but prior to that they had received some. So it's a renewal.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — So in essence the two organizations that are receiving funding for the first time, I guess, would be, if I understand this correctly, READ Saskatoon and the Saskatchewan Abilities Council in Yorkton?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes, and then, as I say, there is this renewal piece.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you. Minister, the \$73,000 is going into which component? Is it settlement? Is it ESL [English as a second language]? Can you indicate? Or is it just generally \$73,000 to top up various components from the immigration branch spending?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — The easiest way to state this — it's 7 per cent on the specific contracts that we had with those organizations, and so there would be a range of activities covered depending on the organization.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — So is this under capacity building? Is it under settlement? Is it under ESL? Because there are various programs that . . .

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes, it is.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — They receive funding from. So is it 7 per cent of the entire ESL capacity building and settlement or . . .

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — If that's what the contracts . . . So some organizations are involved with more than one activity. Yes, the answer is yes.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — So it was 7 per cent lift on everything they do, except for the two organizations and I guess the three organizations that received new money for this year?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Essentially, yes.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Minister, when you finally get the contract signed — and I do note that we're well past midway through the year — is it possible for you to indicate what those organizations received in '07-08 relative to what they received in '08-09?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Sure.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Okay. Thank you. Can you indicate to the committee where we're at in terms of waiting times under the immigrant nominee program? When I say waiting times, the waiting time that it takes to have an application processed.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — I guess my question, Mr. Chair, is how this relates, may relate, to the estimates. And as long as . . .

**The Chair:** — Ms. Atkinson, can you tie this into the appropriate subvote (AE06)?

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Well I see that it's immigration (AE06), immigration, so there is \$73,000. It doesn't differentiate under what component of the immigration branch that this \$73,000 is being spent on, so I was curious to know what's happening with two waiting times under the nominee program. If the Minister doesn't want to answer it, I guess the minister doesn't answer it. When I was the minister I was asked this regularly, and I answered the question. But if you don't want to answer, I guess you don't.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Well it's a matter of asking the appropriateness. We've already addressed the question. Yes.

**The Chair:** — Ms. Atkinson's question, because we are discussing immigration, I believe it would be appropriate. She's certainly tied it into the appropriate subvote.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Sure. Yes, we'll just get Rupen Pandya to give us a hand.

The significance is all the money addressed, Mr. Chair, went to the settlement side and so that we've already helped to address that. But certainly why don't we walk through . . . The average processing times, all categories right now, 6.7 months.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Can you tell me what the waiting time is for the family class?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — The family class right now is just right around between 11 and 12 months.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — And the business class?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Business class, the entrepreneurs?

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Yes.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Is about 11 months.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — And the skilled worker class?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Here we're down between, roughly between four and five — four and a half to five and a half.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Okay. And the farm class?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Farm category. Yes, that one is about 3.5 to 4.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — I'm going from memory. Is there still a category for health workers?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Indeed.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — And what is that?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Over four months.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Pardon me.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — 4.5 months.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — 4.5 months. Okay. Are there any other classes that I've missed, Minister?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes, indeed. There are graduate international students.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Okay.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — About four months.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Okay.

[20:15]

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — The long-haul truck drivers just over three months. And we have a new category that we'll be starting here shortly on the surface side.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Okay, thank you very much, Minister. Those are all my questions for this evening. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — I recognize Mr. Broten.

**Mr. Broten:** — Hello, Mr. Minister. Thank you. I have some questions more on (AE02), specifically on the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, the 3.5 million. In your remarks the last time we met, you identified that the funding covers 76 disciplines or trades, and you identified electricians, plumbers, welders, and carpenters as the four main areas. Could you please give a bit more of a breakdown of how that 3.5 million is being split up among those four primary groups, please?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — It'll be a minute. We'll drill down into that. If you've got another question, we can come back to this one.

**Mr. Broten:** — Yes, we can move on to . . . We'll come back to that. Out of those four programs, those four areas, could you please identify . . . You mentioned earlier that a good portion of this funding is going to increase capacity for instructors to ensure that there are enough placements for people when they are in training. Could you please identify what the appropriate ratios are of student to instructor for the different programs?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Do you have a reference? When you say appropriate, would you have a reference that you have in mind? I mean obviously pedagogical practices vary right across the country. And I'm just wondering if you have a reference in mind when you begin to use the term appropriate.

**Mr. Broten:** — For training to occur as it ought to. I'm sure there are standards, and I'm sure part of those standards are ensuring that classes are not too large and that there's enough capacity for instructing.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — It really depends on the venues within which these activities are taking place. For example, we have three trailers, and so during the summer we had the opportunity to visit one on site. The appropriate number there, if I'm not mistaken, there's capacity within that trailer for about a dozen welders. So that would be an example where the venue in this case, a portable venue, sets very specifically what that capacity is.

As we went to various venues, whether relating to SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] campuses . . . went to all four, certainly saw variety of what those venues looked like. So I guess, is there another frame for your question rather than notions of appropriate because it's not simply a ratio of students to instructors. There are other variables that need to be taken into account. One obvious one would be venue.

**Mr. Broten:** — Okay, let's narrow it down to one trade, say plumbing and pipefitting. Is there, at a given venue, is there a specific ratio that the ministry . . . or specific ratio that is targeted that is deemed appropriate for instruction to occur for in that program?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes, there is not a specific ratio that exists within the ministry. That would be institution-specific, and again we take into consideration a range of variables. So I mean we can drill down and get that for you. Probably it would have to be class by class and venue by venue. And if that's something you're interested in, we can follow up.

**Mr. Broten:** — If some of that information could be provided, that would be helpful if it was just tabled later.

Do you have any information on the breakdown of the 3.5 million? The information you said you were going to on the first question . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Sure, I'm happy to highlight that 25 per cent will be committed to the P.A. [Prince Albert] campus.

Given the rollout, those dollars still will be allocated; not all them have been allocated to date. So it will be a rolling figure that we give you. And again we can provide that for you regarding carpentry, electrician, plumbers, and welding training.

**Mr. Broten:** — So 25 per cent of the 3.5 is going to P.A.?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — That's right, into the P.A. campus.

**Mr. Broten:** — Okay. And then you'll give the breakdown as you roll it for those four main areas?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Sure.

**Mr. Broten:** — So 25 to P.A. Where is the other 75 per cent going?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes, they will be distributed across the SIAST system.

**Mr. Broten:** — Any idea at this point which programs or which locations in particular? And how will that process of determining where the 75 per cent goes, how will that be determined, please?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes, the breakdown from here is, it's being negotiated based on need basis, so demand is an obvious component. Then from there, the space availability is another component. So we're . . . I mean we're happy to get that to you.

**Mr. Broten:** — Out of the various trades, the 76 programs, are there certain programs where recruiting instructors has been more of a challenge than other programs?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes, I mean the easy answer is right now the recruitment of instructors, it's challenging almost across the board. Sure, a hot economy, especially with plenty of demand on trades — yes, the answer is yes.

**Mr. Broten:** — So in looking at how the 75 per cent is split up, are all trades treated equally or is there a ranking system where certain trades might be getting a greater add-on in order to be competitive? Or are all trades and all instructors treated equally across the board?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — The allocation is going to, again it's going to be in large part determined between the apprenticeship commission, SIAST, and the institutional context. So I mean we can, again, we can get you that information. The campuses are going to help give that shape.

**Mr. Broten:** — Going back to the 25/75 split — 25 per cent going to P.A. and 75 going to the rest — how is it the Prince Albert amount is known now and the amounts for the other campuses aren't? Just curious why there would be, why you would know right now 25 per cent of the 3.5 is going to Prince Albert, but the others it's just yet to be determined.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — It was based on the capacity piece within Prince Albert that we were able to determine that quite quickly.

**Mr. Broten:** — The need for increased capacity in Prince Albert so . . .

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — And the capacity to be able to accommodate . . .

**Mr. Broten:** — Oh, where you were able to accommodate people right off the bat.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes.

**Mr. Broten:** — Okay. Out of the 3.5 million, how much of that is going towards regional colleges?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — We can get you that information as we rollout as well.

**Mr. Broten:** — Okay, so just to be clear, as we rollout you'll provide the breakdown of where the 3.5 is going to the various institutions within the SIAST system and within the regional college system?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes.

**Mr. Broten:** — Okay. Thank you. Time is almost up. One more — forgive me if you covered this in your previous visit. Looking on page 11 in the explanation for the supplementary estimates, the last sentence: “. . . and, a funding shortfall for the facility renovations for increased nurses training capacity and the expansion of trades skills training capacity.”

Which shortfall for renovations was that? At which facility, please?

[20:30]

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — The health care over here in Parkway.

**Mr. Broten:** — Okay. And that amount is coming out of which line? Is that (AE08)?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — It's actually coming out of (AE02).

**Mr. Broten:** — Oh that's the tag-on for the 100 . . .

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes.

**Mr. Broten:** — There's the 100 million for health sciences, and then the . . .

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes, that's where that tag-on is. Yes.

**Mr. Broten:** — Okay, thank you. And last question, to your understanding that's enough to cover the shortfall in renovations for that project?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes, they're in there now. We just did an announcement just last week for the psych nursing. Yes.

**Mr. Broten:** — I thank the minister and his officials for their time and their answers. And I look forward to the information on the rollout of 3.5. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Minister, and your officials. That completes our consideration of supplementary spending estimates for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

We'll take a short recess to facilitate the change of officials and ministers, and we will resume shortly.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

**General Revenue Fund  
Supplementary Estimates — November  
Social Services  
Vote 36**

**Subvotes (SS03), (SS06), and (SS04)**

**The Chair:** — I'll call the committee back to order. We will resume with our agenda. The next item on our agenda is consideration of supplementary estimates for the Ministry of Social Services subvotes (SS03), (SS06), and (SS04). We have with us the Minister of Social Services, Ms. Harpauer, and her officials. And I'd ask the minister at this time to introduce her officials. And if she has a brief opening statement, I'd ask her to do that at this time.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome to everybody in the committee. I would like to introduce my officials. To my left I have my deputy minister, Allan Hansen. To my right is my assistant deputy minister of policy, Cheryl Senecal. Behind me I have the assistant deputy minister of housing, Larry Chaykowski; the executive director of corporate services division, Don Allen; the associate executive director of the income assistance division, Gord Tweed; the executive director of community living division, Jeff Redekop; and the executive director of child and family services division, Andrea Brittin.

Tonight we'll be talking about an appropriation of \$11.88 million. That consists of the CBO increases within the income assistance, the seniors' income plan enhancement, the rental housing supplements and shelter increases which include the shelter rate increases in both SAP [Saskatchewan assistance plan] and TEA [transitional employment allowance], the rental supplement increases, the excess shelter policy changes that were made, and the emergency shelter rate increases.

As well there is money allocated to the community living division. One million of that is for expansion to address the wait list that was in our province, and \$2 million is for increases to the CBO sector that offers services for the community living division. The appropriation for child and family services of 2 million is also for the CBO increases.

So with that I will open the floor for any questions.

**The Chair:** — I recognize Mr. Forbes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much. And before we go right to vote 36, if the minister . . . I just have a question on page 7 of the estimates that relate to Social Services, and it is the schedule of capital appropriation. And I don't understand this. If she could, or her officials help me with that. It talks about the original estimated amount of 5 million, and it looks like the estimated adjustments are 2.5 on page 7. It appears to be savings in some area or something, I'm not sure.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — The 5.033 million was the budgeted

allocation for the electronic child case file management system. And getting that put together with IT [information technology] has been slower than we had hoped, and so therefore we haven't expended all of that money.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So that will come back next year as things come up?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — How is that project coming along?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Slower than I like. We had scheduled for about a three-year to get the system fully up and running. And I suppose I should ask Allan if he feels that we're on schedule with that. Or three years was what was allocated.

You can answer questions. Sorry, Allan.

**Mr. Hansen:** — Can you hear me?

Yes. We're proceeding hopefully to the next stage which is an invitation to see if there's interest in the project and that's the first, before you do a RFP [request for proposal]. So we hope to be doing that in the next little while.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you.

Then what I would like to proceed to, the minister talked about the rental housing supplements and of course that was all good news. And I'm curious in the decision on the task force on housing affordability that some areas were included in the rental increase and others were not. Can you speak to that?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes, I can. The rental supplement increases were to be 70 per cent of the market. You're talking rental or the shelter rates?

**Mr. Forbes:** — Shelter — the SRHS [Saskatchewan rental housing supplement].

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — So the shelter rates are calculated as 7 per cent of the average rent for that region as defined by CMHC [Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation]. Some regions we were already paying 70 per cent of the average market rate; others were not. Particularly problematic was Saskatoon, Regina, and Lloydminster. The rates had fallen considerably behind the average rental rates within those regions and those cities, so that is where you've seen the greatest increase was for those three centres.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So what we'll see now is more attunement with the 70 per cent across the province. Is that what you're saying?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And so a follow-up to that is you had referred to in the press release about the indexing or that this would be adjusted periodically.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And that would be twice a year?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes. It'll be adjusted every six months.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. Great.

Now in the press release it talks about — and there's a bullet, it's the fourth, fifth bullet — twice a year the above-mentioned programs will see automatic rate adjustments consistent with CMHC.

I just want to be clear on this because this relates to all what we're talking about tonight. That is the shelter rate increases for clients on SAP and TEA, the PTA [provincial training allowance] living allowance and shelter amounts, and the SRHS. All of those will be adjusted twice a year?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And according to CMHC, so you'll see perhaps in Moose Jaw that when they fall below the 70 per cent that they'll be bumped up to 70 per cent?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes, the rental supplement is an additional 30 per cent for the accommodations that qualify for the rental supplement. So if you get the 70 per cent through the shelter rate increase, then the rental supplement you can receive that over and above, which is 30 per cent. If there is a family member that has a disability, then the rental supplement is 40 per cent. So that family could receive up to 110 per cent of the average rental rate within that region.

The rationale behind that is that the family that has an individual with a disability may not be able to rent just any accommodation, so therefore we allowed an extra allowance — an extra 10 per cent — for those individuals and families. So again both will be revisited every six months and adjusted according to the region rates at the time.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Good, thank you. One of the other areas that we've been talking a lot about is affordability. And of course, your ministry has agreed to pick up the utility rates for people on SAP and TEA which is very important. One of the recommendations, I'm not sure if it was a formal recommendation, but one of the things on the task force that Mr. Merriman, Mr. Pringle talked a lot about was some of the special issues in the North and the cost of heating oil in the North. Is the same thing going to happen in the North? Will you be having any special allowances for heating oil this winter in the North?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — We haven't specifically addressed a separate policy for the North. Now I can be corrected — if they are on SAP, their heating costs will be paid for what it is, but I'm not sure they pay for fuel so I will check with my officials. Indeed it is paid for. Many of the social services clients on SAP or TEA, the actual cost of the heating oil is paid in the North.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And will you consider expanding that further next year as you're having more . . . providing more response to the task force on housing? I understand . . . Actually I was on the Internet tonight taking a look at how home heating oil has gone up. And now it's gone back down, but of course it's like so many of the commodities, it's very volatile. So people see

that as a big issue as part of their housing costs in the North. Are you planning to think more about this in the weeks, months ahead?

[20:45]

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Are you asking that I expand it beyond the clients that are within Social Services? Because we're, for those clients on SAP and TEA, we're paying the actual costs. So what it is, we will pay. So we'll continue to do that. I'm not sure what you mean by an expansion.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Well the report on page 15, and it's just two lines, but I know that the co-chairs actually talked a lot about this. So I'm not sure what they wanted to do as well, so maybe this is a scenario that we could all explore.

But they just say the task force heard from northern Saskatchewan residents that the costs of heating oil can exceed the cost of rents in some cases. They didn't talk about whether those folks were on social assistance or on TEA or anything. They were just saying this is an absurd case, where you could be paying more for heating than actually for your rent. And that doesn't seem to be a very appropriate circumstance, but because of the uniqueness of the North that's exactly what happens — whether it's a housing challenge in terms of insulation, that type of thing, that something more could be done.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I have no doubt, being familiar with dwellings even in rural Saskatchewan, not in the North, that are heated by heating oil that it is problematic and an issue. You have to recognize within the ministry that I have, my concern is the most vulnerable. So those are going to be the clients that are on SAP and TEA, and therefore their costs, whatever it is, is totally covered. And we'll be doing that going forward.

We also have, through the Sask Housing Corporation, the Sask home energy improvement program which is available to any individual, be it in the North, to help retrofits within their home to make them more energy efficient. Would we be looking within Social Services of expanding it to, you know, coverage for fuel costs for moderate income people? It's not something we're looking at at this time.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Well I would encourage you. And the point is well taken about rural Saskatchewan too. Any place with older homes where construction may not be up to modern standards so . . . And clearly your priority is the vulnerable. But I would encourage, through Sask Housing . . . and I understand many if not most of the houses that are rented in the North are properties of Sask Housing, and so this would be an important area.

But I want to move on for another question that relates to this. And that is, one of the recommendations that you implemented is increasing the income thresholds by up to 19 per cent, depending on region, housing type, for seniors who rely on social housing programs. And I think that was relating to who could qualify to apply to rent from Sask Housing. I could be wrong, but if you could expand on that and the implications of that in terms of the supplementary estimates, I'd appreciate it.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — That would be correct. There is no

allocation within the supplementary estimates because it wasn't a cost expenditure. That was within the existing budget, but was a recommendation by the housing task force, as you pointed out, and one that was acted upon. And it is the threshold where seniors are qualified for social housing.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Have you seen any increase in take-up or people applying? I mean this could have implications on waiting lists, but as we've talked about in question period, the actual waiting lists in some places have actually gone down.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — The waiting lists are constantly shifting and yes, in some areas they've gone down. There were some years where they weren't being tracked properly. Some areas they've gone down; some they've gone up. It is changing. We have some communities where not all of the social housing units are being rented by people that would be considered the most vulnerable, but we like to have the units rented out. Then when someone that is a qualifying person needs to rent a unit, then we make the appropriate changes. So it varies from community to community, and the waiting list is constantly changing.

**Mr. Forbes:** — For the record, what is the amount for seniors to apply for housing? Now is it for social or affordable or both?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — This would be for the Sask Housing social housing, I would call it, but I didn't bring any of those statistics with me because that's not part of the supplementary estimate money allocations.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Sure, okay. Could I get that from you at some future date?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — And the question would be what . . .

**Mr. Forbes:** — What is the amount . . .

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — What is the actual income threshold where they qualify? Yes, absolutely.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. Thank you very much. I'd like to move on to the Saskatchewan Income Plan or the seniors' income plan. Now I just have a few questions about this. The numbers that you have for the maximum levels, income thresholds for seniors are for singles is \$16,313 and for the couple, the maximum is \$26,468. How did you arrive at those numbers? What was the rationale of those numbers? Were they tied to a benchmark, i.e., a LICO [low-income cut-off] or some other . . . What was the formula that gave you these numbers?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — The way that you calculate the threshold is the income that the senior has from any resources other than the federal supports. So that may be interest from money in a bank account, it may be, you know, a part-time job earnings or any earnings that they would have. Then you add the OAS, the old age security which is \$6,203.52, and you would add the GIS, the Guaranteed Income Supplement.

And that is where the clerical error came in because the calculations were done as if both of those were maximum amount, and the maximum amount for the GIS is \$7,830.12. In actuality the GIS is on a graduated scale. So as the income

increases that the senior earns through various resources, the GIS reduces.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So will the SIP [seniors' income plan] also be reduced as the senior brings more of their own money to the table?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes it is; it is a graduated supplement. So it does reduce, and the maximum amount that the senior can make without any other federal supports is 4,560, I believe.

**Mr. Forbes:** — My question though is this really in many ways, I believe, it says that a senior won't . . . Will there be seniors in this province who have incomes less than \$16,300, single seniors?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Absolutely. There are seniors with less than an income . . .

**Mr. Forbes:** — It can be less than that?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Absolutely there are seniors that have incomes that are less than that.

**Mr. Forbes:** — In what circumstances would that be?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — The senior has absolutely no income.

**Mr. Forbes:** — But they could then apply for these programs, could they not? Or what are the qualifications? So some seniors won't be able to access these programs is what you're saying?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I'm really having a difficult time understanding the question.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay, so what I'm saying is that . . . Well let me back up and say this. Are all seniors able to apply for these programs, for SIP and old age security and the GIS?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — You're asking what seniors would not qualify?

**Mr. Forbes:** — Right. Under which circumstances will there be any seniors out there who could not qualify for these programs?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — It's based on their income. So it's based on their income tax or else their GIS forms. So if they don't file anything, then they would fall through the cracks because we would have no record.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Right, so but if they file for income tax and . . . I think your point is well made in terms of GIS because we know that there are many seniors who do actually qualify for GIS, but don't for some reason understand that. And the estimates are actually up about 200 per federal riding who could qualify, but don't apply. And you've been very clear actually. You don't apply for SIP; you apply for GIS. That's correct?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes, that is correct.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And it's important that they know that, and they do apply for GIS, which is really the federal supplement to CPP [Canada pension plan] or old age security?

**Mr. Hansen:** — Old age security.

**Mr. Forbes:** — It's old age security is the first thing?

**Mr. Hansen:** — OAS, GIS, they go together.

**Mr. Forbes:** — They go together. And the third in Saskatchewan is SIP.

**Mr. Hansen:** — Correct.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Right. So every senior is eligible for old age security, are they not? Who are not? Who's not?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Anyone who hasn't been in the country for 10 years and someone who failed to file income tax would not qualify for old age security.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So folks have to file for income tax.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay, all right. Good. So there are exemptions out there. So people, seniors, who are on very limited incomes may not be able to access this.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes, they are able to access it. They may not know how to access it. They are not an exemption. So if the member has any suggestions of how we're going to know about those individuals, I'm quite willing to listen to what those suggestions are.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Sure, and I'll write them out.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Perfect. Perfect.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I think this is a very important one. And I do think . . .

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I absolutely do. It's been neglected for 16 years, and we absolutely think it is an important one. So if we have those unknown seniors that aren't making themselves known, I'm more than open to listen to suggestions of how we're going to identify them, find them, and work on that.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay, so now you had made this clear in the House in terms of . . . And I raised the concern about what the impacts may be on those living in Sask Housing units in the clawback. And there is no clawback . . .

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — There is no clawback.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Both in social and affordable housing?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — That is true.

**Mr. Forbes:** — In both. Now I was thinking about this afterwards — what about those situations where they are run by non-profit organizations? Is it the same scenario in that case?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — The non-profits that have arrangements with the Sask Housing Corporation, subsidy arrangements, follow the Sask Housing Corporation's rules, so

there would be no clawback. For those non-profit organizations that do not have any arrangements with the Sask Housing Corporation set their own rules independently.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So how would they — I appreciate that answer — now how do the ones who are independent, are they independent because they've received no support from Sask Housing? They are not connected in any way with Sask Housing?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — That is true.

**Mr. Forbes:** — All right. Okay, good. Now with the SIP and the increase in that, what will be the impact on seniors who have small RSPs [Retirement Savings Plan], small amounts of savings, money that they get yearly? I know this was an issue around GIS because in fact you could be losing some of your GIS if you had a small monthly income of say \$50 or \$100, which really wasn't an awful lot. But you lost the GIS equivalency of that because of the maximum threshold rules.

[21:00]

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Within the income calculations, interest is taken into consideration as income.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Income. So there may be an impact there.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — If they are gaining monthly interest, it is considered income.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay, good. That would be an interesting one. I know the federal government this year in the summer had increased the amount that a person can earn on GIS through employment. I think it was \$3,500 a year. It really wasn't very much. For some seniors it was a significant amount, and I think it was a good move for the federal government to do that.

Now I don't have a solution to this either, but I just throw this out as something to think about. Because I know for some seniors, particularly those who are in the Saskatchewan Pension Plan who don't actually get an awful lot every month — and I think I was just on their web page, and what do they get? — some of them, the average monthly pension is \$118. The highest is 346. So these folks may be a little bit more vulnerable at losing some of that.

So I would encourage the ministry to take a look and see how this interfaces with the Saskatchewan Pension Plan. Because of course that was set up to help a group that didn't have a support and were saving money. And we'd hate to see them go through 30 years, 40 years of work, think that they're going to be getting an extra \$100 a month. And I think that, you know, because with the increase, it's a very good increase, but how do you make it work for everybody? So I'll leave that with you. I would hope that you would take that into consideration.

With that, I don't have any more questions on the income plan. I want to move on to the community inclusion part. And you answered one of the questions I had is, where is the \$1 million in the book? And you said 1 million goes to the programming that you're talking about, expanding the programming, and 2 million goes to the CBO sector and community inclusion.



But you talked about in the press release some of the trends that are happening. So you're going to tackle the waiting list. Now what is the overall trend in the next 5 to 10 years in this area? Are we seeing more people who need housing? And this will continue into the future; in fact we can't see it levelling off. Or is it if we can get a good hold of the backlog, then we have the issue done? Or is this going to be an ongoing challenge for us in Saskatchewan for the next 10, 20 years, even into the future years?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — It's going to be an ongoing issue. I wouldn't say that backlog will be an ongoing issue. A backlog is a sign of neglect, from a decade of neglect quite frankly.

What are we seeing in the disability community? We're seeing individuals with disabilities living longer than ever before, and in living longer, often it is the case where they have more complex health needs as well as their disability. So what we've seen is a total ignoring of this trend, of this fact of what is happening with individuals with disabilities. And so the programming that was in place and then just left there was no longer meeting the need of the aging individual with disabilities whose needs became more complex. So do we need to address that? Yes, we do.

The other thing that we're seeing through neglect is that individuals with disabilities were being looked after by their families and those families are aging. So I can give examples of a 90-year-old mother who is looking after her daughter with disabilities, and she is more than concerned because she doesn't know where her daughter is going to go because there is no facility to house her daughter at this point in time. So that is what we're seeing.

Will that be a trend? Yes, it will be a trend — not having a backlog but the fact that we are going to have individuals with disabilities living longer, that we are going to have their needs more complex, and we're going to see that they're going to have more health complications is definitely something that is going to be the outlook for the disability file, going forward.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So as you move forward and really tackle this capital project . . . And this is going to be very significant for many people. And as you've talked about, aging parents with their children, they're very, very concerned about . . . Have you taken into account what kind of design, how this will interact with communities to make sure people are full, as much as they can be, full members of communities? And how do you see some of the issues around for example Valley View in 20, 30, 40 years play out?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — This initiative at this point is not addressing changes to Valley View. What we're looking at to allow for the inclusion that you are suggesting is that we have facilities, supported group home situations and day programming, available within communities. Now of course we're going to have to reach out a bit in the surrounding areas around a community to make it efficient and effective. But we hope this is going to be expansion — province-wide, quite frankly

We announced on Friday that this will mean a group home and expanded day programs in Outlook. We're going to hear more

and more of those announcements as this whole initiative unfolds over the next four years. And it will be a number of communities to try to keep the individuals, as much as we can, if not directly in their community, very close to it.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Well I think that's really good news. I appreciate that. So what is the ministry's position on new admissions to Valley View?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — At this point in time we are not taking new admissions to Valley View.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And will that continue into the future?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Again, we'll have to address issues as they come forward. We do have beyond a doubt some very, very high needs, complex individuals with complex needs. The staff at Valley View are exceptional, well trained, and are very efficient at dealing with these individuals. They need support of each other though. So I recognize all of that and in doing so, am supporting Valley View in its existing state and not making any further decisions at this point in time.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Good. As part of that announcement earlier on a few weeks ago, you announced that you'll be doing some work around the disability income assistance and what we can do in the years ahead. And we appreciate that. I see there are no funds in the supplementary estimates. You'll be able to deal with this or your . . . I think that you were talking about this will take place in 2009-2010 budget year?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — That is true. The consultation will begin fairly shortly with the disability community. On what this will look like, I have told any of the groups that I've met with that we're going to start with the basic design of what will be, sort of, an easy identifiable permanent disability. So we're going to start there. It will be a program that the disability community has asked for to allow for dignity, and we're going to accommodate that. This will be the initial stage of that transition to a different program, and it will be strengthened and evolve in the future years.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So what you're saying when you say shortly, you mean in the next few weeks as opposed to in April?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — April will be too late because we want to have this for the budget cycle.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Good. All right, thank you. Moving on, a big chunk of this was the CBO funding for the salaries. Now has the money completely start . . . is it completely flowing now or are there any holdups in that area?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — The funding hasn't totally flowed.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — But when it does, it's retroactive to October 1.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Excellent, good.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — You know, I mean, again a good thing. But when there's things that happen that change, sometimes there's unintended consequences. And one that I was hearing some concerns about is within a workplace, there may be several funding organizations, particularly at different levels. You have the federal level funding a program. You have the province funding a program. You might even have municipal or private funders. So there might be discrepancies in terms of who would get the increase and who didn't get the increase. How has that been handled? Have you had any challenges within the workplace to try to make this as equitable across . . . or helping organizations deal with this?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — We've only addressed the programming and services that we pay for provincially. I do understand that there are CBOs that run perhaps not a complete full-time program for provincial-approved services, and they're also offering services to the federal government. We didn't address that. The federal funding is separate and apart for different services. And so therefore, we just gave the uplift to the provincial portion.

You have to remember each of the CBOs have their own autonomy, so therefore their boards are making those decisions on what to do with the money allocation. I encourage them to use it for recruitment and retention because that's definitely something that we've heard loud and clear is an issue within the CBO sector and in particular in your group homes where you're looking at 24-hour care, both for children at risk and for individuals with disabilities. Those facilities of course are fully funded by the provincial government and don't have the issue of having multi-source funding.

So we didn't specifically manage how the CBOs use the money. We recognize their independence and their boards and the authority of their own individual boards.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So if I'm understanding this right then, you gave a 7 per cent increase on what would have been the wage area of their budget or . . .

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Their entire budget.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Their budget?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So it would have been operating costs? Rent also got a 7 per cent increase?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — If their budget included rent? It was on the entire budget.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Not all budgets do.

**Mr. Forbes:** — No. No. Fair. So then the boards themselves then could decide how they allocated that money.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes. They're an independent board and so . . . And I have said this to the media: I cannot dictate to them. All I can do is encourage them and tell them that is the intent of the money. So that if they then decide to spend it elsewhere, they will have to explain that, I guess, if they come back to the province the next year and say, you know, we have trouble with recruitment and retention but we spent our money somewhere else. This was a problem that they list. But we don't micromanage their authority. We recognize the authority of the individual boards.

**Mr. Forbes:** — But I think clearly — and it will be interesting how this plays out — that many of the employees felt that they were getting a 7 per cent wage increase, that that was the effect of the announcement. They got it wrong?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I would say that many or most of the employees did. We'll do a survey to see if that is indeed where the money was given, but the board has to answer for what they do too.

Now I'm sure these employees understand that they're working for a board. I think they understand the conditions of their employment. So I have a lot of faith in these boards, I have a tremendous amount of faith in these boards making wise decisions.

[21:15]

**Mr. Forbes:** — So one of my questions is just an encouragement for you to continue to do this next year. But I guess I'd be very interested and hope that . . . You've talked about a survey or somehow you're going to find out how that was arrived at and spent. And I guess my concern would be that many . . . Because the CBO sector — and I've heard this said by many people — is underfunded. It's hard to find staff. Retention and recruitment, you've talked about it, is huge, a huge issue. And clearly it will be interesting to watch how boards spend that money in the next few months ahead because we think that the people, the staffs, are expecting it and should be getting it. So it's very, very important.

I just have a couple of quick questions here, and I'm not sure if they relate to this, but just short answers. We were happy to see the announcement in July. It was actually a federal announcement, but the headline was Sask "First Nations child, family groups get \$105 million from feds." It didn't sound like there were any financial implications for the province on this, but clearly there's an agreement, a framework here. Has that money started to flow, or what's happening with that?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — To my knowledge the First Nations agencies are still planning on how that money will be spent.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Pardon me? Sorry.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — The First Nation agencies will be a huge factor in determining how the money should be spent, and that process is still under way.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Is it moving at an acceptable rate? You're happy with . . .

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I don't believe any money has actually . . .

**Mr. Forbes:** — But the discussions with the feds is good?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — The discussions are taking place.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay, because it's very, very important and we're excited to see this.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Absolutely.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So this is very, very good. The PATHS [Provincial Association of Transition Houses Saskatchewan] and the Sask funding is proceeding?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I know a couple of people want to ask a couple of questions. My colleague from La Ronge.

**The Chair:** — I recognize Mr. Vermette.

**Mr. Vermette:** — I guess you kind of answered this, but I guess you opened up an opportunity for me to go down this area with you, and I appreciate you. You talk about neglect, and you made some other comments. And I'm glad to hear you that, you know, you're addressing issues and concerns.

And I'm going to bring my questions into housing. And the question was about when you referred to low-income housing and somebody who is working and trying to make ends meet. And I guess it's not neglect on their part. And I don't know what condition the house is in, and I'm not going to say I know what kind of insulation's in there, what the window's like. Are there windows? You know, what's the doors like? I don't know. Through neglect it could be problems that . . . they're dealt with, and the heating bill that they're going to be left with at the end of the day. And there are some concerns out there with the cost of heating for some of the houses. Sure you know, it's nice to have a house for their family. And they pay their rent, but they're struggling to pay the heat. The heat is unreal.

So that opens it up. And I'm glad you, you know, you gave an opportunity to ask that question. And maybe from your ministry and your officials with Housing, that's an issue that, you know, maybe later on can be opened up more and brought to your attention. It sounds like you're willing to have those concerns brought to you, and I appreciate that when you open that up. So there's an area there as well.

You know, there's also some areas where conditions of some of the housing in the North, the housing conditions that people are living in, you know, whether it's Sask Housing or housing authority, but I understand — and clearly maybe you can correct this — it is your jurisdiction, whether it's a housing authority or Sask Housing, correct?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — That is correct.

**Mr. Vermette:** — Okay. Thank you. So hopefully over the next six months, you know, sooner as those concerns are developed, I appreciate . . . and we can find those areas where the neglect

was and can bring those to your attention. I personally am glad to hear to hear that, and we'll make all efforts to bring those concerns to your department and your housing officials. It will be good to work with you guys on that. So that was my question. Thank you.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Very good.

**The Chair:** — Ms. Junor.

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you. My colleague from city centre was asking questions around this, but I didn't hear that he got to my question, so I'll ask it myself. Were all the CBOs that are funded all or in part by Social Services all given the increase equitably or were any left out?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — No, they were all given, on the 7 per cent increase, they were all given the 7 per cent increase.

**Ms. Junor:** — So all CBOs that are funded all or in part by Social Services received it. There were none that were left out for any reason whatsoever.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — That is true.

**Ms. Junor:** — Okay. Thanks. That's it.

**The Chair:** — Mr. Yates.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. My questions go back to the 7 per cent funding to the CBOs as well. The 7 per cent funding went to the CBOs. They're allowed to spend it in any manner which they chose. What does their contract say about spending that money — the current contract with the government — as to their allocations of spending?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I'm sorry. I'm going to have to get that question repeated.

**Mr. Yates:** — What do their current contracts — each year these organizations sign contracts with the government — what do their current contracts say in regards to the spending of the money?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — The contracts vary depending on the different area of the CBOs. So there is nothing in their contract saying how they are going to, how specifically they have to spend the 7 per cent. Your colleague sort of dealt with this. So we have contracts in place, but it doesn't specifically tell them where they had to spend the uplift.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. In future contracts, will you include in those new contracts how they spend additional future funds?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — We're going to be looking at renewing the contracts and strengthening the contracts. We've already announced that. Will it specifically tell them how they have to spend funds? No, it will more likely be as it has been — a budget submission where they will be listing their expenditures — and they will be tracking the, you know, the services that they will be providing.

We're also looking at long-term contracts so that we will be — if they are a consistent service that is being supplied — we will be able to give them sort of a three-year guarantee or something of that sort. Going forward we are working with the CBOs to design that. This will not apply of course to all CBOs because they vary in the services that they supply.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. In the past, these contracts often if not always contained the number of funded positions, the services which were provided, in some cases even the number of hours that were allowed to be within the contract, utilized for certain functions. Is that style of contract going to continue, that very detailed with greater accountability for the public dollars? Or are we going to continue to put money in without necessarily the accountability on the back end of it?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I don't agree with your sort of assumption or implication that there is no accountability for this money. And I suppose my question goes out to you. Do you want us to start to take some of the autonomy away from these boards and control their spending through more micromanagement? Is that what you're suggesting here tonight?

**Mr. Yates:** — No. Mr. Chair, what I'm trying to understand is . . . The contracts in the past were quite detailed and within the contract structure had quite a bit of accountability. Now I'm hearing that the 7 per cent, they can do whatever sort of within the contract or within what they want with that money. In the past, there would have been parameters under how they could spend that money. I'm just asking, in the future, will there continue to be parameters as you develop new contracts with these groups?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — There will be accountability.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — Mr. Forbes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I'm done with my questions, and I just want to thank the minister for her answers and all the officials. I appreciate the chance to ask some questions and get clarity on these very important things. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** — I would like to thank the minister and her officials for appearing before the committee. We'll take a short recess to facilitate the change of ministers and officials. The committee has recessed.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

[21:30]

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

**Subvotes (HE04), (HE03), and (HE08)**

**The Chair:** — I'll call the committee back to order. The last item on our agenda this evening is the consideration of supplementary estimates for the Ministry of Health, vote 32,

subvotes (HE04), (HE03), and (HE08). We have with us Minister McMorris, and he has a number of officials with him tonight. I would invite the minister to introduce his officials, and if he has a brief opening statement, I'd invite him to proceed with that also.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Well thank you, Mr. Chairman, and it is a pleasure to be here to go through supplementary estimates tonight from 9:30 until 10:30 — prime time.

On my left is my deputy minister, Dan Florizone, and to my right is special advisor to the deputy minister, Duncan Fisher. Over my left shoulder to my extreme left is Lauren Donnelly. Over my left shoulder again is Gren Smith-Windsor, and to my right is Ted Warawa. Also joining me, behind me further back is Kevin Wilson who is the executive director of the drug plan and extended benefits branch, as well as Lauren Black, assistant to the deputy minister, and Sean Burnett who is a master's of public administration intern. So those are the officials that we have with us tonight, and I do have an opening statement.

I was just going to say that being the night after Grey Cup I'm certainly glad the Roughriders weren't in it. If it was a year ago, it would have been a little tougher job to be doing this the night after the Grey Cup.

But anyway, good evening, and I'm here to present details of the Ministry of Health supplementary estimates and answer any questions you may have about them.

Before I launch into the specific dollar figures, let me provide some background to my remarks. When I presented my ministry's estimates this past April, I talked in depth about our plan for 2008-2009. Our government is committed to a publicly funded, publicly administered health care system. As a province, Saskatchewan is fortunate to be in a position to invest significantly into our health care system. This is due in large part to a strong economy.

Our government is committed to filling a number of high priorities. This includes keeping our promise to rebuild our health care workforce by recruiting and retaining nurses, doctors, and other health care professionals that are in short supply; investing improved cancer care, expanded drug coverage, and more addiction beds. This past month we launched our patient-first review of the health care system. Health care should always put the patient first, and I believe my ministry's priorities are moving us in that direction.

Having provided this context, I would like to discuss why we are here tonight. The supplementary estimates and mid-year financial results show an 80 million overexpenditure for the Ministry of Health's \$3.745 billion budget. Most of this extra money — 70 million as a matter of fact — goes towards the increased funding for the collective agreement with the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses. The remaining 10 million is dedicated to a number of initiatives including replacement of equipment at the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, repairs at the North Saskatchewan Laundry in Prince Albert, a general increase for operating grants provided to community-based organizations, and additional high-cost prescription drugs in the provincial formulary.

I've provided you with some details of the extra money that we've asked for in the '08-09 budget. I'm here with my, as I said, my ministry's senior staff to answer any questions and to provide additional details about these expenditures and how they support programs and services planned for the rest of this fiscal year. I'd be glad to answer any questions if there are any.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Minister. I recognize Ms. Junor.

**Ms. Junor:** — I have a couple. Good evening to the minister and all the officials. We do only have an hour tonight, so I'm going to try to be pretty specific. I hadn't intended to talk about patient-first, but you did mention it, so does that mean we are open to talk about it in any way?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — What I was setting out is some of the initiatives that we had put forward in the initial budget asked. But I'd be willing to discuss any of the supplementary estimates which is the 70 million towards the SUN contract and the remaining 10 million that goes to a number of initiatives that I had touched on.

**Ms. Junor:** — So my question would have been — since I hadn't planned on going into that, but it just made me think of it when you mentioned it — what part of the budget . . . Since this was a new initiative that came in after the April budget, where does patient-first fit in? Under what line in the budget? It would have had to been in here somewhere, right? Because it's an extra cost.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Well that's not quite right. The patient-first was budgeted in the spring budget that we debated in the House, and I answered questions on around here. I believe there was about \$1.5 million that was allotted for the patient-first review as well as some I don't know if it's really exit surveys, but to get a kind of a grasp on what people in the system were having to say. So it was already in the original budget. It's not part of the supplementary estimates.

**Ms. Junor:** — Okay then. My first question then that's particular to the estimates now, the supplementary estimates, is about infrastructure and the increase in infrastructure, the capital transfers. Can you tell me which facilities and locations will be getting the infrastructure money? And is it only now or does it have a rollout of '08-09, '09-10, etc., etc.?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Are you referring to for example the announcement that I made in Saskatoon this morning about \$100 million going towards a capital investment as we move forward? Is that what you're talking about?

**Ms. Junor:** — I'm actually looking at the facilities. I wasn't going to go into something like that since it's not on here. You've got capital transfers for facilities and 2.8 million. I was thinking you might have some idea to tell us where that money is going.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — What that is referring to — that 2.8 — is going to the expansion of the North Saskatchewan Laundry Services in Prince Albert. They're expanding the facility. There's just been a number of issues. And I don't know how familiar you are with that service out of Prince Albert, but there have been a number of issues, including some OH & S

[occupational health and safety] violations, so it needed to be done. In fact it had to be done. It also is expanding the laundry facility so that it deals with some of those OH & S concerns. So that's where that 2.8 million is going towards.

And no, that isn't — I wasn't quite sure of your question — that isn't part of the announcement that I had made today regarding the 100 million towards capital. This is over and above that piece.

**Ms. Junor:** — Since you talked laundry, I'll move straight to my laundry question. That facility in Prince Albert, does it have a projected life expectancy? I think it's . . . I don't know the age of it. I can't remember the age of it, but I know it's been around.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — The facility that we're talking about in Prince Albert is about 25 to 30 years old, so this is bringing it up, it's bringing it up to today's standards, plus expanding it for future growth. If there's one area . . . There's a number of areas in the province that are growing, but I know in the health sector in the Prince Albert area, the growth at the Victoria Hospital, in many different aspects, you know, they're being challenged. So this expands the laundry service.

You had asked the question, how does it compare to other laundry services, I think, or how it compares to other laundry services in Regina and Saskatoon. In fact it's newer. So that tells you that we have some major investments to do in the other health regions as well. But this one was cited with some OH & S violations, so it's one of the reasons why it was addressed.

**Ms. Junor:** — If I understand correctly, from memory, there are other regions besides P.A. using this service. Could you tell me which ones those are?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — So it is wholly owned by the Prince Albert Parkland, Kelsey Trail, Prairie North, and Mamawetan Churchill River Regional Health Authorities. It provides laundry services primarily to the health facilities in northern Saskatchewan but also provides services to some northern correction and educational facilities too. But it's owned through those health regions that I have named.

**Ms. Junor:** — So are there, with the expansion and the upgrades, are there any plans for expanding the services or the clients?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — I guess that's something that could be looked at in the future. This expansion that we're talking about right now is to handle the need that is there currently. If there was, you know, if they were going to expand the scope and not just talk about mainly the health regions — a little bit on education and correction, if they were to expand that scope — there is probably room to expand the service then itself. But right now the capacity that is going to be made available will be used up through the clients that I have already talked about.

**Ms. Junor:** — Then a different topic, you mentioned the SUN contract which is also in the notes attached to the supplementary estimates. And I think you said the current year cost of the SUN agreement was 60 million of the 71.7. Did I

hear that right?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — It's 70 million.

**Ms. Junor:** — It's 70 million. This is '08, cost for the '08 cost of the contract?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Yes, the estimated cost for the '08-09 fiscal year is 70 million.

**Ms. Junor:** — So then we're looking at more year over year before the end of the agreement in '11, more . . . [inaudible] . . . increase from year to year?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — This is on top of what was in the budget in the spring which was about \$34 million and the 70. So the total cost was, for this contract for this year, was 104 million. Next year it goes up by I believe another 60 million.

[21:45]

**Ms. Junor:** — So it'll be 160 next year?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Well that will be on, yes, on top of the base funding that we have agreed to this year.

**Ms. Junor:** — And this money doesn't include any of the costs associated with the MOU [memorandum of understanding], right? This is just the collective . . .

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — This is just the collective agreement, yes.

**Ms. Junor:** — Okay, then I'd like to talk a little bit about drugs because you're talking about extra . . . a lift to the drug plan, especially adding high cost prescription drugs. Before I start my actual questions, I want to ask you if you remember last year when we talked in estimates, asking you about Paclitaxel, the ovarian cancer drug that was previously purchased for 189 or something a vial, and then dropped the cost to 14.99, and I wanted to know what the new contract was for Paclitaxel.

You undertook to tell me the next day, which would have been May 6. It's now November and I still don't have an answer. So I would really like to know the answer to that question because it might be one of our high-cost drugs. Given that we dropped from 189 to 14.99, I'm hoping we still have that contract.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — It's through the Cancer Agency, and part of the agreement, part of the contract that is signed with the company pertains to confidentiality and not releasing the price, which is not uncommon and becoming more common with drug companies, so that price cannot be released.

**Ms. Junor:** — Then can you assure me that we've not reverted back to the high-cost one? I don't care if it's \$16 or \$22. Just tell me it isn't 189 again.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — I guess what I can tell you is you have our assurance . . . I mean, because it's confidential, you have our assurance that the Ministry of Health or the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency is getting the best possible deal it can. And by doing that, some of the fallout is the whole issue around

confidentiality. So I guess, you know because we can't release the price and because I can't, you know, say well it's higher than this but lower than that, that just is not on. But what I can assure you is that through the Cancer Agency and through the Ministry of Health, dealing with these drug companies, they're getting the best possible deal they can get.

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you. And then just for future, if I ask a question and you can't answer it, will you just tell me you can't answer it because I've waited for months and looked at different ways, wrote to the Chair, gone through different processes to see if I could get the answer. I would have appreciated if you'd just said, I can't answer it due to . . . and that would've ended that. So I appreciate if you'd do that.

Now still sticking with drugs, can you tell me which new high-cost drugs have been added? So are they just new drugs for cancer treatment, or give me for examples.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — The money that has been put into the supplementary estimates is about 700,000. That will cover off . . . The drugs that were announced effective July 1 were Concerta and Strattera. I don't know how familiar you are with those drugs. We can talk about those drugs if you want, but those are the two drugs that are covered.

**Ms. Junor:** — No thanks, you don't have to go any further. I do have a question about the process because there was a process, when I was in the ministry, of determining with an expert panel, the formulary, how drugs got onto the formulary. And I'm wondering if any of that has changed.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — So the process is still in place to consult with experts in the field, as well as a common drug review, to garner recommendations as far as whether drugs like Concerta and Strattera should be covered or not. That's part of the process.

**Ms. Junor:** — So that formulary committee is still in place and working?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Yes, yes it is.

**Ms. Junor:** — So then drugs like Avastin, how did that get approved? Did it come through the formulary committee?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — That Avastin, which is on the previous year's estimates, was covered in the previous year's estimates. It is not in the supplementary estimates. But I would tell you that that would be approved through the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency which . . . I guess I'll just leave it at that. That was through the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency.

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you. There's been some talk about discussions at the national level between the ministers of Health about bulk buying and group purchasing to reduce our costs. And how is that going?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — I guess first of all to the question regarding a national drug strategy, it's certainly been talked about for quite a while. I can tell you after attending the ministers of Health conference in Quebec City, it was talked about. The federal government of course in the past and still

now is not really too excited about getting into . . . They're not necessarily against the national drug plan. They don't want to put much money into it and have huge exposure that way.

So what we have done is decided to move in more of a regional front. And so we've talked with the Prairie provinces — I shouldn't say the Prairie provinces — I would say the Western provinces, to move forward. And that work is being done. We're still in the process of finding some commonality towards the drug purchasing. It does work in some cases but won't work in all cases. It just won't work that, you know if it's the four Western provinces and Territories all purchasing a certain drug that we'll all get an agreement with the company that . . . Quite often the drug companies have already agreements in place within particular provinces, specific provinces, and they tend to go through the process that way.

And that's you know a little bit of a . . . kind of replace to the one question that you had regarding disclosing pricing. And that's part of the agreement, so that's why it would be difficult to move in a block of Western provinces as well as the Territories. But that doesn't mean that it can't be done in some cases, and that work is being done. We're trying to find some common ground. I know Alberta and British Columbia have moved a little bit further on this front over the last few years. And we're certainly have told them that we're more than willing to work with them, and they're welcoming us.

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you. I have a couple of questions about the diagnostic imaging equipment. And I know that you've specifically said the Cancer Agency. Is it going in Saskatoon or is it going in Regina or what is it that's going with this money?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — There is improvements in both Regina and Saskatoon, and I can get into the details, whether it's the you know improvements or renovations for the bunker, for the linear accelerator here in Regina. We can get into some of those details or the CT [computerized tomography] simulators if you wanted to. But money is going into both health regions through the cancer clinics.

**Ms. Junor:** — The equipment will be in each cancer agency?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Yes. It's different equipment. Some of it is common for the two facilities, but some of it isn't. Some of it's specific to Regina or specific to Saskatoon. And I'd love to get into it. You know, I wouldn't get into the detail of exactly what . . .

**Ms. Junor:** — Maybe in the Spring. We have a lot more time then.

I want to talk about is some of the equipment including, will it be including new staff? Or is it just going to be enhancements of what's there?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — The money is not going to additional staffing. What it is is, it's going to straight capital. It's to replace some of the equipment that was in either site. The equipment is dating back as far as 1996, some '97, 2000. It kind of . . . some of the equipment is in various stages or various years. But most American manufacturers estimate that the useful life of for example a linear accelerator and related

equipment to be 10 years. So we're well past the estimated useful life. So this equipment is timely, it's needed. And it is purely equipment, not staffing.

**Ms. Junor:** — I have a question about equipment which I don't know. I don't think it's going to fit in here, but you may indulge me this one question about the PET [positron emission tomography] — what is it, positron emission topography, or whatever that is. We don't have one of those in Saskatchewan. Are we looking at getting one?

[22:00]

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — This is obviously some of the latest technology, although it would be the latest technology if we had one here in Saskatchewan. Most every other province except . . . I believe every other province except Prince Edward Island has one. It's something that we're going to be looking at as we move forward because I think it's, you know, obviously it's proven its merits in every other province and quite probably, broadly, down in the United States. So it's something that we'll be reviewing and looking at in the very near future, probably. Not that the money to purchase one or to lease one or whatever would be in this year's budget, but certainly money to investigate the usefulness and how it would fit into our system. We'll probably be, within the next year, looking at it.

**Ms. Junor:** — Could you tell me how much one costs? Do we know how much the cost of one would be? I'm not talking about the installation and all that, but just, you know, to buy it?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — We don't have an exact price. I think there's some estimates and kind of some idea of what it would run, you know, and there's . . . I guess it depends on what you're talking about, if you're just talking about the machine, if you're talking about, you know, installation and staffing and all the support that goes behind a machine, it can probably range anywhere from five million — depending on what you're putting into the cost when you're looking at the total cost — to, you know, or more or quite a bit more.

But certainly as we move forward and look at this technology which is certainly — I hope it didn't leave the impression that we had to study to see whether it's worthwhile — it's certainly becoming the standard of care in cancer diagnostics in most places. So it's not that we have a question on that. We need to start looking at the whole package and what it will cost the province and where it can be located. There's a number of questions before you actually worry about going and buying one. And so that's the work that we'll be starting in the near future.

**Ms. Junor:** — I'm assuming then, since we're one of the few places that don't have one, we do send people out of province somewhere to get the tests done.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — So the answer is yes, that we send people out of the province for this scan and the numbers are increasing. We have the numbers here: in '06 there was 158 patients that received ministry approval; in '07 there was 201; and to date in '08 it's 248. So the numbers are increasing every year. The rough cost per scan is about \$1,500. So I could tell you that the year-to-date costs in 2008 for PET scans is

\$312,000.

And I think it's safe to say that I think we'll see those demands for out-of-province scans continue to increase. I think it's also safe to say that — and not that this would be any reason for not moving in this direction — but once you install one in your province, in our province, once we install one in our province, I think you'll see those numbers increase significantly. Right now you know it is a bit of a deterrent when you have to go out of province, and you have to get prior approval. That's not a reason why we wouldn't move in that direction, but I think you also have to keep in mind, you know, what kind of a cost driver that will be.

And I think as I said, just on the out-of-province approval, it's increased you know in two years from 158 to the year-to-date right now, 248 — 100 scans and we're not finished '08. So there has been a marked increase of out-of-province approvals. And I think as I said, we'd be looking at that number of 248. I don't know what it'll finish off this year, but we'll be significantly higher once we have one installed in our province.

**Ms. Junor:** — And I guess following up your comment about people being . . . the disincentive to have it done or to even order it, doesn't say something positive about the quality of care people will be getting for cancer then. If you are either personally or because of the professional choice of not ordering the test, and you not taking it, there is something lacking then in our quality of cancer care here.

But thank you for answering the questions because it was more than I had asked, but I was going to try. But you went ahead and did it anyway. You answered it all, thank you.

I just have a couple more. Fuel costs you mentioned. And I don't know exactly what that means, additional fuel costs. Every district added more money to their budget for fuel costs or how did we . . . Who got that?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — So the money for the fuel costs goes to every health region to then to be disbursed. And it is going to both air ambulance, the increased costs and fuel for air ambulance, as well as for road ambulance.

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you. The CBO question about the increase to, you know, general increase to the grants, do you have a list of all the CBOs that Health funds in part or all? Do you have a list of those CBOs? And then my question is, did they all get the money, or did some get left out? For what reason or any reason?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — So all CBOs that are direct or indirect, directly through the Ministry of Health, will receive the increase. And it's about 115 community-based organizations that will receive this funding.

**Ms. Junor:** — And were there any directions attached to the money, like you had to go onto wages, or no?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — So this funding is going obviously to the CBOs. We knew, and I think all the CBOs made it very, very plain for a number of years, that the wage discrepancies were huge. And I'm sure you've heard from CBOs that they're

having a hard time recruiting and retaining staff, that the wages were not comparable to many other organizations, and so as a result, they were having trouble retaining their staff. It was certainly the intent as this money goes out that it would go to addressing . . . Probably the issue that they would raise as their number one priority over and over again is the whole staffing piece and the wage discrepancies. So there was a need through the CBOs for that, and that was the intent as the money went out.

**Ms. Junor:** — I know when we were in government and did give an increase, the money did not necessarily go to wages. So I'm wondering if there's going to be any track back and any accountability piece put in so that you will actually find out which ones did it.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — I think as we move forward, certainly the questions as, you know, we move through the next year, you know we'll track it and follow it and that if it's still their number one issue and we see that their wages didn't increase with the last, you know tranche of money, then there's definitely more questions to ask. But it will be tracked as best as we can, knowing that, you know, I guess they have the final say.

And if that happened under, you know, a previous administration, that's certainly a kind of a concern that we'll certainly be watching as we move forward. But I do know that, just talking to a number of the CBOs . . . and for example when SARC [Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres] had their reception to a facility, they all came up and congratulated us on the increase in money. And to me there was really no question as to which direction that money would be going. It would be going to salaries, but we'll certainly track it as we move forward.

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you. I missed at the beginning when you were talking under the regional targeted programs and services, the 71.7. You said 70 went to the SUN contract, but the 1.7, I missed where that was going.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Could I just get clarification? So it's 70 towards the SUN contract, and then what was the other number that you used?

**Ms. Junor:** — Well it says regional targeted (HE03), regional targeted programs and services, 71.7 and you said 70 of that was the SUN contract, so that leaves 1.7 unaccounted for.

[22:15]

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — What it is, is of course the lion's share is the SUN contract, as we said. The other amount that is going to health regions would be part of the fuel cost piece, as well as part of the CBO piece that is administered through the health regions. And the reason why it is broke out differently is that some of the cost goes through health regions but some of the cost doesn't go through health regions, for example air ambulance. That's why there are a couple of different numbers. But that, the number that you're citing, would be for the SUN contract as well as CBO costs as well as fuel cost that will go to the health regions for the road ambulance.



**Ms. Junor:** — Okay. So the top line then, the provincial targeted programs and services of 1.3, that includes what then? I was thinking that was the CBO one.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — So as I had mentioned before, the air ambulance would be funded through the ministry. Road ambulance would be funded through the regional health authorities. Some of the CBOs would be funded through the regional health authorities, and some of the CBOs would be funded directly from the Ministry of Health. So that remainder is air ambulance and CBOs funded through the Ministry of Health.

**Ms. Junor:** — So basically the 1.3 and the 1.7 are sort of together. You've got vote (HE04) which is 1.3 and (HE03). The first line picks up 1.7 so that would be 3 million for all those services?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Yes.

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you. And there's just one I missed when I was doing my series of drug questions is that, what changes have there been made in the last year for drug suppliers? Like have we moved from somebody to Abbott, and has there been a lot of that changing done, or have we kept basically our drug suppliers?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — So I've been informed that there hasn't been much movement of, for example, the drugs that are already covered, but there are new drugs added. There have been new drugs added, and so those companies . . . I mean, there may be a new company or a different company as far as that is concerned, but not any movement in the plan that has existed.

**Ms. Junor:** — All right thank you. Mr. Chair, that's the end of my questions. I would like to thank the minister and his officials for going above and beyond the sort of scope, I guess, of the supplementary estimates and being quite open to other questions. I look forward to spring when we can go all over the place for a longer time. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Are there any other questions for the minister and his officials from any other committee members? I see none. I would like to thank the minister and his officials for appearing before the committee this evening.

And before I ask for a motion of adjournment, I would just like to thank all members who participated in this evening's proceedings for co-operating and making the Chair's job quite uneventful this evening. And with that, I would ask for a motion of adjournment. Mr. Allchurch has moved that this committee adjourn. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That's agreed. This committee stands adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 22:21.]