



# **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 15:00.]

**The Chair:** — I'll call the committee to order. Good afternoon, everyone. Once again it's Monday and the Human Services Committee has a full agenda. We'll start the afternoon with the consideration of vote 36, Social Services. This evening we will consider the spending estimates of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour until 9:30 at which time we will then move to vote 73, Corrections, Public Safety and Policing. I would note that we have one substitution this afternoon and that is Mr. Forbes for Mr. Broten.

**General Revenue Fund  
Social Services  
Vote 36**

**Subvote (SS01)**

**The Chair:** — We do have Minister Harpauer, Minister of Social Services, here with her officials. The minister and her officials have appeared before the committee on a previous occasion to discuss the spending estimates of the ministry, so what I would do at this time is ask the minister to introduce her officials.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. With me today, seated on my left, is Dr. Allan Hansen, the deputy minister of Social Services. And behind me I have Bob Wihlidal, the assistant deputy minister for client services; Larry Chaykowski, assistant deputy minister for housing; Tim Korol, assistant deputy minister for child and family services; Jeff Redekop, executive director for community living; Andrea Brittin, executive director for child and family services; Lynn Tulloch, executive director for income assistance; Tim Gross, the associate executive director for housing; Don Allen, the executive director of corporate services.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Minister. And, Minister, I would ask if you have officials joining you at the table if you could identify them for Hansard and that would be most helpful. Seeing that the minister has appeared before the committee on a previous occasion, I don't believe there is a need for an opening statement unless the minister has a very short opening statement.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Another official just arrived, so I have one add-on for the officials, and that is Glenda Francis, the executive director for the human resource services. But I don't have an opening statement.

**The Chair:** — Good. Thank you, Minister. So at this time I would ask if there are committee members that have any questions for the minister. I recognize Ms. Atkinson.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Minister, I note that you have two acting assistant deputy ministers, one responsible for housing and one responsible for child and family services. I'm interested in knowing whether both of these acting assistant deputy ministers have received their appointments through the classified public service.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — The acting assistant deputy minister

for housing, I believe, was through the public service.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — So the acting assistant deputy minister for child and family services, that position did not occur through the normal public service classified service process?

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

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Can you indicate to the committee the credentials of this person who is acting as the assistant deputy minister and has been appointed by order in council?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — His resumé description can be supplied to you. I didn't bring his resumé with me.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — And can this resumé be supplied to us before the end of this committee meeting because I understand that today is the last day for Social Services estimates?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Perhaps to save you some time because I know you've had a lot, a great deal of interest in this particular employee, this was a position that did not exist before. Many provinces have stand-alone ministries for child and family services. Under the previous administration, of which you were a cabinet member, there wasn't even deemed the importance to child and family services to have a deputy minister in charge.

So therefore I did see some areas where there was a great deal of concern in the file and felt that the position was very important. The strengths that I was looking for, when I was looking for someone for this position, was that they were able to work in fixing an organization which was recognized by members of your own government as being dysfunctional, and has been pointed out by the Children's Advocate as being a demoralizing workplace, and there was a number of concerns that ... So I was looking for someone who could build relationships and to look at an organizational structure.

The other thing that I was looking for, and I have said both of these things publicly, was someone who could build the relationships with the First Nations. We have 18 First Nations agencies, and the relationship with all of those 18 has not been a healthy relationship for several years. So that in my mind was very, very important.

I consulted with Vice-chief Guy Lonechild before making my decision, and he was a huge advocate of the particular employee that we have employed. That, and absolutely we checked out the people that he had given for references, and he came highly recommended. He also was employed in a number of fronts with your own government prior to the election. He had done work in various areas with your government, so I didn't foresee where he would be a particularly problematic employee.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you, Minister, were you involved in the actual hiring of this person?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I did through my office. Like I said, I personally talked to Vice-chief Guy Lonechild.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — So is it the normal process of your

government to go around, I guess, what would be the normal process of the deputy minister for your ministry along with people in the Public Service Commission to go through a competitive process to appoint someone to this position? So is it your position that this person could not have received their position through a competitive process had they applied for the assistant deputy minister of child and family services?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — It's very interesting, because the hang-up here is process, of course, and my priority was the children. And we are talking about a very broken system. It's been identified by a number of people that have come with concerns. I met with front-line workers who are very concerned. Pointed out by the Children's Advocate year over year, and nothing has been addressed. So I was looking for specific skills that perhaps wouldn't be normally depicted for that particular position. And in my mind the children come before process. And the legislature allows for such exceptions.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Chair, assistant deputy ministers are part of the classified public service and I certainly understand that you might be looking for a particular set of skill sets to fulfill an assistant deputy minister, now in charge of child and family services. So are you saying, Minister, that this candidate couldn't have made it through the normal public service process to get their job through the normal process and had to be appointed through order in council?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I don't know because we didn't use the process, as you pointed out.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — And as I understand it, through the Chair, there have been people that have been appointed as assistant deputy ministers. The process can be expedited with the agreement of the Public Service Commission and the deputy minister responsible for the ministry. Was that attempted by yourself?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I'm not sure if this is a witch hunt or what the issue . . .

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Not at all.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I guess my question is, is there a particular . . . Because no, this hasn't been normal practice and the member is well aware that this was an exception. It was a newly created position and you are well aware of that. So I fail to understand why your persistence.

The point that you're trying to make, is there some reason why you feel this person is not doing an adequate job? I've given you all the reasons of why I chose to go this route, the importance that I felt even creating the position in the first place. This was a system that has been neglected for a number of years. It's been pointed out on many fronts. So I could go through processes and allow the system to be at the whim of processes. But I'm sorry — the children need a system that's working. And so the process can come before that, I suppose, but I didn't feel that that's what I wanted to do.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — So, Madam Minister, is this going to be your mode of operation for the rest of your term, that if you don't like the process you're going to usurp the process and do as you

want? I mean there is a reason why there is a process and it's about having a professional public service. It's about indicating to people who work in the ministry that people get their job through the legitimate process. There are OCs [order in council] obviously for deputy ministers, associate deputy ministers. But assistant deputy ministers are . . . They're not political appointments. They're people who go through the normal process and they receive their jobs based on the requirements of the department.

And I'm just wondering. You know, you can use the rationale at the moment, but it seems to me that, you know, a couple of weeks to go through the process so that a person obtains their job legitimately then sends a signal to the rest of the public service — and people within the ministry, Minister — that this is the person that went through the process. And I'm just wondering, is this how you are going to approach your ministry in the future?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — My record stands contrary to that. I'm sorry. I have about 2,000 employees; this is one out of 2,000. There has been employee changes within the ministry. So to go to that length of assumption over one position when the legislation allows for this, I think, is a little over-the-top judgmental.

No, it hasn't been what I've done for any other position in any manner, and there's been changes in positions. So it's a huge leap that is unjustifiable, quite frankly.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Chair, to the minister. Minister, there are people that are watching your government, and this came to my attention because there are people within your own ministry that have concerns about how this appointment took place. And as the opposition, it's incumbent upon me to raise issues when the process is not being adhered to. And in this case, it wasn't.

And so obviously . . . I mean you can spin it any way you want, but the reality is that this is an assistant deputy minister that did not go through the process to get their position. So my question is, how long is this person going to be in an acting position?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Well there is definitely . . . We have set a goal of 200 additional spaces for children within the next year. That's a target that we have set as a government, and it will be challenging to accomplish that. It was not accomplished in any given year by the previous government.

There are issues to do with the structure. Is child and family services structured in a manner that is working well? And front-line workers have definitely brought forward concerns that it is not functioning well. The Children's Advocate has identified concerns that it's not functioning well. So there is expectations I have for that position, undoubtedly.

I also mentioned, you know, keeping a good working relationship with the First Nations agencies is critical to this ministry and to child welfare system. So I guess you yourself as well could spin this any way you want. But the assumption is that we're going to just jump over any process, and the process is the be-all and end-all and is the only way to go.

[15:15]

In this case, I felt that the situation was too critical and made a different decision that is allowable by the rules. And if officials have concerns, by all means they have every opportunity to raise them with me. I have not had any concerns brought to my attention in my office of this.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Oh it doesn't surprise me that you haven't had any concerns brought to your attention because you're seen as the person who made this appointment. It wasn't an appointment that was made by officials in your ministry. It didn't go through the normal process. This is strictly seen as a Donna Harpauer appointment, made by the minister, and that's highly unusual.

Usually appointments are made . . . You have a deputy minister for a reason; they administer the department. But in this case you have inserted yourself into this. So people aren't going to contact you. But I can tell you, I can assure you, Minister, through long-time public servants, that this has raised a few eyebrows not only within your own ministry, but in other ministries as well. And I guess I will send this out to people. They'll see that this is just a decision of yours.

You thought you were doing what was best in the interest of children. You haven't indicated that this OC will expire. You haven't indicated that the person who got the job will eventually go through the process to get the job. And I also think when you say there's no one that was in charge of child and family services, I think that there are people in the department that would say that there was an assistant deputy minister in the past that had this kind of portfolio of task within your ministry.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — It was tagged on with a number of other tasks; it wasn't a focused task. Whereas as I pointed out before, most provinces have a stand-alone ministry, let alone a tag on with everything else within the ministry. So that point I disagree with, but the rest of your point is fairly taken.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Okay. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Vermette:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the minister and your officials, I guess where I want to bring my concerns to and some questions to your ministry, I guess, is in housing. And I'll be honest with you; I've had quite an opportunity in my constituency to deal with the housing issue. It's quite a concern to people back home, to people who don't have a home, the crowding that's going on. There's a lot of issues.

And I realize a week or so ago . . . And I know this is not, it's a federal jurisdiction where there was about \$60 million for housing on-reserve. So I think from the federal government, I realize there's dollars coming in. But I'm thinking more of your provincial housing dollars that, you know, you guys allocate. And I wouldn't mind having a breakdown of how many new houses will be built in the North, how many will be built, provincial dollars will take part on-reserve and off-reserve as well for the North. So if I could have those type of numbers, I would like that information.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I cannot supply the numbers for

on-reserve because I'm not responsible for the on-reserve housing. And so you would have to obtain those numbers from the federal government.

Off-reserve, since November 2000, which is the election, there's been 48 units that have been completed in the northern communities. And if you just give me, I can actually give you the numbers. There was 12 in Creighton; 8 in La Loche which was affordable housing; 12 which were also in La Loche, so that's 20 in La Loche. In Sandy Bay, there was 10.

There was one student housing in La Loche; four houses were relocated to La Loche. There's two student housings in La Loche since the election.

There also was in the expression of interest, I don't believe any of those . . . Or not the expression of interest. There was a federal trust fund that was allocated of 26 million. I don't believe that has been delivered yet. But that is in the hands of the First Nations and Métis Nations to choose where they want to see that allocated and again that was federal funding.

Just give me one moment. We have eight units that are under construction as we speak and because they haven't been publicly announced, I can't disclose the specific projects. And we have 30 more additional units that are in the pre-construction, business plan development stage.

The federal government has just announced their funding fairly recently, so we're sort of working through. We have not signed as a province yet, but it is significant funding that would be allocated for Saskatchewan. And you know, once that's signed, we'll work through the details of how much federal dollars, how many provincial dollars, and an allocation of those funding.

**Mr. Vermette:** — So I guess I want to go back to this. You identified a number of them. You said, just to be, and I want to be clear, four. You got to a number of four, and I missed that. You went . . .

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I'm sorry. There was four houses relocated to La Loche. So they weren't built on site.

**Mr. Vermette:** — These eight new ones that are under construction, you can't say where they're at. But just to be clear, you're saying those were in the North.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes. Yes, they are.

**Mr. Vermette:** — The proposal for 30 more houses, they're going through the planning or whatever the process, that's for the North?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — It's all for the North.

**Mr. Vermette:** — And none of these will be on-reserve.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — No.

**Mr. Vermette:** — Okay. What is your plan for on-reserve housing as far as matching any dollars that, some of the provincial-federal partnerships? Do you see anything like that

going on?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — No, we do not. It is not something our province has ever partaken in, is direct dollars on-reserve for housing.

**Mr. Vermette:** — Are you aware of the waiting lists in the North? And I guess I can break down communities if you'd like. I can do that, sit here for the, you know, and go through all the different communities. Are you guys aware, and your officials, the waiting time that people wait when they apply for a house with low-income housing or affordable housing in the North? And I wouldn't mind a breakdown of whether it . . . I guess I could put that in writing to you if you would like that. But if you have any comments to make, or any of your officials, as the waiting lists, or you're aware of some of the crowding that's going on in our northern communities.

I mean it's unreal. And we talk about the health issues for babies and respiratory problems that are having, and just the different things that go on when you have such crowding. You have a mother who might have three of her children with their spouses, with their kids — like some of these situations are — because there's just no affordable housing. There's just zero, nil.

So those are concerns that I'm being faced with when I go into the communities and talk to them, and they're asking. And it's hard because, to understand that whole process that they go through and every day that they're put into, and try to bring to your attention and your ministry's attention of those concerns.

And I know that there are some of the housing authorities that look after some of those units, but there's also . . . I'll go to some other questions after if you just want to . . .

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I don't have specific waiting list data here with me. We can supply that to you, as well as the history of the waiting list if you would like. I don't believe my officials have that, but I will just see. No, I'm being told that we don't have that detailed of numbers with us here today.

**Mr. Vermette:** — Well maybe what I'll do is instead of doing it . . . I guess I can go in writing, but I'm going to put this to you: is it possible to, is there a time length that you guys could have those numbers to me? Or would you prefer that I put it in writing to you? Because if you can do it just this way and in a short while I'd get some of that, that'll be fine. Otherwise, you know, I could request it in writing if need be.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Just by asking the question here in this format is authorization enough for us to give you the information.

**Mr. Vermette:** — Okay. Thank you for that. My next question will . . . How do you . . . I guess as an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly], you know, people come in our office and my constituency office. I have one in Pelican and I have one in La Ronge. And it's to try to deal with some of the concerns if somebody needs assistance and, you know, sometimes not everybody has the ability to travel and stuff like that.

When you have your housing authorities, is it a practice or do you . . . And I just want to see what your feelings are on this. Should the CA [constituency assistant] be able to contact those offices and try to assist somebody if they're having problems with applying for a house?

And sometimes there's a different reason why somebody needs some assistance. You know, some people are quite free to go do it themselves. They'll go through the whole process. It's no big deal and they can do that. Some people unfortunately just aren't there and they need some assistance to help them. And it's not to cause any grief to anybody. It's just, say, to help them with that process; getting the application, filling it all out, getting it out on time, making sure everything's covered. And I'll be honest with you: in my constituency there are some people who need the extra help.

At this point I want to know your feelings on that, and if you'd comment. Do you think what I'm commenting is a fair process? And should the housing authorities work with somebody who's trying to do it in that way — and I don't mean it in a negative way, I mean truly in a positive way — for a client?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Well I can tell you my constituency assistant does just that. If there's someone that needs help accessing — they're not even too sure what office to access for services — or if they're struggling with an application, if they don't understand an appeal process or, you know, the fact that there's an advocate in the different area where they may have concerns, my constituency assistant does all of that. She works with clients very closely to help step them through the processes that they need if they are struggling to understand it themselves. And I expect that of her.

I would also expect the housing authority to help as much as they can as well. So if there's a specific concern with an authority not being particularly helpful, I would suggest that, yes, you put that in writing. And you may not publicly want to state it here. But most housing authorities are exceptional in helping clients.

And I think most constituency assistants in our office are exceptional as well.

**Mr. Vermette:** — Okay. I thank the minister for her response to that. And that's going to be very useful in the next little while.

I guess, you know, when I talk to different leaders back home in my constituency, and whether it's the leadership and some of them . . . And again I go back to this because there's a lot of needs on-reserve for housing. It's just as well as if off-reserve.

And there's an opportunity. And you know, whether it's a challenge, I think we all have a responsibility as a government. And I understand there's opposition. There's a governing body and there's the government. And right now your party is the government and we are the official opposition, the NDP [New Democratic Party] party. And I'm new, learning that process.

But going through that process, when I see situations — and I guess I will bring to you, your attention and your government's attention — when people back home in my constituency have

concerns and when they share with me . . . Because whether they're on-reserve or off-reserve, you know, at election time we all want the votes. And we go out door knocking, and we encourage people to get out, and we want them to vote. And I don't see it as . . . At that time nobody seems to say, oh I'm sorry; I won't come knock on your door because you're on-reserve. And I'm just sharing with you my view because I'm new.

So I would encourage and I will encourage. And I've been asked to encourage and put the challenge out to, you know, yourself and your government that it would be nice to see more move on a partnership with First Nations on-reserve housing and provincial government, feds — when dollars come forward from your provincial coffers, that they wouldn't be pulled away from the feds, that it's a true partnership because of the lack of housing.

[15:30]

Some of the communities border municipalities, so the people go back and forth — whether they're, okay, on this side of the street, okay I'm on municipal so I want to go apply for a house. On this side, I'm treaty, but I could live on the reserve, but there's no affordable housing either way. So some of my communities are exactly that way. And the struggle is there and it doesn't . . . They could live on a reserve, honestly, tomorrow and move off because there's no place.

So those challenges that have been asked, and I guess I'll put that towards and see what your response is. I wish, you know, for the people back home that are suffering and don't have a home, and there are some families who have young children . . . For no cause of their own — whether it's misunderstanding, accident, you know, tragedy, whatever happens to somebody — they're in a situation where they have no home. And I'm working with them and my CA is, and we're going to continue to follow this up.

I guess I put that out to you almost as, you know . . . What I'm hearing from my constituency, I want to make sure for the record that I've passed that on to you and your officials and your government, to hear that people are in a dire need, on-reserve, off-reserve, and communities that are so . . . They're attached. The only thing that separates them is a walk. So the housing issues, they go back to one family member, back to the other, because they have no place to go. And it's a sad reality. And there's such a shortage of housing in the North. And people are seriously, they're overcrowded. And you're seeing the health and safety of these young kids, adults, our elders. So anyway I share that with you.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I have met with the New North on more than one occasion and listened to their concerns, as well as I've travelled to some northern communities. The jurisdictional issue I understand would be frustrating, you know, in your situation, and of course it was decisions made long before either you or I were elected.

I would suggest to you perhaps it might be helpful if you had this discussion with Mr. Belanger. He had this position for quite a period of time and understood, obviously, the difficulty of the province getting involved in on-reserve housing because he

chose not to and didn't change the set precedent. So perhaps that would be helpful in helping you to understand the jurisdictional challenges that also come with this particular file.

**Mr. Vermette:** — And thank you for that and I will do that; I'll follow it up with him. But also I have to look at it this way: times change. You know, you have decisions to make as a government. You have an opportunity when there's lots of dollars and there's opportunities and there's a commitment. But sometimes change . . . We can always blame people or come back and say it's their fault.

And I understand that, you know, at that time that government didn't do it, but there's new government. There's new changes. And I keep hearing your government say that, so that's why I put it to you today — not to be disrespectful to you, but to say truly if there's an opportunity for change, you may be the person that's willing to make that change.

You announced today you made some changes, that you've decided there's a need, so you just went out. So I put that to you the same way. Maybe you'll see the need, and that's why I'm going down this route of questions to you. And maybe you'll see that there's time for a change, and you can convince your party that it's time to look at this, in partnership with the federal government, to deal with the shortage of First Nations housing on reserve, that we do have a responsibility. They are voters. They live in this province. It's time that we look at that and have a serious look at it. Thank you.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Very good. Thank you for that viewpoint.

**The Chair:** — Are there any other committee members that would have questions for the minister? Ms. Junor.

**Ms. Junor:** — I just want to talk about the rental housing supplement line in the budget. I have a question that comes to me from seniors — and you can correct me if I'm wrong — about the qualifications of people who would be eligible for the rental supplement. There used to be families, people with families, and I've had the question asked of me, why wouldn't we offer this to singles, and particularly, single elderly women need it. I wonder if we've given any thought to that.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — It is offered for families or if someone in the household has disabilities. So it goes beyond families in the area of disabilities. So it may be a single individual or a partnership or one or the other has a disability, is where that program is available.

I haven't had one approach for single seniors so, no, we have not had that discussion. Seniors in general was absolutely a concern as to, you know, what they could afford in rising costs which is why we made the significant announcement on increasing the seniors' income plan, which was applauded by government as a whole, including yourselves. But I haven't had pressure on this particular program to include seniors.

**Ms. Junor:** — Perhaps it's not coming for the rental supplement because that's not where mine is coming from. They don't know about it. But what's coming to me is seniors coming and saying, my rent is going up \$100 next month . . .

just recently at a banquet. My rent is going up; I can't afford it. My neighbour's went up this or that. And I'm thinking, why aren't they eligible for this because it would be something that . . . I know raising the supplement to seniors is a good thing. But this is also a program that they could apply for if their need was such, if we had our criteria changed so that they could apply if there were, you know, some criteria that would capture those single senior women in particular.

Those are the ones who are coming to me. And they're not coming for this program because they don't know about it. But I'm thinking that is somewhere that you could put money that could perhaps capture this need and assist these particular women in a bigger way or a more adequate way.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — As I said, it hasn't been something we've considered, but I thank you for that suggestion. And I do agree with you, that the rental increases, in particular the city that you represent, has been extremely difficult for seniors. So the first thing that we did was the seniors' income plan change which was a significant budget increase that we needed for that. And we will be monitoring it very closely to see if we need to look further for other programming for seniors.

I also know that our government committee for human services has met with a number of seniors groups. They report to me with suggestions of what they're hearing as well, which we'll be doing throughout the summer. I'm sure they're going to have a list of, this is what we hear. The Chair's not committing to a thing.

**Ms. Junor:** — Well I just know that seniors, senior women that are talking to me, don't know about this. So it's something that I am saying we should maybe look at, that this is a place where maybe we could put money that could assist you. So I'm glad to hear that you think that there's some merit in the thought.

My next question — and you and I have been corresponding on this three or four times, four anyways — the HomeFirst homeowner program, and it is a constituent of mine who's actually applied for it which triggered my questions. And she was denied access to it and was told that the money had run out and of course that was in October.

And it seems to be now that there's a different number of people who have applied and received approval since our first letter which was in October. As of March now, you're quoting January 31 numbers that show a significant increase in approvals and conditional approvals. This particular constituent was told, as of October, there was no more money. So I think that she's quite interested in knowing why that there still seems to be money added or people added or numbers added, which is one question.

Second one, I see in one of the letters it says, there's 60 people, and this is the March 5 letter that you sent to me, of this year. There is 60 applicants who were given conditional approval, and their applications have expired or dropped out of the program. Does that then add the money that they were allocated back into the program? And will there be people who were on the list who didn't have access to it that will be revisiting? That's my second question.

And my third question is, of the areas indicated here — you have Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Regina, Saskatoon, and rural — and before my colleague from the North leaves, I'd like to know, in rural, how many HomeFirst homeowner program people got money north of P.A. [Prince Albert]?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I'm going to try to remember your questions. I believe — but I will have that confirmed by my officials — that yes, if someone was being held funding for a person and they couldn't secure the remainder of the mortgage and they drop off as you said, then that money becomes available for someone else. But I will just confirm that with Mr. Chaykowski.

**The Chair:** — While the minister is conferring with her officials, I would just like to welcome the teachers that are attending the Social Sciences Teachers' Institute. They have joined us here in the committee room to observe the committee proceedings. And on behalf of the committee, I'd like to extend a welcome. I'm sure the people that have put the program together — at least it's my hope — that they have briefed you as to what we are doing here, and I hope that you will find it informative.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Okay. Yes, the pool of money that was allocated to the HomeFirst homeownership program is a finite amount of dollars that's available, so if an application falls off, they will revisit other applications, but there's some hesitation till they know the level of assistance that's going to be needed for the ones that they're working with right now. So there's a bit of a hesitation right now, but the funding will not be allocated to something else. So those applications will be kept until the funding is completely allocated.

The North that you asked about falls under the remote home ownership program which is a separate program.

**Ms. Junor:** — So none of this money was allocated north of P.A., to what it was we considered a rural northern community.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — That's correct.

**Ms. Junor:** — And what money is in that one?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I don't know. Again the specific details of all of the dollar amounts in housing, we'll have to supply at a future date.

**Ms. Junor:** — To the committee?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes.

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you. My other question then is, how many people applied for the program in rural areas and in urban areas, and I'm considering small urbans like Moose Jaw and smaller than that. How many applied and were not accepted?

[15:45]

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I'm being told by my officials that they kept applications until it went far beyond the funding allocation. So they've just turned down applications from there, so they don't have those numbers of total applications.



**Ms. Junor:** — And never will?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — And never will.

**Ms. Junor:** — Okay.

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I've just become aware of, you know, over the course of being critic for Social Services, the wide range of services that the department, the ministry, provides for the folks that they support. One of them is the whole issue around denture work and denture care. And so I'm wondering if you or some of your officials could talk about the services that your ministry pays the denturists for those services, and how much they pay. And how is that all working?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — We're going to have Ms. Tulloch join us at the table for that type of detail to our programming.

**Ms. Tulloch:** — Thank you. Lynn Tulloch with income assistance division. All recipients of social assistance programs do have access to health benefits, and there are certain benefits that are included, dental benefits, as part of that. I don't have the details of exactly what is covered with me here today, and I can't speak specifically around the denturists' expenses specifically.

**Mr. Forbes:** — But there is a contract that you have with the denturists or their association to provide this service. Does it typically pay for the service completely, or what has been the history of this?

**Ms. Tulloch:** — I'm not aware if we actually have a contract with the denturists. Through Saskatchewan Health, they have access to certain health benefits under supplementary health, and there are some dental benefits included there. But I'm not sure to what extent that extends to dentures.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I understand that actually that there is a bit of a difference between what the denturists, what they charge and what the government pays. So you're not aware of those numbers here? You don't have access to the costs?

**Ms. Tulloch:** — In terms of what is reimbursed, that would be through Saskatchewan Health. Through Social Services, we nominate people for the health coverage, and then Saskatchewan Health actually manages the details.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So it doesn't come out of your budget?

**Ms. Tulloch:** — No, it does not.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay.

**Ms. Tulloch:** — But we would nominate the individuals for the health coverage . . .

**Mr. Forbes:** — Sure.

**Ms. Tulloch:** — And then Saskatchewan Health would . . .

**Mr. Forbes:** — You know, we've been talking about the rental supplement, the uptake on that. How many people would be — in general terms, just generally a ballpark figure — be covered under the supplementary health benefits?

**Ms. Tulloch:** — Under supplementary health benefits? Again I wouldn't actually have that exact number available, again because we liaise with Health on that and their budget covers it.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay, good. So under your understanding then, it's a discussion, if there is a contract that it would be between Health and the denturists. It would not be between the denturists and Social Services.

**Ms. Tulloch:** — It would not be between the denturists and Social Services. No, definitely. I have just found some of my reference material. I can provide you with a bit more information.

The dental coverage that is available through supplementary health includes routine dental services such as examinations, X-rays, cleaning, restoration, extractions, and dentures. There's also family health benefits which extends the same benefits to children. And that's the general gist of the dental coverage. But as I say, we make the nomination to Health, and then Health administers it and covers it under their budget.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Now are you aware of how the bargaining is going? Does Health keep you in the loop in terms of how things are going at the table with the different providers of the services?

**Ms. Tulloch:** — To my knowledge, I haven't had any discussions with Health around that and the service providers. No.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Well thank you. I think my colleague, Mr. Belanger, has a few questions.

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

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and welcome to the minister and officials. Just a couple of questions, Madam Minister. I won't go into details about the housing because I have other questions, and I'm sure we'll have the opportunity to ask them at a later date.

But in terms of the fixed income or low-income people and some of the client base that we serve, or as the minister that you are responsible for, if you were in their shoes — just curiosity, Madam Minister — what would be your priorities as a head of the household if you're the mother or the father or parents, and you had two or three kids living on a fixed income, in particular, social services? What would be your four or five priorities in terms of where you'd spend your money?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I mean the obvious priorities for any given family is food, shelter, clothing.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Yes, that's exactly the checklist I have — food, clothing, and shelter. You're just a bit different. Utilities of course are up there as well. And the reason I asked is that if those are the priorities in terms of food, shelter, and clothing —

which are, you know, pretty standard in terms of the needs of a family with children — there's other challenges that people face. Of course you have other costs that you look at as a family because it is very expensive raising families in any parts of the world.

One of the things that families will do and one of the targets intended to support families on low income is a program called the RRAP program, the rural residential rehabilitation assistance plan, which is primarily meant to help families of low income repair their homes. And as you probably are familiar with the RRAP and the ERP [emergency repair program] programs, what's the total budget for both those programs to help low-income people help renovate their homes?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — My housing official will join us in a moment with the actual detailed numbers, but I recognize and agree that the RRAP program is an extremely important program and very beneficial to many families in our province. And seniors have access to it as well.

When the federal government had approached me shortly — because the agreements with the federal government were about to expire shortly — after the election, it was something that I campaigned on very, very hard with the federal counterparts. And I'm very pleased that that program has been renewed with the federal announcement.

So for the actual funding, so that agreement — as I mentioned earlier and you hadn't joined us yet — the federal government is committing significant dollars to our province of which is funding for the RRAP program. We have not signed that agreement yet, and it isn't from any concern with it, it just has not worked with the schedule of the federal housing minister. So the RRAP program will be continuing with the new allocation from the federal government.

So my officials have told me that the new commitment by the federal government will be 10.2 million over two years. We will put in our cost share amount of 3.4, for a total of 13.6 million for the next two years.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Okay. And there's no question that the RRAP and the ERP program, from our perspective, we sincerely support that. I think one of the things that we often struggle with in terms of trying to maximize the benefit is, of course, the cost of material increases, and I think there was some adjustment made earlier to try and get as many families to benefit from this particular program as possible. So the maximum a person could earn to make them eligible for the RRAP or ERP program has been increased from, I think, 48,000 to 60,000, which is a good move given the fact that the last several years you've seen a tremendous growth in the cost of material.

It's along that particular train of thought, Mr. Chair, that I want to ask the minister, in terms of the 13.6 million over two years set aside for RRAP and ERP, and yes, seniors, those living on a fixed income, families that may be on assistance and own their own home, and as you struggle to make ends meet . . . And I'm glad the minister concurred with my assessment of what is priority with the families right now — you know, if you're head

of household — is food, clothing, and shelter.

Now recently I understand there's been a recent change in the rules to make families eligible for the RRAP and the ERP program. And as a result of those changes in the rules, it excluded many, many families. Perhaps the minister's not totally familiar with the rules, but I want her to clarify it with her officials. But a recent change is that if you owe land taxes to a municipality — bang — all of a sudden you're no longer eligible; whether it's \$10,000 or \$500, you're no longer eligible for the RRAP and ERP program.

And secondly, I think there's been three or four rule changes. I know of two, and I just want to get the minister to confirm whether these changes are in fact recent, and secondly is if there's any other rules that have been implemented.

The second rule that has been implemented is the fact that if you have any particular liens — contractor liens, subtrades' liens — against your property, again you're no longer eligible. Now I believe these are recent changes to the rules. And it's very unfair, Madam Minister, to have those rules implemented like that. And primarily because if you're living on a fixed income — of course we want to advocate responsible payment of your land taxes; that's pretty darn important to the communities to provide services — but if you're low income, and you're struggling as it is, then I think payment of land taxes is probably a lot lower in priority than food is.

So like you, many families living on fixed incomes make that decision to look at food, shelter, clothing all having priorities. Land taxes are probably 10th or 11th down the list, or maybe even not even on their list.

So as the department indicates, these new rules are necessary for families, you know, to make them responsible. Well I'm always an advocate for responsibility, but when there isn't money to go around, your land taxes become one of the casualties of your household budget.

So this whole notion, Madam Minister, of putting in a rule that your land taxes have to be up-to-date, you can't have any liens, I think is totally unfair because you're missing the mark. Families can't afford to fix up their own home by their own means now. So if you put them with more rules, that makes them become further eligible from this program. So I think, Madam Minister, I think we need to change those rules. That's not a very proper rule.

Again I want to re-emphasize we're advocating responsibility. But if there isn't money there and you own your own home and you need to repair a leaky roof or insulate your home better for your children, and they say, well you're eligible from the income perspective, but guess what, you owe some land taxes. Oh you owe a contractor a couple of hundred bucks from five years ago; sorry you're not eligible.

Now, are those two rules the only new rules that had been attached to the RRAP and ERP program?

[16:00]

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you for raising that concern.

My officials are not aware of that rule change and much of the rules of RRAP of course, because it's heavily funded by the federal government; the rules are decided by the federal government. However they are going to investigate, and if you could provide any other additional information for them that would be helpful. That would be great. But they'll take a look and see if they can find the situation that you are describing.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Okay, thank you very much. I would very much appreciate that. And I have a contact name of an individual that was told he had arrears. The amount was 500-and-some dollars. And of course we're not being proper to name clients here, and I can fully respect that, so I won't give the name. But I will give the name privately to the officials, and also your contact person within Sask Housing that advised me of these changes.

And again I don't want to blame any of the officials or staff because they simply answered the question that I asked. And much like the member from Saskatoon there, sometimes the answers or the questions are tricky and meant to catch people. And so I don't blame the officials nor the staff. They just primarily were very professional and provided me the information I asked. And I certainly hope the rules are changed on that eligibility issue because it just doesn't seem fair at all.

The second question I have is around the whole notion of foster care, Madam Minister. I can say that the foster care file needs a lot of attention. It is without doubt that we are seeing some radical shifts in how society operates and the values of society, and we see it on a continual daily basis. And certainly from the perspective of being part of an opposition which is part of government, as everybody knows, we implore you to continue focusing on that particular file because there are some serious structural problems in the manner in which we try and assist the whole notion of foster parents and foster families in general.

I often said if I was a billionaire, I'd build myself a 1,000-room house. And in that 1,000-room house, I'd get 1,000 child care workers to individually work with each child, and I'd just literally pick them up from different parts of our province. But of course, I'm not a billionaire. But the fact of the matter is the need is out there. And there needs to be some radical shifts and radical thinking as to how we could really begin to empower and embrace a lot of the groups and organizations in the province — First Nations and Métis groups as well — to try and develop a new safety net for many of our families being caught under the social services and foster care situation.

I simply wish you every success in that regard, putting politics aside, because we know that there is a lot of problems. And we know that the resources that are available now may not be able to resolve some of the problems. But boy, if imagination and innovation and attention is required in that particular field, that is exactly where I think you need to go.

In terms of the foster family file itself and supporting families that are weakened or threatened as a result of taking children away from their families, are there any specific measures, are there any kind of strategies that you're looking at that would help alleviate that particular problem? Because we know we've only seen the tip of the iceberg with this particular problem. We know children in care, on a daily basis the numbers are going

up. So innovation and brand new strategies, has there been any time spent in that regard?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Before I talk to the question, I want to thank you and I want to thank all of the members of your party, the critic of Social Services, for not politicizing this issue. It's very sensitive. It's very troubled. It's very challenged.

And I want to thank all of you for that — other than perhaps a previous colleague who is just after one particular employee, which is unfortunate — because you just pointed out yourself, this system has a lot of trouble and maybe going the process that was used previously is not the answer to get outside opinions and outside eyes. So we are looking at it a little differently. It's challenging and there is no one solution.

I'm assuming with the question that you're asking . . . And I guess I'm going to ask a question just for clarification. Are you meaning the assessment tool of how we assess whether or not a child is at risk so that perhaps we recognize neglect before it actually becomes harm, or were you referring to something different?

**Mr. Belanger:** — Well certainly there's a lot of theories and a lot of thoughts, but my particular question in that regard is really how are we engaging the families impacted?

Like for example, I know Aboriginal people in general have probably a greater experience with Social Services and taking the children away from the families, as do First Nations and as other poor non-Aboriginal families suffer as well. This is not, it's not based on being Aboriginal. It's that it's a poverty issue.

So my point is specifically on the First Nations file, on the Métis file, even from a geographical perspective; as the North is different from the South, as the East is different from the West. And on that non-Aboriginal file, that's what I'm thinking, is there something unique or different or concepts that you're looking at or inviting people to share with you, these kind of things? It's probably a \$1 billion question, but what is needed on that front to really put forward a good system? Because not one political party can claim compassion — the monopoly on compassion — that comes with this issue. It takes intelligence, perseverance, and some commitment.

So I think this spans across parties, and that's why we don't want to become political with it. But that's the line that I was thinking.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I've talked publicly and I try, you know. You know I don't have all the answers. But we are looking at proposals coming from communities, and so we made the announcement with CUMFI [Central Urban Métis Federation Inc.], community urban Métis federation incorporated — I had to think for a minute what the acronym meant. And their concept that they had approached us with is fostering families, rather than fostering children.

And I know that this will be watched very closely by other jurisdictions because it's a unique concept. That's not just, you know, let's take the kids away and foster the kids. They are offering to foster the families, have mentor parents in the apartment building. I'm extremely excited about that model.

Now is that for all of the situations? The answer is no. You are also very familiar, and I know you visited and spent some time with Egadz in Saskatoon which uses peer homes, which is another concept of not focusing on necessarily reuniting the families but having mentors in a home of youth, that can make them want to achieve a little more. So that's another model.

There is so many community groups that are doing a great job, and I'm open to looking at any new proposals they may have, as well as expanding existing programming that is successful because I think we need all of that. And I think you pointed that out as well. There's not just one model that we can shove all our kids into because they come with different challenges; they come with different pasts.

So for some families, we can foster families. For some we can have, you know, a mentor in a home, a supported home. Some may need intensive counselling because they have addictions or basically they have seen too much. And then we have our little ones; fetal alcohol syndrome comes into play here. So there's every thing that I can find that's available, we're going to give it a try.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Okay. The only closing comment I would have is that again I wish you every success in your deliberations of how to deal with this because I think, from Social Services' perspective, it's probably the biggest challenge we have as a province and as a society. And the biggest thing that I would say in my closing comments, brief as they might be, is that I urge you and implore you to look at the foster family or foster parent perspective as much as you can because it is the number one issue. I see it in our communities and I see it in our cities.

And we see that kind of degradation of the basic building blocks of humanity. Then, you know, there are some very basic fundamental problems with society today when we are discarding kids in the fashion that we are discarding kids, and they become problems later on. And there's thousands of theories and thousands of concepts and ideas. As radical as they may be, some of them have merit and others are kind of worrisome.

But from the perspective of focusing on this, I think it's the one thing we ought to spend tons of time. And I would encourage you as a minister to spend as much time as you are on the file of foster families and foster parents and foster children. Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much. And I see we've got about 45 minutes left, and so I've got a few quick questions. One for Sask Housing: I'm curious, I've heard some local stories about what happens when a house burns down. Are renters required to have house insurance? What happens with a home that's owned by Sask Housing? Is it self-insured, and will the house be rebuilt?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — So Sask Housing insures the property, but the contents, the tenant is encouraged to get a tenant package and advised to at the time of renting a Sask Housing unit.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And I assume then, if Sask Housing has insurance, they get the insurance when they rebuild the house.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — That's correct, right. Good, that makes sense.

My next question is dealing with, actually, with the federal budget that came out early in January, and of course was a budget to stimulate the economy in Canada. And there was a large section of that that dealt with housing. And I'm hoping that the province has aligned its budget in a certain way that could take full advantage of the components within the federal budget. If you could highlight just a few of those. But clearly people have been asking that we didn't miss this opportunity when the federal money was coming.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I agree. We're very mindful of maximizing our dollars because it's just a very, very important thing to do. A little disappointment to the Western provinces is that the federal announcement seems to be heavily weighted on renovation rather than new build. And all of the Western provinces, we have a lot of demand for new build, for additional stock. However, we will still work with the federal government and maximize what we can.

And it is significant dollars that they are offering. We had hoped to connect with the federal counterpart when we had our break a week ago; however she was unable to come. So it'll be very shortly that we'll be signing the agreement and allocating money accordingly.

[16:15]

**Mr. Forbes:** — So there is, as far as you're aware and the ministry's aware, there is no missed opportunities when it comes to this federal budget then.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — You have to remember, this is over two years. Yes, it's funding over two years and if the signature with the federal government isn't our dollar commitment, exact dollars, so we will access, we'll have X number of dollars available to us to access. So it's our responsibility to ensure that we access it.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Good thing. Thanks a lot. There's been a lot of talk and of course one of the recommendations that came out of the Merriman-Pringle report was the rent bank. And there's been a lot of talk; in fact, it was on the news this morning on CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation], a community group picking that up.

And they've been talking about the provincial role and how they might help with that and I think there's two aspects to it. One of course they need financial support to actually have money to, you know, to support the individuals who may come forward. But also I am curious — and maybe this is a notice for next time when we meet about the Sask Housing Act — are there legislative requirements for a rent bank? I'm not sure; I don't know if anybody can actually go out and just lend money.

And has Sask Housing taken a look to see what are the legislative requirements of something of that kind? It's a little

different than a food bank and so we need to make sure that all the i's are dotted and the t's are crossed before this moves forward.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — We haven't had the discussion of a rent bank. My understanding is there is a emergency tenancy fund in Ontario as well as Alberta. I'm not as familiar with Alberta as I'm doing some reading on the different housing initiatives that they have in Ontario. It made me realize that we have to be very mindful of comparing programs to programs because there was an advocacy group in Ontario who said one of the biggest stresses, in the article I was reading, was that Ontario's shelter funds that were available were not representative of the community in which the person lives.

So they were saying that transportation costs were high because they couldn't afford to live perhaps where they needed to or wanted to, so they were living in a cheaper community, but they had to commute a long ways. So we've addressed that obviously in the increase to the shelter allowance, changing the regions that they represent, indexing them to the CMHC [Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation] standards of that community. So it isn't something that I'm considering at this point in time.

I think the changes to the shelter allowance and the rental supplement rates has been very well received and took a lot of stress out of the system. And we will continue to look and monitor that. We've made another significant increase in February because we're going to, you know, revisit and adjust the numbers every six months as long as the market is hot such as it is. Now it's levelled somewhat so it'll be interesting six months from now to know, you know, are we still seeing the leaps and bounds that we were experiencing, and again especially in the city that you represent, but also here in Regina.

The other thing that we did — and you're well aware — was change the tenancy Act so that the rent can't be increased multiple times through a year which was, I think, very important as well to our renters.

**Mr. Forbes:** — You raise a really interesting point, and it's one we kind of alluded to last time. And the point I was asking earlier about the health benefits is, how do you know when you're really reaching a significant group of people who need support? We think there's a group out there who needs the rent support — and I think a lot of credit goes to you and to the ministry for the changes to the rental supplement — but we're not seeing the uptake that I'm surprised that there would be. And I don't know why that is.

And when I've talked to people, there's questions about tying it to a home inspection, whether that's an issue. And I think this is almost something when you bring forth the Sask Housing Act in a while, will the board have those kind of conversations to say, we have this really good program; is there only 4,000 people who need this in Saskatchewan? And maybe that is the answer. Maybe there are only 4,000. I'd be surprised if that's the case. But continually we need to go back and check to see what is the uptake.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I agree with you to a degree. But who are we to decide? And some people don't want it. They truly

don't. They do not want it. They do not want a handout. They see it as a handout. So I've had that just on a personal level or being out and about, of they don't want it. So if they are managing because if they are going to fall through the cracks, and they do approach our ministry, by all means they're told about it.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Now I have some questions about, on the website you have the performance measures and that's helpful. On page 7, it talks about the number of affordable housing units developed through housing programs. And you have in 2006 — 1,205; in the year 2007 — 1,880; in the year 2008 — 2,457, which is almost double, well it is more than double the 2006. Can you explain a little more about this graph? Did last year 1,200 more units come online, or what does this mean?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I have to apologize because I didn't bring that with me today. So I'll refer to my officials, and hopefully someone has the graph here with us.

**Mr. Chaykowski:** — Thank you. Larry Chaykowski from housing division within the ministry. The graph, I'm just sorting for it myself here, but I believe that graph is it's a cumulative over time — the number of units — if it's the one that I'm looking at.

**Mr. Forbes:** — There's more than 2,400 Sask Housing units out there though.

**Mr. Chaykowski:** — Yes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Yes, for sure.

**Mr. Chaykowski:** — That graph depicts new developments that have been added to the affordable housing portfolio. If we were looking at what's . . . You're quite correct. What would be missing from this, I think what you're looking for, is what is the base of existing subsidized housing units that are out there. And that number would be in the order of 30,000, 18,000 of which are owned by the housing corporation, and roughly another 12,000 that are subsidized primarily through non-profit housing organizations. This graph depicts what was developed through different housing programs in those years on a cumulative basis.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Now when you say those years, do you mean . . . When is your first year?

**Mr. Chaykowski:** — So I believe the base year, it's not apparent from this. I think we're starting from about 2005, adding 2006, 2007, and then 2008.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And I'd be very happy about this because it looks like a HomeFirst. Is this the initiative that started in 2004, the five years?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — We're still using the HomeFirst, the home rental, right now.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Yes, sure. And that's fair enough; that's fair enough.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes, that's the program that we're still

working under.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. So that's what's the . . . And that was the original goal, 2,500 homes I think, units.

**Mr. Chaykowski:** — The original goal was 2,000.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. And then I go to the last year. You had talked about 856 units would be coming online over the next 18 months and so I did ask a written question. You provided the question of all those units that were coming online and I know there's a couple . . . And we're really anxious for the Lighthouse project in Saskatoon. And I keep bringing that one up because I think that would be a great one. Other than that, are you pretty much on stream from bringing those 856 units online, subtracting of course the Lighthouse which was oh, how many housing units — 120.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Housing's so difficult because it's always sliding, you know, because you have them in various stages. So since the election — and these would have been projects approved by the previous administration of which you were a part of: 429 projects have been completed; 307 are in construction; and 843 are in developmental stages. So one that we've been able to announce, for example, is the student housing. So that is the business plan and everything. It will be in construction this year, but it isn't right now.

So that keeps rolling. And some projects take two years; some will be done this summer. And so housing statistics is probably the most frustrating thing I've worked with to nail down the numbers as a solid number, because it changes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Ruled by the clock. Have you — and maybe this is when you're thinking about the Act — are you thinking about an overall multi-year plan? Is that something that we can be thinking will be coming in the next while?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I guess we can have that discussion when we have the discussion committee on the Act. But what I think we need to do and why I think a board that represents industry as well as our Housing Corporation as it exists today — municipal, First Nations, and Métis Nations — is to look at existing policies, existing programs. Are they working? You know, and the home ownership program, I mean you've raised it yourself and it's sort of phasing out because it doesn't apply to today's market. The market is not affordable even if you are giving a hand up.

How we can be more responsive? The process that was in place under yourself when you were in government in my mind is a very slow process. Some of the submissions from the expression of interest in the fall of 2007 still aren't built. You know, so how can they get a more streamlined process? We need to look at vacancy rates and be a little more responsive to those communities that are going to experience vacancy rate challenges such as what happened in Saskatoon, now, you know, being experienced in Regina.

So there's a number of things that, yes, I want this board to take a look at and housing is kind of a rolling, ongoing budget because of the fact that some projects are done in a year, some are done in three years — so that you have to have ongoing

funding to support all of those.

We don't have right now but perhaps at some point in time we will have a target number. The problem with target numbers in housing is, in all honesty if you would have in government had a target number, not anticipating the growth in the population of the province that we've experienced, your target would have been sorely short of where it should be.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Yes, and that's a point well made, but it does, you know, rally the troops around an issue that needs to be supported and people can understand that. And I think — and I'm curious — you talked a little bit about the Ontario; we've looked at what's happened in Ontario. So I have to ask you, have you watched what's been unfolding in Alberta the last, since February? And it's been exciting news there on a whole host of different things. And of course theirs is a 10-year plan and of course those are the issues.

Who knows, who can predict what will happen in 10 years? What they have said is they've set aside \$3.3 billion for that, and of course it's a whole host of issues that some may argue may not relate to housing, but housing is a really fundamental thing. So I guess my question is, have you taken a look at, some of your officials taken a look at what's happening in Alberta?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I've started, because no, they have not set aside 3.3 billion. This was a secretariat that presented a report that the government thanked them very much for their hard work and whatever, but hasn't committed.

They have, however, in this budget that they've just brought down, committed significant dollars to housing. So the entire program is not committed to. It is a report that was given to the government, and I haven't totally understood yet, because it isn't just allocations for housing. It also addresses . . . and we've had these conversations as well; in order to help people, you need to look at addictions. You need to look at mental illness. You need to look at a number of issues that is concerning that individual or that family. So I've begun to, but I haven't thoroughly gone through it. And I understand that the Alberta budget has just been brought down for consideration.

[16:30]

**Mr. Forbes:** — One that just pops out — and I don't know if you've had any thoughts on this — but it's one that I've heard and in fact talked to some of the folks about this, is strategies for success, no. 15: simplify personal identification requirements for accessing programs and services. And it's one that I hear over and over again, in terms of ID [identification] as an issue. And whether it's accessing a bank account, you know, health services, or getting out to vote . . . And it seems to be a relatively simple thing that, you know, many of us don't have an issue with. And then you talk to people and they go, is there something more we could do?

So I'd like to pursue that more, and I may be writing you and see if we can rally the troops around that one because I think that's one that, in terms of young people . . . In fact I was even talking to some people in the business. You know, we talk about underground economies. Part of the reason they go underground is because they don't have any ID.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — We do pay, I believe we do pay the cost of getting an ID if we're aware of it — if we're aware of it. And of course that's the Catch-22. And yes, that's why ID fraud is such a serious issue now because it does disable you from accessing many, many, many things if you don't have that ID. So if we are aware, my understanding is we pay. I think it's \$25 for some of the pieces of ID. But we don't always know.

**Mr. Forbes:** — No, that's good to know. And again it's that whole awareness, developing the education that the services could be there, are there, and just making sure that happens.

One of the issues that has arisen too is around food — the cost of food and the whole issue of quality of food. And I don't know if you've thought much about that, or has the ministry talked about how might they ensure that those who are on social assistance have access to better quality food?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — As you're well aware, we addressed shelter rates first and foremost with some consideration to the general living allowance. I've also done some jurisdictional comparisons, and we're not by any means the bottom of the pile as far as the amount that is available in Saskatchewan for a living allowance for those that are on assistance. But, you know, there's a number of areas of course where we can give a person a hand up. And the best thing that you can do is have a growing economy, which we have, and we have fewer numbers on social assistance. We have the low income tax credit that will be available, and then they can access the GST [goods and services tax] rebates.

I don't believe in Saskatchewan that safety of food is the issue. It's accessibility. You know, we have some pretty stringent quality of food rules and regulations. Most of them are enforced by the federal government, but watched very closely by our own Ministry of Agriculture. Is there some way to encourage people to shop wiser or buy better quality food? Well I could suggest that they need to visit some of the group homes because obviously they have been very frugal in their shopping to feed individuals at \$4.85 a day and feed them nutritionally — although I don't think they had a lot for variety. Part of it is just general public education, and Health does that to a degree on making nutritional, healthy choices. But I'm not sure there's again one answer to how we do this.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Well I think that I agree that access is the biggest issue, and how do you do that? And then the education part is huge, and it ties into so much of the work of the ministry in terms of how do you support families, that type of thing. And so I think that's something that would be very interesting, and I know it's come up. And you have to do it still in a respectful way. It's a huge, huge issue that's very important.

I wanted to just touch just a second on the CBO [community-based organization] summit. And that was a pretty innovative thing that went on, and I think that you were talking about doing some surveys following the CBO summits to see as a follow-up. What kind of work have you done in terms of keeping in touch with the different groups? And the other area around that was talking about core funding, trying to develop a new model. I think if I remember correctly some of the issues that emerged was the human resources — finding, recruiting people, retaining them. So I'd like to raise those kind of issues

as well.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — My officials are telling me the survey in question was a two-part, outcomes-based survey, based in January 2009 and a follow-up in January 2010 to monitor just the turnover rates of employees in the CBO that received the 7 per cent lift that we had mid-year last year, and take a look at if that strengthened their ability to retain and recruit employees, and go from there. So that is the survey that they believe you're referring to.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I think I am, yes.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — That's the one.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — So it's a year window so that we get a better handle on recruitment and retention, understanding it's a huge issue because otherwise, I mean, we wouldn't have put 9.3 per cent increase into it last year, which we did, because that's becoming a bigger and bigger struggle for many of our CBOs that are doing front-line work.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Now the other part, I think what there was a discussion around, the type of contracts that Social Services was signing with the CBOs. What kind of work has been done in that area?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — That is going to be ongoing, with some contracts being this year. So it's done in consultation with the CBOs. And they also have to be in agreement that they want multi-year contracts. So they're working with specific groups that were suggested by the regions. The criteria is — if you will give me one moment — for selecting an eligible CBO to give consideration if they want a three-year contract is, in the current funded year, have all accountability reports been received on or before the deadline? The second is, has the agency remained in good standing as a non-profit organization during the past year and present? The third criteria is, has an annual general meeting been held in the last 12 months and minutes received by the ministry? Number four, has the agency been funded by the ministry for at least three consecutive years? Number five, has the agency maintained an assessed low-risk status for the past 12 months? And finally, are criminal record checks conducted on all board members and employees?

So each of the regions made suggestions of what CBOs within their regions would fall within that criteria. And the idea that we had as a minister is we would — for those that are interested — set up a three-year contract with them and then have another group next year so that we don't all of a sudden have an overload of every three-year contract, you know, expiring at the same time.

So I believe the ministry, and I'll get this confirmed with my officials, will be going through this process in the next three years for sure which will catch the majority of those that are strongly interested in this type of contract.

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — That's correct. At this point we've had, I believe, 15 different organizations take up the offer for a multi-year contract, a three-year contract, and that was starting

April 1, 2009. We'll be continuing the expansion of that as CBOs are interested.

At this point, the dollar value of the contracts that have been captured in those 15 CBOs or just over 30 programs that are funded now on a multi-year basis or contracted on a multi-year basis is between 11 and \$12 million or just about 18 per cent of the CBO budget has been converted.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. It's an interesting dilemma because . . . And it does make sense. You would want the larger ones to go into it so that the management . . . And it's as you say. You know every year, there's like a certain amount so you're not caught one year. But it's the smaller ones, the very small groups maybe that get between 50,000, \$150,000 who have a hard time with all the management part. They're doing more managing than they're doing delivering services just because at the point when they're small, that's just the way it is.

So do you see that sort of evolving down to the smaller groups as well? Do you see more CBOs as part of this than on one-year contracts or what's the relationship of that?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I can see it to a degree, but the difficulty that some of the smaller CBOs run into is that they don't give a core program consistently throughout the year. So they're frustrated, and I understand that wholeheartedly. They're frustrated because they're surviving on grant funding.

But they receive a grant, often from the federal government for a specific program, but it doesn't really give them full-time activity. So then they look, okay what else can we add on here, and they take a look at something else. But it's funded by someone else, and it may be a different ministry within the province. So then they add that on, and some will be up to three or four different programs that they've kind of pieced together that then gives them full-time employment or activities, but it's funded from four different places.

I'm not sure how to ease that for them because if it's not within the mandate of the Ministry of Social Services for example, do I go outside of the mandate just to make this piece work? Do we, you know, say to the federal government, that's okay; you have no obligation because we'll fully fund here. So it's a little bit of a dilemma. There will be those that are going to struggle on grant funding because they don't pick one program, and yet there's still so many things that they're doing that's so very good.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And it's tough, as you say.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Yes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Multi-level, not just within the provincial level, but it's huge.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Oh exactly.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Yes. I want to talk a little bit about the social assistance rates and TEA [transitional employment allowance] and SES [Saskatchewan employment supplement] just for a second. We were talking last time that the anticipation is that the numbers on TEA are going down and that that's causing a

reduction in the budget because there's less take-up. And is that still the trend that's happening?

And I guess my concern is that we see an economy and . . . we're, you know, so grateful that Saskatchewan's seeming to hold its own, but people coming in who may need social assistance for a short period of time until they get back on their feet, how are things with that and especially in terms of TEA?

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Plateaued for the most part right now, which we'll be watching very, very closely obviously. It's not uncharacteristic either for the winter months because a lot of the jobs achieved in the stimulus package, many of those jobs will be, you know, in construction and available through the summer months. So to get a really good picture, we have to be mindful that the numbers may not look promising through the winter months. But we'll see what the summer brings, and I think that will be more telling as to the actual situation of numbers of TEA clients.

[16:45]

I think — I'm hoping of course as I'm sure you are — that we still see a decline. I don't think we will see as dramatic a decline as we did in the past year because many of the really employable are employed. So at some point, you're running into a group that have a few more barriers and challenges to entering the workforce.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And I understand. And I know I've received at least one letter, and they wrote you as well, in terms of people who want to come back here because of our programs that we have. And that's a burden that we have. But first they have to be here, and then there's all the things that happen because of that.

I want to ask a question about SIP, and it's one that I was not really aware of. And of course there's been huge changes and many, I think, for the good. But it's for residents who are in special care homes. Their income level cut-off is \$600, so it's quite a bit less. But the maximum they can get is like \$25, and yet they may actually need more support because they're paying for the special care home. I don't know this area very well at all so if . . .

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I'm going to say that the income is not different just because they're in a care home or not; it's still the same income threshold. But I will confirm that with my officials. But there isn't a separate income level for the . . . There is?

**Ms. Tulloch:** — For residents of special care homes, there is. They are treated differently.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Okay, so I stand corrected. Okay, let's all learn what happens here.

**Ms. Tulloch:** — But that's only residents of special care homes, not use of personal care homes. That's correct — not private personal care homes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And so why is the difference? Is that because they're already getting a benefit from the provincial government?



**Ms. Tulloch:** — Because it's already a government facility, yes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. And so the concern that's been raised to me, though, is that the maximum they can get from SIP is \$25; it's not the \$190 that any other person could get. And of course because they're in a special care home, they still have things that they may need, and \$25 a month just is pretty, pretty minimal when you think these are people who still have grandchildren, who still have different things that they would like to have some choices over. So I don't know how you arrived or how the ministry arrived at \$25 for that number.

**Ms. Tulloch:** — The \$25 has been, I think, a long-standing amount for that portion of the senior population, and it wasn't changed in the recent changes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So this whole special care home residency is a holdover from . . .

**Ms. Tulloch:** — For some time, yes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. And is it the intention to maybe . . . How big of a part of the budget for SIP [seniors' income plan] is this?

**Ms. Tulloch:** — I don't know how many. I don't have that handy with me. But I don't think it's too many that are in special care homes that are accessing SIP.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Yes, because they're under pretty heavy stress. And I know the situation where this was brought to me, you know. A couple, and the husband is really concerned about the wife and thinks this is hugely unfair. And so I would ask the minister to take a look at this. And I appreciate that there's been huge changes, very good ones. But I think again as we're bringing the whole program up, this is the thing that I've really been watching.

And the other issue, and I raised this with the Minister of Finance. I don't know if the Minister of Finance has shared this with you, but when I was at actually a luncheon for north Saskatchewan community living, I happened to be sitting with some financial planners. And I was talking about this. You know, my concern is how do you make sure people don't lose some of the benefits that they should get, especially for low-income people who've worked hard all their lives, and they've put money aside, and they're coming out with maybe a pension of 50 bucks or 100 bucks a month. And they find out, oh I should have bought a car; I should have bought a home, anything but that, you know?

And especially the Saskatchewan Pension Plan, you know, which is . . . You know, you have people who really have that work ethic and I think should get rewarded. And so these folks told me about TFSA, the tax-free savings account. That is a way to shelter your money so that you can take benefits from SIP. And I hope that your government talks to the people in Kindersley to say, listen, are you advising the folks when they hit 65 that they have options? And then this may actually happen because, if they don't do that, they may lose out on some other government programs. And that's a new, emerging thing. And I wasn't aware of the good things TFSA is or are.

And so this is a good thing, yes.

With that, I don't know if you have any questions . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . You're done. Actually I think all my important ones are . . . Well one, I know you've done some work around absolute homelessness and the folks at the Salvation Army in Saskatoon. They're working hard to find a place that can meet their needs, and there's some zoning challenges I think they're working through. And I don't know how well they're getting that done. But are you thinking of other absolute homelessness initiatives? I know there are groups out there who are keen in this area.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — The three cities that have the largest — there isn't just three — is Saskatoon, Regina, and Prince Albert, all of which are in the process of expansions. Prince Albert is expanding with the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association]. And as you mentioned, Saskatoon is expanding with the Salvation Army. Regina is expanding with YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] I think. No, YW as well, we did a kind of short term emergency for the YW. And Lloydminster, there'll be an announcement within the week, I believe, on an expansion in Lloydminster.

I know with the Salvation Army, they said the significant increase in shelter rates helped a lot because then they know that the funding can help sustain their operations. But a lot of the funding in the actual capital has been from the federal government, in their homelessness strategy, has been stepping up to the plate on many of the emergency shelter pieces.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Good. And we did get the Ombudsman report last week, and there were some increases here. And I know last year we talked about the office of fair practices. And of course that's an issue that, you know, as we get in our constituency offices, concerns about fairness and that type of thing. And we see some good work that some of the third party advocacy groups are doing. I hope that there's some work being done in that area to make sure due process is being followed because it's hugely important. I don't know if you want to make a comment on the Ombudsman, but I know last year we talked about the fair practices part which is very important.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I've just been told that we are doing staff training with the Ombudsman offices on fair practices, so that'll be ongoing.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay, good. Well with that, I think I've gone through the list of my important questions. There's always questions, and I may have some written ones tomorrow. But thank you and thank your officials for being here and answering the questions.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I want to thank you as well and sort of reinstate the thank you that I have not only for yourself but for everyone on the child and family services issue and the struggles that we've been facing with it. But I want to thank you for the questions in the committee. And we'll supply the answers. There was a number of answers in the beginning, details and statistics that we will get forwarded to you. So with that I want to thank the committee members for their time and their diligence in committee. And I want to thank my officials for coming here and helping us out with the answers that we

needed.

**The Chair:** — I believe this brings to an end the consideration of spending estimates for the Ministry of Social Services. This committee will recess until 7 o'clock at which time we will consider vote 37, Advanced Education, Employment and Labour. So we are recessed till 7 o'clock.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

[19:00]

**General Revenue Fund  
Advanced Education, Employment and Labour  
Vote 37**

**Subvote (AE01)**

**The Chair:** — I'll call the committee back to order. This evening we have before us the spending estimates of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour, vote 37. Minister Norris is here with his officials, and I invite the minister at this time to introduce his officials.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and committee members. I'm delighted to return tonight to participate in the discussions and debate regarding the '09-10 budget.

I'd like to introduce, as the Chair has suggested, a number of officials joining me tonight from the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour. Many of you will know Wynne Young, our deputy minister; Reg Urbanowski, assistant deputy minister, advanced education and student services; Karen Allen, executive director; Linda Smith, executive director, policy and planning; Tammy Bloor-Cavers, executive director of programs and acting executive director, student financial assistance; Wayne Zelmer, executive director, facilities; Jan Morgan, executive director, Can-Sask career and employment services; Brent Brownlee, director, training institutions; Ann Lorenzen, director, university services; Scott Giroux, director, financial planning; Rick Ewen, the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship Trade and Certification Commission; Rhiannon Stromberg, senior executive assistant to the deputy minister.

And if I'm not mistaken, I think we also have . . . I think that will cover it. I think there were a few others but maybe watching it from other vantage points.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Minister, for those introductions. This is the second appearance before the committee by the ministry, so I don't believe there's a need for any opening statements unless the minister has a very short statement that he would care to make. What I would ask is, Minister, if you have officials joining you at the table and if you're asking them to help answer questions, that you would identify them for Hansard so that they can be properly recorded for our purposes. So with that, Minister, do you have anything you would like to add at this time?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Sure, I do have just a short statement. To reiterate, the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and

Labour, our budget is part of a strong and steady Saskatchewan. As I've said before, the overall lift of \$79 million or 10.4 per cent for a total budget this year of \$840 million. Saskatchewan's economy continues to stand out as a pillar of strength during this time of global economic downturn, though of course we know we're not immune from what's going on around us.

Tonight we're focusing on post-secondary education specifically within the ministry. In this fiscal year, we'll be working with our post-secondary sector partners to develop a vision for post-secondary education in Saskatchewan. Essentially we need to find enhanced synergies and increase the inter-institutional collaboration that's under way to help maximize these taxpayer dollars that are being invested. And certainly I think there's a great degree of willingness among stakeholders to come to the table and participate in that endeavour.

This year more than \$665.6 million will go to post-secondary education and training programs in Saskatchewan — a remarkable number. And of that, 622.5 million is targeted for Saskatchewan's post-secondary institutions. We're working to ensure that these investments are contributing to institutions that pursue excellence, that are innovative, that are inclusive, that are effective and, as appropriate, responsive to the changing economic realities of Saskatchewan and the country.

Some of the key investments for the overall budget of \$665.6 million includes 23.5 million in new funding to enable universities to limit tuition increases to an average of about 3 per cent, putting Saskatchewan in the low- to mid-range compared to other universities in other jurisdictions; almost \$300,000 to expand the mathematics and information technology and complex systems or MITACS, a partnership program for graduate students and post-doctoral fellows to participate in applied research and development internships; as well up to \$18.5 million to rebate tuition costs through the expanded graduate retention program, 6.5 million of this is new funding for this year. We anticipate that this support will assist approximately 10,000 graduates.

2.8 million to index the provincial training allowance for shelter and energy costs. \$200,000 to implement the new Saskatchewan Scholarship of Honour that is expected to support approximately 30 individuals — those who have served their country, or family members. 2.2 million in new funding for student loan enhancements to provide grants for low- and middle-income students in one-year programs and to low-income students with dependents; to increase the provincial maximum weekly loan, which has not seen an increase since the mid-1990s, to \$140 per week of study; and increase the Saskatchewan student bursary to maintain debt levels at \$210 per week of study, and Saskatchewan changes to complement the Canada student loans program changes which were being implemented this year, '09-10.

Our government is also providing operating grants to post-secondary educational institutions. These include 1.5 million for regional colleges to address increased costs, 4.1 million for collective agreement costs for post-secondary institutions. We're also making capital investments in post-secondary education. I recently announced through the

\$500 million booster shot that 26.35 million in infrastructure went out to various projects across the province.

In this budget, there is an additional increase of 52.9 million in capital funding to renew, rebuild, and grow our province's post-secondary infrastructure: 25.1 million for universities and colleges for continued facility maintenance or sustaining capital, an increase of 12 per cent over last year; 4.1 million for the principal and interest on ministry authorized borrowing by the universities; 4.4 million for renovations to accommodate health care program expansion; 4.5 million to Cumberland Regional College in Nipawin for renovations and to develop a centre of excellence in literacy, workplace essential skills, and adult basic education; \$4 million for Carlton Trail to relocate to the new high school in Humboldt; and importantly, especially in these times, 9.8 million to help assist in the completion of the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organizations International Vaccine Centre, a centre of excellence recognized around the world as it works to better understand and combat zoonotic diseases.

As well, investing in training and apprenticeship seats is also a part of this year's budget. 7.9 million in funding is targeted for training seat expansion for registered nurses, psychiatric nurses, practical nurses, medical diagnostic professionals, and physicians in partnership with institutions and the Ministry of Health. The budget also allows us to maintain the '08-09 mid-year increase of 3.5 million for nearly 1,100 additional apprenticeship seats that we announced early last fall.

And we're working with the federal government in a couple of key areas. First on infrastructure stimulus, as we are collaborating with post-secondary institutions on proposals for the new \$2 billion federal knowledge infrastructure program — that dialogue is under way. And second, on additional employment and educational initiatives to be announced in the coming months through the labour market agreement and the Labour Market Development Agreement — those are federal-provincial initiatives to help those both who are EI [employment insurance] eligible as well as those who are not.

I want to make a couple of specific references, especially to some of the work that's underway regarding our support for First Nation and Métis peoples. As we invest in advanced education, we'll focus on improving education and employment outcomes for First Nations and Métis peoples in Saskatchewan. In this fiscal year, the ministry will develop a First Nations and Métis involvement and inclusion strategy, and we will work closely with the Ministry of First Nations and Métis Relations among others across our government.

Budget '09-10 also provides continued support for a number of initiatives. We will be targeting funding of 5.9 million for the creation of the Aboriginal Workforce Development Fund to increase workforce participation of First Nation and Métis individuals through new and existing employment initiatives developed by community-based organizations.

In addition to the 2 million in capital funding that we provided for SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies] as part of last month's \$500 million accelerated infrastructure booster shot — it's the first time that the province of Saskatchewan has contributed, by the way, capital funding to

that institution — this '09 budget provides for continued ongoing operating and program funding to the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, continued operating and program funding to the Gabriel Dumont Institute, the Dumont Technical Institute, the Saskatchewan urban native teacher education program, and the northern teacher education program.

Continued operating funding is also in place for First Nations University as we continue to work with that institution to ensure that it is successful and sustainable and accountable and most especially as we continue to focus, first and foremost, on the students of that institution, as well continued funding for adult basic education and skills training on reserve through regional colleges and SIIT, and money for ongoing training and skills development opportunities for First Nations and Métis people in northern Saskatchewan through the Northern Career Quest Partnership.

And I was just up north about 10 days ago, and I had an opportunity to be briefed and given an update on the Northern Career Quest Partnership. I won't go into too many details, but I am happy to say we have a new corporate partner that's come onside, and this is helping to provide additional resources. And there'll be more on that in the days to come, but some very good work being done there.

Our government and the ministry recognize the vital role that First Nations and Métis peoples play in ensuring Saskatchewan's economic success. We will continue to take steps so that the people of this province, from corner to corner, have an opportunity to participate in and benefit from the strong and steady economic growth that's under way.

Finally, the last substantive area I'd like to touch on relates to employment opportunities, especially important in these times right across our country. Increasing opportunities for employment in Saskatchewan and reducing barriers to employment for residents are also key priorities within this budget.

Funding includes \$19.4 million to support JobStart/Future Skill to address worker shortages, including \$510,000 to deliver the workplace essential skills Saskatchewan pilot. That is, as we work to address our talent challenge, this funding — almost \$20 million — established to ensure that people right here in Saskatchewan are better positioned again to participate in and benefit from the economic growth that's under way. Almost \$1 million to deliver the targeted initiative for older workers, to assist unemployed older workers to re-enter the workforce — again a vital component.

5.7 million to support adults with disabilities through the employability assistance for people with disabilities program, and we made specific reference and efforts this year to enhance the number of resources and the types of resources available to people with disabilities. We're going to do our very best to ensure that there are more real opportunities for people with disabilities, to ensure that they're better able and assisted to participate in the economic growth that's under way in our province and, more broadly, across our communities.

Community-based organizations will also see a further 3 per cent increase over and above the \$5 million over four years

announced in last year's budget and the September 2008 increase of 7 per cent. So we've been able to maintain that 7 per cent increase and add an additional 3 per cent.

As you can see, Mr. Chair, within the balanced and prudent approach set out in the budget, this will be a year of solid investments and initiatives for our ministry. We look forward to serving the province, to the benefits that a strong and steady Saskatchewan provides for the people of this province. On that, Mr. Chair, committee members, I'm delighted to be here this evening. I look forward to addressing your questions. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Minister Norris for being here this evening, and to all of the officials as well. Excuse my voice. I assure all committee the furthest south I've recently been is Swift Current, and hopefully it's just a normal cold.

I'd like to start this evening perhaps not in a completely obvious spot as the estimates are laid out, but start in a spot based on the attendance of a guest in the gallery this evening. Kerri Hysuick is the president of the Saskatchewan Society of Occupational Therapists. And in Health estimates Ms. Junor had the opportunity to ask the Health minister some questions about the establishment of an occupational therapy program at the University of Saskatchewan. And I was wondering, Minister, if you could please provide us with an update on the status of establishing that program, please.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Sure, I'm happy to talk about this. I've recently had the opportunity to speak with this. I don't think it was at the last meeting that I had with the provost at the University of Saskatchewan, but in one of our previous meetings, we actually spent a little bit of time on this. So obviously the key element here is we are working closely with the Ministry of Health. We are seeing some progress. At this stage, my sense is that it's proceeding through the University of Saskatchewan. I think there are some consultative initiatives under way on campus, and I don't know where we are on the latest. Maybe I'll ask Mr. Reg Urbanowski to just provide . . . As I say, I'm probably a few weeks out from the latest briefing, but you may have an update.

[19:15]

**Mr. Urbanowski:** — The occupational therapy proposal has not been put forward to the ministry at this point. It's still within the university, and it's going through their process. We do have a member from the Ministry of Health and a member from our ministry that sits on the advisory committee to formulate the proposal. We would expect that proposal, my understanding is, within the next few months.

**Mr. Broten:** — Is it the ministry's position that the establishment of such a program is still supported and is still a green light, so to speak?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Well again, you know, I think in broad strokes there certainly is support at a conceptual level. Until we actually receive the proposal itself, you know, I think it's best to

say that we look forward to receiving the proposal, and we'll see what's included within that proposal. But I think it's fair to say, again on a general level, we're working closely with the Ministry of Health as well as within the university. And we look forward to receiving the proposal.

**Mr. Broten:** — So am I correct to assume that there is no funding earmarked in this '09-10 budget for the establishment of such a program?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Well given that we haven't received the actual proposal, I think it's completely consistent to say we look forward to receiving it and obviously reviewing it. But without that proposal in front of us, indeed it would have been premature to provide funding within this specific budget cycle.

**Mr. Broten:** — So once the proposal's received — in the next couple of months perhaps — if it is reviewed and a favourable approach can be found for both sides, are you able to provide a rough timeline of when the ministry would once again consider to what level they might fund the program and when more in-depth planning and some of the ground work can start to happen? I think of the health sciences building and how likely one would want that included within the building and the planning that is involved with that. As well, I know that in speaking to the society, a lot of faculty recruitment that is required for establishing a program doesn't happen overnight, so it's helpful to plan.

Would there be any message that you would like to provide to the society in the type of work that they could be doing to be constructive in this process? That's the one question. And the second one would be, from your perspective then the immediate hurdle in front of this project or this program going forward would be the University of Saskatchewan and putting a proposal forward to the ministry?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Let me take your second question first. I probably strongly recommend a re-framing. I don't think there's any hurdle. My sense is that there is due process and deliberation. We have great respect for the autonomy of the institution and the integrity of academic programs. And so as we're going along, certainly I'm in regular contact with the provost. We've highlighted this in one of our recent meetings, not the most recent, but in one of our recent meetings.

The work that's under way is proceeding apace. I have met with the society and certainly supportive of that vision. It's very difficult to say here's what resources are required — whether those are financial, space requirements, or on a human resource level — until we actually see the proposal. So we want to send out a message; I'm encouraged by the work that's under way. Certainly I think that the deliberations are very important.

As far as the space allocation with reference to the Academic Health Science Building, you know, those considerations certainly I'm anticipating are going to be part of the deliberations under way at the University of Saskatchewan and with various stakeholders, so I wouldn't want to speak directly to that. Again at a programmatic level, those stakeholders are certainly well positioned to comment in due course on that, as well as the academic review process as far as being reviewed by peers.

So I think the key message . . . Certainly encouraged by the work that's under way, I'm looking forward to receiving the proposal, and I don't see the work that's under way as being in any way having to overcome a hurdle. I see this as being due diligence, as part of due process in the establishment of any potential new academic program, especially one where the stakeholders are focused on and embedded in work pertaining to health services within Saskatchewan.

I think that's probably as best framed . . . I'm encouraged by the work, certainly received a lot of feedback and appreciate that too. It helps to reinforce the degree and extent of support that's across the community. And I look forward to receiving the proposal.

**Mr. Broten:** — Who would have the final say in whether or not the proposal passes or does not go forward?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Well I think there are some key elements here. Part one is through the university community. I'm assuming, and Mr. Urbanowski will correct me as I go, but I'm assuming that the health science leadership is going to be heavily involved in this. And my assumption is, is already. Certainly from there, I'm assuming academic council, university council will be involved in this. My sense is obviously the administration's going to have a key role. And if I'm not mistaken, probably it would go to the board. From there, you know, as it comes to government, then it will be given certainly due consideration. I think the two lead ministers would be Minister McMorris and myself, and obviously that would lead to deliberations with our colleagues, both in caucus and ultimately in cabinet.

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you. If everything went as well as it could go, what would be the earliest date for the first class of students?

**Mr. Urbanowski:** — I think from my understanding is they're looking at the completion of the academic health sciences building, and so it could be '11-12. It could be '12-13 — depending on that — but I have not seen the proposal. There are a number of steps in starting the program that are actually required before you actually have an intake of students. So you would probably want faculty on stream at least a year before as they have to develop a curriculum because one part of the process is to develop the proposal to go through the process. A second is to actually develop the curriculum and send that through the process as well as as apply for an initial accreditation of the program. So it would have to be at least a year before the intake of students.

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you. Well I thank the society for its interest and its work on this and thank the minister for his answers on these questions. The questions that I just asked concerning occupational therapy, would the same answers mostly apply for speech language pathology or is that a different kettle of fish altogether?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — We essentially, for the purposes of our work, have bundled those together.

**Mr. Broten:** — So is that a joint proposal that comes forward from the academic community on those two, or it's two separate

proposals?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — No, it'll be two separate proposals, but the process from our end will be the same.

**Mr. Broten:** — Okay, thank you very much. Moving on now into the Estimates book and student support programs (AE03), on the skills training benefit, I notice a reduction from '08-09 to '09-10 from about 9.3 million to 8.7 million. Could you please explain why the reduction please.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — We'll get Mr. Urbanowski to provide a little detail, but the overview on this one is that, quite simply, the funding has moved to client and community supports. So this has been an internal adjustment with a focus on some of the key partners that we have, and what I'll do is . . . Reg, why don't you just provide a bit of an overview about what that looks like? I'll make some closing comments, but provide an overview.

**Mr. Urbanowski:** — The skills training benefit is going to decrease by \$600,000 to offset additional funding for the regional and employer planning partnerships program. There'll be no impact to clients that currently receive assistance through the STB [skills training benefit].

**Mr. Broten:** — It's not a reduction in the amount of service being provided. It's simply counting the service provided in a different category.

**Mr. Urbanowski:** — Right.

**Mr. Broten:** — And that different category would be which one, I'm sorry?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — It's been moved to client and community supports.

**Mr. Broten:** — Okay.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — And I guess the comment I would make is we're just trying to maximize those resources that are available. So where we're seeing demand, we're just trying to ensure that we're able to meet some of those by an internal reallocation of resources, and that's simply the case.

It's oversubscription and undersubscription, quite simply. Where the funds were, they were undersubscribed. And by moving them to the client community supports, we've just moved them to an area of higher demand.

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you. Moving on to (AE02), post-secondary education, there's a lot in this section. First off, let's maybe talk a bit about tuition and tuition increases. In your opening remarks, you said that funding has been provided to allow tuition to increase an average of 3 per cent. And if you could please expand on how that 3 per cent will be calculated, please.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — I think we just want to make sure we answer the question there. There can be at least a couple of interpretations, one based on our calculations. And that allowed us to then put the \$23.5 million forward on some calculations

that we undertook. The universities are undertaking their budgets right now, and so we will receive feedback from the institutions on what that actually looks like as that work is under way. The last thing I want to do is detract from or unduly influence the budget-making processes within those institutions. But the piece that we have is the tuition support — the 23.5 million — based on some calculations that we made essentially as an offset.

**Mr. Broten:** — So would the average of the 3 per cent, would that be based on total student population, or would that be based according to an average of 3 per cent across a variety of programs?

[19:30]

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Our assumptions were based on program-specific analysis. We'll wait to hear back from the universities as they undertake their budget-making processes.

**Mr. Broten:** — Okay. So some of the examinations you did as a ministry, were all programs essentially treated equally, or were programs weighted according to the number of students that might be in that program?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Well I think now these are some of the questions that the institutions are now working through as they're now coming up with their budget. So what we've done is provide \$23.5 million to offset an average of 3 per cent. As I said, we'll now wait to see what the institutions do. And I'm assuming they're going through their calculations, and again I'm not going to unduly influence or in any way pre-empt them. We respect the autonomy, and we'll see how that manifests itself within their respective budgets.

**Mr. Broten:** — I'm certainly not asking you to not respect the role of the university as it looks at the different disciplines. But I think the understanding of how that 3 per cent is calculated for the university would certainly have implications on how they do adjust tuition levels to stay within a 3 per cent increase. If all programs are treated equally, then some programs would certainly be going up a lot more than if the understanding is the total student population across the board of 3 per cent for everyone equally. Then that's a lot different than if, say, the college of engineering and medicine and dentistry have a large spike with a fewer number of students in those programs.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — You know I think the language is important here. I don't anticipate large spikes in any program. We've been working collaboratively with the respective institutions. And so I think the language is important here. We'll see how it manifests itself. I think the universities are best positioned. It'll be done, my understanding is, programmatically. We'll see how that manifests itself, but it's with every confidence that we have a . . . You know, I think words like spike . . . The response that we received on budget day, including from student leaders, was one of a sense of reasonableness, if I had to provide that characterization. So you know, we'll wait to see what the academic institutions come back with. But you know, my sense is there's a spirit of reasonableness that the institutions are working with.

**Mr. Broten:** — How was 3 per cent chosen as the appropriate

level of increase?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — There were probably, as I look back — and we can speak more in detail — but probably three or four variables that we kept in mind. First and foremost we looked across the country and we said, you know, one of the things that we need to ensure remains in place is that there is a comparative component here.

And as we go through some of the figures that we have, UBC [University of British Columbia], British Columbia, 2 per cent; Alberta was U of A [University of Alberta], U of C [University of Calgary], up over 4 per cent; U of T [University of Toronto] in Ontario, 4.5 per cent; Western, 4.5 per cent. So that comparative, if you want perspective, was one of the principles that informed our tuition management strategy, and that is we need to have a comparable bandwidth that we're working within and feel comfortable about that. Certainly we remain with this, what I would say, in the middle of the pack.

Another principle that we worked on was predictable, and that element of predictability again helped to avoid this notion of rate shock. And that certainly not only informed our work; it's also helped to inform the work of those under way within Manitoba. And I'll give you a quote from Diane McGifford, the Hon. Diane McGifford, Minister of Advanced Education in Manitoba, and I serve with her on a couple of tables: "We will not have tuition rate shock in Manitoba. We will ensure tuition rates are affordable for students and families."

Manitoba, as you know, has just moved off a tuition freeze as well. And so it's that same comparative degree of predictability, and a key element here relating to excellence and innovation, that element of quality. And so with that, we began to also look at the rates of inflation here in Saskatchewan. Somewhere over the last 18 months, between 2 and 3 per cent is what we've been looking at. And then we also wanted to make sure that the institutions, which are really the backbone of the post-secondary system, and with faculty members, scholars, researchers, that the institutions had the capacity to be supported as well.

So we kept this in mind, informed by these principles: a comparable component, predictability, then aspects relating to quality, kept in mind inflation, and within a comparative perspective, also had a commitment to our institutions as well as our students. And I think we've got a pretty good balance.

**Mr. Broten:** — When will the tuition amounts be finalized for the next academic year?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes, I anticipate that we'll be hearing soon budget dates for the respective institutions. Of course they need to be approved by their respective boards. I would say over the next five to six weeks we'll be receiving those from the respective institutions.

**Mr. Broten:** — So in conversations between the ministry and the universities, when the ministry conveyed its desire that tuition increase on average 3 per cent, with your own modelling based on all the things identified, you determined that 3 per cent was a suitable increase, and then based on that 3 per cent you looked at . . . Was the message that was given to the university

essentially it's fine for tuition to go up 3 per cent; that's the amount that we as government are seeing as acceptable? The amount of funding that we're tying to that is 23.5 because we think you can do it within that means, and now make it happen. Is that how you would characterize it? And now you're waiting to see how exactly that plays out through the various colleges?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — No, I wouldn't. You know, I would never characterize the partnerships that we have and the dialogue that we have with our two universities in that fashion. This is a partnership. These are esteemed institutions held in very high regard across Canada and around the world. And you know, any notion that there is a kind of heavy-handedness or kind of dictatorial tone on that — no. This is established through dialogue. This is established through discourse with great respect for the very significant positions and roles that these institutions play.

So no, I have to say I wouldn't characterize the dialogue that led to the \$23.5 million tuition support in any way related to that manner. I think it was one based on a solid working relationship through dialogue. And I've had the opportunity and honour of meeting with several stakeholders from each institution and on a range of issues, some of which we agree on, some of which there are some differences. But I would never characterize the dialogue as anything along those lines.

This is about consensus building. This is about working through. And I guess back in behind your question, some of the assumption, you know, as we began to roll this out, we did that more than a year ago. We did that during our first budget process. We did that and we said, we're keeping our campaign commitment; we're sustaining the freeze in place. That was a campaign commitment that we made for the first year.

But we really wanted to make sure that support for the students and the institutions, that there was a balance. What we've seen across Western Canada, certainly you may be familiar with some of the experiences. BC [British Columbia] — I think that's where you did some of your graduate work — you know, we wanted to avoid any kind of tuition rate shock that they have seen in British Columbia.

There were lessons learned from other Canadian jurisdictions. Manitoba is rolling off and putting an end to a decade-long freeze there, and this made good sense. And you know, I'll read some quotes. Andrew Thomson, former NDP cabinet minister, in the *Leader-Post* February 10, 2005, where that gentleman said, "Anywhere that we've seen tuition freezes put in across the country, they just haven't worked."

Again I go back to Diane McGifford's quote, where this desire to avoid tuition rate shock, most recently April 4 in the *Winnipeg Free Press*. There is this article that came out called "Tuition fee fraud," and it was a critique of some of the outcomes of tuition freeze in Manitoba. And I'll read some of these: "... tuitions play next to no role in a high school graduate's decision to go to college or university." "... Manitoba's education tax credits, tuition rebates and freezes ... have not increased the enrolment of low-income students, which was central to the government's agenda."

A tuition freeze "... seems to make less sense now as

expatriates are coming home for jobs ... [The government in Manitoba] needs to give the ... untargeted tuition rebates a second thought."

So there's a discussion under way, led by the Levin Commission, that has made a series of recommendations in Manitoba and called for an end to the freeze and increase in tuition in small increments. And I think that's consistent with the desires and objectives that we've had here. And that is, let's make sure that we're sustaining support for our institutions, and at the same time let's have a bit of balance here.

And I have to say, on budget day I was very pleased with the student leaders. We'd obviously had dialogue, and you may have had some too, but it was a very mature response. It was a response that was informed. It was a response that I think had that sense of balance.

So those are some of the key elements as we look at this. And again I'd go back and reiterate, I'm very pleased with the working relationship that this ministry has developed with both the University of Saskatchewan and University of Regina, their federated, affiliated, and associate institutions. And that's the path and process and expectations that we have on a go-forward basis.

[19:45]

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Minister. Perhaps for the sake of brevity I presented the scenario a bit too curt. But my point behind the question was, through conversation with the university a decision is made at a political level as to what an appropriate increase would be that would be feasible with the university, whether that's zero or freeze as it was the first year and funding was attached, whether it was 3 per cent this year with funding attached, and we'll see in the years to come. So on that topic, in the past you've mentioned and talked about a tuition management system or tuition management strategy. For the record, could you please in a succinct paragraph describe as you see the tuition management strategy, please.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Well I'm not certain I'm going to fit within your parameters of a concise or a succinct paragraph but no, I appreciate the question. As I've highlighted already, there are some core values in behind this, with great empathy for students but also great support for our institutions, for the scholars and professors and researchers within. And so, you know, from that balance, that notion of ensuring that there is comparative data, that we're not working in a vacuum.

And we're pleased, you know. I think we're pleased with some of the best practices from across the country. Manitoba is rolling away from its tuition freeze. They're going forward with some increases. After the BC experience I think we've said, let's make sure that there aren't any of those rate shocks. So BC has moved beyond tuition freeze. Alberta moved beyond tuition freeze. Saskatchewan has now moved beyond tuition freeze, and Manitoba as well. So it's based on best practice across Western Canada and certainly well beyond.

The predictive component, we want to make sure that we're avoiding rate shock for students and their families especially, but also for the institutions. This is about having a long-term

vision for post-secondary education to ensure that again that sense of balance, of reasonableness for students, but also the institutions, the notion of quality — or what I would refer to as that spirit of excellence and innovation and inclusion — but also focusing on effectiveness. Those are some of the key elements.

From this piece I think what we can do is then begin to identify some of the specific components and so we can frame these as questions.

What kind of operating and infrastructure supports do our post-secondary institutions need? And \$665.6 million support for our institutions, I mean this is, this is a very sound but solid investment. Then we can talk about the \$26.4 million booster shot that was made just a few months ago, the \$25.1 million included within this budget on facility maintenance. Again we're trying to say, very solid investment. And if I'm not mistaken, it's about 12 per cent over last year, year over year.

Then we can get into specific institutions and initiatives: \$4.5 million for Cumberland, the regional college; 4 million for Carlton Trail. Now I know that's on the regional college piece but for us we want to make sure that this message is being sent — regional colleges play an absolutely vital role right across our province.

Specifically relating to the university, you've seen a recent investment: \$15 million comes out of the budget of my colleague, the Hon. Donna Harpauer. But the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] housing initiative — desperately needed. So that operating and infrastructure piece that really, there's one key element and component because with the operating support, that helps institutions maintain the capacity to have a dialogue about tuitions, that again they're confined within a reasonable bandwidth.

The next question is, what kind of supports are we offering to our students? And the \$23.5 million to the institutions as offset, but also the \$2.2 million student loan funding, so that students from low- and middle-income backgrounds actually have access to increased resources.

The federal government came out with an initiative and we wanted to complement it, and that was we wanted to make sure that dependants were taken care of, and those children are between the ages of 12 and 18, because the federal program ends when they're 12 and I said, well that's not enough; we need to go the next step. We need to make sure that those children are taken care of while their parents are students. We've also then made adjustments for the first time since the mid-1990s, and we wanted to do that to make sure that more students had access to more resources. And we can continue to drill down. These are not exhaustive; they're just simply indicative.

Then from student supports, we've got the institutions, the student supports, then we get into the post-graduation world and this is where the graduate retention program comes in, \$18.5 million — very successful program. We're receiving pretty remarkable feedback about this.

And we've put in additional dollars. Is it \$400,000, Reg, on the

RAP [repayment assistance plan]? And we've put additional dollars in to help those that are struggling on their student loan repayments. We've said this is a vital component. Too many students are struggling for too long and for those that are struggling, let's actually put some new resources and put a new system in place to help alleviate some of those struggles.

So I hope what I've been able to do — again, I know not succinctly or perhaps as concisely — but I hope what I've been able to do is provide some of the values that have informed the creation of this strategy and at the same time provide a bit of an overview of the actual strategy itself, that enables us to think and work through public policy issues in a systematic fashion ranging from institutions, student supports, and post-graduation. And I guess that's what I would call the frame around the tuition management strategy.

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you. In your opening remarks you mentioned the Saskatchewan Scholarship of Honour and you estimated that about 30 students, in the first year, would be eligible for the scholarship. Could you please state the basic parameters of the program; how much is earmarked for the program — just some of the details around that, please.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — This year what we're budgeting is a range between about 130 and \$200,000. So we have up to \$200,000 available. And I'll just walk you through, if you want, some of the programming parameters.

This scholarship is, as the Premier has said, up to \$5,000. As we're going, I'll highlight a little bit. We went through a lot of deliberation on this, and we said with a scholarship of this significance, we want to make sure that the sum really reflects — although money can never say thank you to these individuals — but the sum is reflective of a real and sincere gesture of thanks. And so \$5,000 is, we thought, a significant and sincere approach to offering our thanks.

The payments will be made in . . . and again it may vary case by case, program by program. And we're very conscious of this, especially because what we have put in place is we've said they don't have to enrol in programs just in Saskatchewan, and that was certainly important as we looked at some of the families. They ought to have opportunities wherever they are across Canada.

So the criteria: current and past permanent residents of Saskatchewan, returning soldiers who have actively served in military operations in the Canadian Forces since September 1, and spouse or children of severely injured or deceased soldiers who have served since that time, and enrolled in a recognized Canadian post-secondary institution are the key parameters. The delivery will be managed by our ministry, the student financial assistance branch within the ministry. And I think they're available soon if not now as far as applications. By the end of the month we'll be accepting applications.

The annual costs after this year, as I've said, were . . . On this first year we have some rough estimates between 135 and \$200,000. We anticipate that after this year it will take probably about \$85,000. Again that's an estimate, and just based on statistics that we have, certainly I think those are realistic numbers.



We're also able, the Student Aid Fund is able to accept and provide tax receipts from private donations if individuals or corporations want to participate in this endeavour. So I hope that provides — I mean, you may have some additional questions — but provides an opportunity to continue the discussion.

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you. Certainly for family members, for receiving the scholarship, it's probably the one type of scholarship we hope very few people ever have to access, where we want fewer is better. Which budget line item would this scholarship be included under, please?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — We've got, I think, it's its own individual line. We'll get you the . . . It's under the Student Aid Fund.

**Mr. Broten:** — Which vote is that?

**Ms. Young:** — (AE03).

**Mr. Broten:** — Oh yes, thank you. Under (AE02), the interprovincial agreements, could you please identify which interprovincial agreements the 1.5 million represents?

[20:00]

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Sure. Those are optometry under Waterloo, occupational therapy under Alberta, dentist under NAIT [Northern Alberta Institute of Technology], orthotist from BC. Nuclear medicine, respiratory therapy, magnetic resonance imaging technology, and sonography are the . . . This year, 1.5; last year, 1.42 thereabouts, 1.43. So we've seen a slight increase.

**Mr. Broten:** — How many OT [occupational therapy] seats would that represent, please?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Occupational therapy, that's out of Alberta, 15 students every year. It's a two-year program.

**Mr. Broten:** — Okay, thank you. So that would obviously be eliminated if Saskatchewan had its own training program, those seats?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes, exactly. Obviously that's part of the deliberation as well, certainly a sign of, you know, one of the very, very positive signs.

**Mr. Broten:** — Were any seats — I might have missed it as I was writing them down — are any seats purchased for speech language pathology? Did I miss that one? At U of A?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — No, U of A relates to just the occupational therapy.

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you. In recent weeks there's been some discussion, as we talked about it a bit in question period last week, about investment funds and shortfalls and a variety of funds that affect public institutions, and the *StarPhoenix* article, April 16, 2009, where it was identified that there was \$100 million in losses to the operating budget and endowment funds at the University of Saskatchewan.

In this format where we cannot be limited to question period sound bites, could you perhaps give some thoughts — succinct, once again — on what areas of the university activity you see these impacts having the greatest potential effect on students and faculty, please?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Well I think it's important for us to put this in, whether it's a Canadian context or a global context. And certainly we're aware, and the media report was adequate here, these are fluctuations in endowment funds at both the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan, the focus of the article. Again there are certainly other post-secondary institutions in Canada that have challenges far more significant than our institutions.

So I have received assurance that strategies are being developed to ensure that the institutions remain on a sustainable path. We certainly are attentive to these. As these strategies are developed and rolled out across the campuses — in this instance the question's specifically about the University of Saskatchewan — the component that's very important . . . It's one thing to speak about \$100 million. It's another to begin to say, okay what are the parameters or what's the horizon that the institution has to address this?

And so as we look at the University of Saskatchewan, we're dealing with something in the magnitude, as I understand it, of about \$10 million this year. So right away the scope is one that is quite confined. From there obviously it will take a multi-year strategy, and I have every confidence that the respective administrations and the respective boards are in good stead as they go forward.

What the specific plans are for these institutions, again my sense is that they're under development right now, and I'm assuming that's part of the budgetary process that's under way. So you know, we'll see how this goes. It is a time where these fluctuations have occurred. They're affecting institutions around the world on a relative scale. Within Saskatchewan these fluctuations . . . I certainly don't want to minimize them, but I will say they've been in a moderate range of activity and the same can't be said across the board. There are other institutions elsewhere that have been much more severely affected.

**Mr. Broten:** — Certainly the long-term well-being of these endowment funds will be tied to how well the global economy comes out of things in the years to come. With the real impact that you'd mentioned of about \$10 million for this year, while in the entire global budget for the university it's not a huge, huge amount but it is still \$10 million.

I mean you look at the 3 per cent increase in tuition. With allowing that to be maintained at 3 per cent, that was 23.5 million, so it's still a sizeable amount of money which will have impacts, I would assume, in some way in the university, either through increased revenue through another means to make up the \$10 million or through changes in programming or to save the \$10 million in some other way.

Have you had discussions with the university in terms of what type of approach, as they develop their long-term plan based on the world economy and all the sound thinking that needs to go

into that long-term plan — but for this immediate year with the \$10 million that you identified, any idea at this point how that may or may not affect students and faculty?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — You know, the conversations I've had at this stage, I've stuck mostly to the macro level. I've left it to the institution to go about its business, and for accuracy that process was under way. I think certainly we will see, come budget time and what that looks like, but, you know, our universities have proven themselves very resilient, both institutions.

So I'm not, as I say, I don't want to minimize it but on a relative scale, I feel confident that the University of Saskatchewan in the case that you're mentioning is well positioned to ensure that this is done in a prudent, reasonable, and responsible manner. And we'll wait to see and hear from the institution, from the University of Saskatchewan, what that looks like.

**Mr. Broten:** — Has the ministry received to date a request for additional funding because of the shortfall or are they at this point simply developing internal plans and seeking to make any adjustments internally that they need to do?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — No. That conversation has occurred and the institution is focusing on this, and I think that's most appropriate.

**Mr. Broten:** — Would the ministry be unwilling at this point to provide any additional resources if it were asked after the internal planning and action is done?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — I don't anticipate that a request like that would be forthcoming.

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you. Moving on to SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] for a bit. The Saskatoon Kelsey Campus, well I guess some of the campus, some of the campus spots are within my constituency, but the primary campus just outside.

They're currently in a number of facilities throughout the Saskatoon area. Is there any discussion or planning being done in terms of looking at extensive renovations of the main Kelsey Campus or additional building in areas there, or is the approach still at this point to use a variety of locations? Is there a desire to centralize activities in various spots, or carry on with what's going on?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — I think it's a helpful conversation. The legacy piece from the previous government was one of a fragmentation of services. And certainly what we've encouraged the board to do is, through its strategic planning process, develop a vision for what is perceived as maximizing the learning opportunities and most especially outcomes.

There are probably two or three schools of thought. Certainly an option relates to some degree of recentralizing away from this legacy of fragmentation. Certainly cognizant of potential costs, infrastructure costs on that, but there may be some synergies realized, so there is one option.

Another option relates to again focusing on learning outcomes,

perhaps not moving away from fragmentation, but actually having a closer look at programming options that are being dispersed across the community and maybe putting some of those programming options closer to potential employers, so some notion of enhanced proximity to employers and again not opposed to that one either. They're again weighing those and then options in between that have come up. So certainly welcoming the board's input on to this subject as well as input from the students and the administration. And it's an important conversation.

The key element that is going to help to inform the dialogue really relates to learning outcomes. And if we begin to think about how we define success, and especially when we think about the very successful legacy and continued operations of SIAST, I think that relates overwhelmingly to the educational experience and the employment outcomes that are achieved through those experiences. And I think, as I say, that's going to be pretty fundamental to future discussions about the infrastructure needs.

Certainly I know the new board Chair, Mr. Alan Thomarat, is talking about Saskatchewan as a campus. And I'm pleased to hear that discussion and dialogue because it relates to again ensuring that the programming options that are under way and available are rooted within both community and with a sense of employment opportunities.

And so I welcome it. I think it's early on in the process and I'm encouraged by the spirit of the deliberations. And I look forward to working with the board and administration and obviously the students as well as this dialogue, this conversation, takes place.

**Mr. Broten:** — As this dialogue, conversation, takes place, is there a date identified where a request or proposal may be given to you on this issue or is it an ongoing discussion?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — You know, I'll be waiting to hear from the board on this. And certainly there are a number of ideas as I've highlighted, a couple of ideas, if you want models, and there are a range of ideas that come up and options. And as we're proceeding, I think what's important here, the question about capacity for students. And you saw during the investment from the booster shots, that out of the booster shot more than \$26 million directed to post-secondary institutions across the province, including some very significant SIAST programming. And we did that very purposefully.

[20:15]

So Reg, if I'm not mistaken, plumbing is available not just in Saskatoon now but also in Regina. The goal there, how can we help to alleviate some of those constraints in Saskatoon and open up new programming offerings in another location in the province? So that's number one.

Number two, we continued to move forward on the nursing and pleased to see progress there. And number three, if I'm not mistaken, \$2.35 million investment in P.A. — am I close? — \$2.35 million investment in P.A. with specific reference to the trades.

I've been to all the campuses. I'm sure you have too. We went to P.A., and as I went there the first time, you know, it was obvious. I mean they're doing programming almost up to the rafters. They're using mezzanines. And so we said, we need to get some money in. So I was very pleased to have cabinet approve those dollars, that kind of investment for SIAST. SIAST is a profoundly valuable institution.

As it relates specifically to the Kelsey Campus in Saskatoon, again we inherited this fragmented model — not necessarily anything wrong with it actually. There are, as I visited the respective settings, there's a lot to be said for it. That being said, welcome the deliberations around the board table about what that future looks like, and with special reference to educational experience but also employment opportunities. And we're going to find new ways to create those synergies.

**Mr. Broten:** — One of the settings you speak of is Mount Royal Collegiate in Saskatoon where certain SIAST programs are moving there, and there's some renovations going along with that. Could you please give an update on the timeline of those renovations and is there funding in this budget to complete all of that work, please.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — It's anticipated that it'll be May 2010 for the completion of Mount Royal. So that's the first part. We'll just get you a little more detail. It was . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Sure. It's a virtual opposition. It's with great empathy. I've got a little bit of a scratch in my throat tonight too.

The initial capital — and I'll just go through here; Reg, confirm if you will — it was about \$17 million of initial capital that was put towards Mount Royal. I think the second tranche was, there was a second line we're just checking. It actually flowed through . . . The partnerships are a little bit complex on this one. Additional dollars flowed through the Ministry of Education. And I certainly don't want to get it incorrect. The Deputy Premier might not be happy with me.

Mr. Chair, with the permission of the committee, we'll come back and provide the dollars. The second stream of funding came in through the Ministry of Education and I don't have that total number. It was 17 through this ministry.

There was an initial 17, then there were dollars that flowed as well from Education — we'll get you that. There was an additional \$4 million put in for ABE [adult basic education]. Now that apparently, the program shift out of SIAST, it's moving to the Davies Building. So there's been a change. So that \$4 million remains intact with Mount Royal and will be used. Sorry, SIAST is keeping \$4 million for the ABE. It's going to the Davies Building. Plus there was an additional \$1.12 million for operating, administration, and program delivery which is going to . . . So roughly just over, well around, \$600,000 for each ballpark.

**Mr. Broten:** — So all the funding is in place to complete any sort of renovations that need to occur at Mount Royal Collegiate?

**Ms. Young:** — In place but not yet expended.

**Mr. Broten:** — And not yet expended. When might be the completion date for those changes?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — May 10 is what I think we're looking for.

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you. On the topic of SIAST programming, in Prince Albert Woodlands Campus, there's the outdoor power equipment program in P.A., and there's been some discussion about ending that program in Prince Albert. Are you able to provide information to the committee on what the status of that program is in Prince Albert, please?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Sure. We've had some issues regarding student enrolments in that program. I think at present there are two students in that program, and so I think SIAST is having a look at it as part of its ongoing budget deliberations. As part of those deliberations, I don't know what the outcome will be, but I do know that the enrolment piece has been very weak in that program.

**Mr. Broten:** — Certainly enrolment is an issue. It is however a unique program in that, to my understanding, it's the only one in the province. And it does provide a training option for many people in the North as well, so there's perhaps a good possibility there for more promotion of the program.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — If I could, actually it's not the only one in the province. My understanding is we've got a similar program here in Regina.

**Mr. Broten:** — Yes, you're correct. I apologize.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — And in regarding the North, I was just in the North, and Northlands is doing some pretty interesting programming through a simulator. And so they're able to do some very interesting work using that simulator.

So just regarding it, it was one of the questions I've asked, do we have the appropriate training under way for jobs that are available? After they allowed me to go about 20 minutes on the simulator, I realized that I probably wasn't a great candidate for those tasks and those jobs. The simulator thankfully was intact, but I do want to offer every reassurance, all joking aside, that that simulator is a very helpful, state of the art instrument for heavy equipment, and it is up and operational.

So again, programming under way in Regina, light enrolments in the P.A. campus, and Northlands doing some very fine work using the simulator, among other pedagogical practices.

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you. Are there any other programs within the SIAST system that are being considered for elimination or being scaled back?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Not, that's the one that . . . And again I wouldn't quite characterize it like that, it's just the enrolment piece has caught our attention and SIAST attention, but to the best of our knowledge, that is the extent. But again, you know, we leave that to the SIAST administration — very competent, very capable — and to the board.

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you. Under (AE02), Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, an increase from estimated

'08-09 of 13.8, up to '09-10 of 17.7. I know you touched on this in your opening comments, but could you please in a bit more detail describe what that increase is providing, please?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Sure. I guess I'll contextualize it by highlighting that early last fall, we were able to come forward with a \$3.5 million investment to establish what we'd anticipated would be 900 new apprenticeship positions. Absolutely delighted to report that the \$3.5 million has been translated into 1,100 apprenticeship positions, so an additional 200 outside our anticipated outcome. So I'm pleased with that; that provides the context.

What I'm especially pleased to report is that we were able to ensure that that \$3.5 million wasn't just one time, but that we were actually able to meet it. So on this we can walk through a couple of elements.

The increase in apprenticeships, at least on the trajectory that we see right now, between 2005 and 2010 will be 75 per cent increase in apprenticeships. And I'm certainly pleased with that, pleased with some of the numbers surrounding First Nation and Métis people regarding the participation in the trades.

From there the Apprenticeship Commission is finalizing its '09-10 business plan and a training plan will be established based on the assessment of the demand for training and financial resources that are available. Again what we were able to do is increase those. The increase that we see, the increase is 28.4 per cent. There is the 3.5 million which allows for that continuation, plus the negotiation of in-scope salary increases, which essentially provides continued apprenticeship seats and a little bit of inflation regarding salaries.

[20:30]

It's probably worth highlighting some of these statistics out beyond . . . I appreciate we're talking about the budget, but just to be able to track this through. I'm pleased with the progress that we're seeing in some key areas here.

The number of Aboriginal apprentices active during the year — and I'm just going to begin in '03 — was 567. In '04, with credit to the previous government, it jumped to 817; '05, 989; in '06, 1,108. In June, a modest increase, it was 1,028. Sorry, that's a modest decrease. And what we've been able to do in our first year was 1,243. So from 1,028 to 1,243, I think that's reflective of certainly the intentions we have — just to continue to increase opportunities within the trades and at the apprenticeship level, especially for First Nation and Métis peoples across the province.

So I hope that's touched on not just the specific question you were addressing. I tried to make sure that was clear. But also, I think for us all, a shared priority — increasing opportunities for First Nation and Métis peoples.

**Mr. Broten:** — Certainly I would agree that that is a good thing. In terms of the increase that you identified — the 900 which turned out to be 1,100 — with the increased demand and increased number of individuals seeking an apprenticeship, the challenge on the SIAST end of things is to ensure that there's enough capacity within the classes in order to allow for the

class training that needs to occur. With the increased numbers, what kind of pressure is that putting on the SIAST system? And have you had to increase the amount of funding available in order to ensure that the quality and the availability of the class instruction is adequate for those in training?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Two or three elements here, and first and foremost, the outstanding job that SIAST has done in helping to accommodate these increases. And so kudos to the entire SIAST team on that.

And so your question's about quality and availability. Quality has been maintained; availability across the board. There was one exception, and that related I think to plumbing. It was one of the reasons that we wanted to expand the program here. The question wasn't in any way about quality, it was about succession planning and retirements. But my understanding is that that's been addressed. So that's the key component of your question.

But I would like to just as well, the Apprenticeship Commission is in dialogue with some of the regional colleges — again, finding ways to help potentially alleviate some of that pressure on SIAST.

I've been to each of the respective regional colleges; some more than a site visit, we've been actually able to make some return visits as well. And certainly I'm encouraging that discussion and deliberation to go some considerable ways forward because I think there are some of the regional college campuses that have that capacity available. And again, we were just in North West and at Northlands. And North West, we had a discussion along those lines and multi-use facilities. So that's how that's been addressed for the most part.

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you. That's perhaps a nice segue into the next area of questioning in the area of regional colleges. Could you please once again state which regional colleges are receiving building upgrades or additions or new construction of facilities, please?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Sure. We've got in this budget, we have the campus in Nipawin which is receiving an upgrade. Reg, we've got the numbers? Here we are. It is 5.4 million for Cumberland and just over \$4 million for Carlton Trail. That's in Humboldt. That one again, we wanted to make sure there was an alignment of resources between the Ministry of Education and ourselves because the new high school is going forward and we wanted to make sure that there was a nice alignment there.

And so again, just looking at the \$4 million for Carlton Trail Regional College doesn't give credit for the synergies that are being actually brought to bear between the two ministries. And that was the rationale for going forward there. And in the booster shot we had, in addition to the SIAST investments, we were able to go forward with the Great Plains Regional College.

We also made sure that, as I've highlighted, SIIT was included. Not quite on the mark regarding your question, but certainly worthy of mention and applause because of the fine work that institution's doing. And we also ensured that St. Peter's is on the list and Michael Hall, given the important strategic alliance that that institution has formed with key entities at the

university. So those are where we are today.

**Mr. Broten:** — If I could just back up one second to some questions, I apologize. On the issue of the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, are you looking at adjusting the ratios at all of apprentice to journey person?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — I just want to make sure I've got your question because I think we went through a part of this last time, and I don't think we got to the heart of your question. When you're talking about the ratio, are you talking about the training ratio?

**Mr. Broten:** — The number of certified journey persons you would have on-site to the number of apprentices.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Right, okay, good. Again in the classroom, it's a 12:1 ratio. I don't think that's your question, but I just want to make sure we've got a bit of evolution here. Then as we go forward what you're talking about is . . . Why don't I actually walk through some of these? There are almost two full pages, so I won't walk through all of these. There are some, well I guess the best way to say this is, there are elements of both continuity and change. Many have stayed the same. So 1:1 is the norm but there are a number where it's 2:1. There are a number where . . .

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Minister, it's okay if the entire list was not read at this time. My question is one of process I suppose. If the ratios are going to change in the workplace, what is the type of consultation that you would normally do or commit to doing with employers and apprentices in order to ensure that a safe and appropriate and quality balance is in the workplace between journey person and apprentice? How is that ratio changed? Who needs to agree to it? Who do you speak to when determining whether or not that is a change that does occur?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — If I may, I'll just go back and I'll just summarize it simply as this: within 23 categories there are no changes and in 24 there are changes; just to give you a bit of an overview of what that looks like.

Why don't we ask Rick to come up? We've had a lot of extensive consultations. Rick, why don't you just walk us through that? This is Rick Ewen with the Apprenticeship Commission.

**Mr. Ewen:** — As the commission board of director gives the government advice on matters respecting ratio, and prior to making a recommendation to the government, it conducted a widespread survey of people in industry, including its own subject matter, expert trade board and commission board members. So there was a fairly extensive and exhaustive consultation that took place last summer. There was considerable support and very little opposition to raising the default ratio from 1:1 to 1:2.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — That's great. Thank you.

**Mr. Broten:** — So in the past when that, as you describe it, extensive consultation takes place, will that same type of consultation take place in future changes?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Sure. The same process would take place in any future, what I would call at this stage, hypothetical changes.

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you. I appreciate that. Back to the topic of regional colleges — sorry for the back and forth there.

Thank you for the list you just provided on where work was being done within the regional college systems, the ones you identified as well as the work that was done through the supplementary estimates. When we had a discussion on the issue on March 9 in committee, I asked a question about why these projects, what determined that these projects were the ones selected. And you identified five criteria at that time: one, health and safety; two, capacity shortages; three, deferred maintenance; four, shovel readiness; and five, the ability to view the project through a P3 [public-private partnership] lens.

And when you talked about this criteria that was to be used in determining, you said this was part of work that you were doing to provide a type of a ranking system, as I recall.

[20:45]

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — A capital priority list.

**Mr. Broten:** — Yes, sure, similar to what we have in the K-12 system where an institution would know where it is on the ladder. Have those five points that you identified, have those further evolved into a stated or a coherent policy, or are those five more sort of guiding principles that you use? And to the level that they are developed into a succinct policy, have those five points been passed on to the regional college association as well as the individual regional colleges so that they can get a sense of where they might be?

Because of course with the changes that have been done in a number of institutions — the 13 point some million at the Great Plains College, the campus in Swift Current — there are other regional colleges that would like to look for expansions, but it would help them, I would believe, to know how they can best position themselves to be awarded funding for projects that they may want to have.

So lengthy question but number one, is this a formal policy; and two, is it given to regional colleges for their ability to respond appropriately?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — You know I just want to come back to your . . . Fair question, actually it's an excellent question. I'll start by saying one of the tasks that we had to roll up our sleeves and get down to work almost immediately upon coming into the position of running the ministry, and I'll just say I was surprised, there was no capital priority process. Now you can imagine what that looks like across an advanced educational system, where we have a range of facilities that would stretch from the largest science project in the country through to training facilities that are located in rural communities that had been overlooked for, frankly, decades.

So it's a fair question to say essentially where have you done, what have you done, why have you done it and what progress is there to date, and in the policy questions about formalizing it.

The list itself is a work-in-progress because over the course of a little more than a year, it would be very difficult to come up with a finalized list. So it remains a work-in-progress.

Certainly the criteria that we've established helps to inform it, so I would call them key criteria. Are they the only ones that we will look at? No, not by any means. Have we communicated these principles, criteria, to the association in respect of regional colleges? Certainly I've been in dialogue and the answer is, yes we've been pretty frank.

And in fact on budget day, during the pre-budget presentation that I made, I was very clear about a couple of things. This is a work-in-progress. This is something that's absolutely essential that we do. It's essential that we do it for prioritizing our own resources, absolutely essential given what the federal government has done, and that is the KIP program, knowledge infrastructure program, where \$2 billion will be flowing, and some of which already BC was able to get an early jump because of the election, I think, but those resources flowing.

And so we were in, I think, a reasonable position to say the least, on being able to interface with the federal government to say, look, it's still a work-in-progress, but at least we have a list. So certainly the response we've received from various institutions, not just the regional colleges, how can we have greater input into the system? And I think as importantly, and this is something that we're focused on now because it's not quite like the K to 12 system.

You can imagine with a range of institutional facilities that stretch from something as sophisticated, complex, and rooted in multiple partnerships as, let's say a synchrotron, our synchrotron, to a training facility in a remote community — a broad array. It's not simply going to be like the K to 12 system. What I've said is probably it's going to be something between Highways and the K to 12 system. There will be some level of complexity to this.

So what we've set as a goal, and this is certainly part of the dialogue and the purpose for the dialogue, is ideally — and I've said somewhere between six months and a year, I think, is reasonable or realistic — let's have this up on a website, and that way our stakeholders can actually access it. Again it may be imperfect, but then they can begin to see relative rankings.

Now there will probably be more than one category, and we've seen that even out of the federal system. The federal system is set with a 70/30 piece, and that is 70 per cent for universities, 30 per cent for colleges. And that continues where actually it's a helpful process, out beyond being able to access federal dollars. It's a helpful process for us to go through again further refining our system. So still a work-in-progress.

I think we've been clear about communicating. And I think the most important component, more than communicating, we've actually made very significant investments.

There are seven regional colleges, and then we have Lakeland — and I'll come back to Lakeland; I'm deeply impressed with the work under way there — seven regional colleges, and at the end of 16 months we have investments under way in Nipawin, in Humboldt, and in Swift Current at Great Plains.

The Great Plains piece, just want to highlight, and we've talked about this before. The last significant investment in capital in Great Plains was in . . . Reg, am I mistaken by saying 1948? In 1948, so I want to give some context for the magnitude of the investment there.

Almost half of our institutions, of the regional colleges, have received significant investments in 16 months. So as we're developing this list, not ignoring the institutions, actually putting forward those investment on a go-forward basis — more work to do, certainly more work to do and, you know, certainly welcome your input and input from stakeholders right across the system about ways that we can enhance that process for the potential partners. I do want to come back.

I think one of the things we also need to look at is — and we're doing this — we need to be attentive to Lakeland. It's a shared institution between Alberta and Saskatchewan, and I think there's a lot more that Saskatchewan can and ought to be doing with that institution and appreciate the partnership. I've been able to get out there on a couple of occasions, most recently with Tim McMillan, the MLA for Lloydminster. And we were out looking at the firefighter training facility out there. And that, the significance of that, is that partners directly with Parkland. And the work that's under way, if I'm not mistaken, that's out at Melville.

So pleased to, happy to have that question. It's an important question. Work-in-progress but I think we can say after 16 months, we're making progress on the list and we're making on the progress on the institutional investment.

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you. Could you please describe the nature of the funding provided by the province to Dumont Technical Institute vis-à-vis how regional colleges are funded please?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Happy to do that. You know we were just out at the Gabriel Dumont Institute. They invited us out on Saturday morning, and had a good conversation. Your colleague, the MLA for . . . I saw his headquarters in La Ronge last week. Doyle, yes Doyle, was there too.

I think we've got those numbers. If I'm not mistaken, it's about eight. Sorry, out beyond the Dumont Technical Institute, I want to get some numbers for the GDI [Gabriel Dumont Institute] as well and then we can . . . DTI [Dumont Technical Institute] rests under the umbrella of the Gabriel Dumont Institute.

The core operating grant for the Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2.1 million thereabouts; SUNTEP [Saskatchewan urban native teacher education program] which is one of certainly the core programs that receives some significant dollars, 2.8 million — core grant of 1.6 and 1.18 for reimbursements of university levied tuition and course costs; and then the Dumont Technical Institute, 3.8 million. And I think the nature of the question — I just want to provide — those roll out as a bundle, and it's subject to the agreement with DTI's business plan.

I don't know if we're answering your question or you may want another level of detail. Happy to get into it, just . . .

**Mr. Broten:** — Within DTI there's a feeling that for every

dollar of program funding that they deliver, a feeling that the amount of core funding that they receive is considerably less than what a regional college would receive for providing a dollar of program funding. And I think there's been some discussions with your ministry in terms of how that gap might be brought closer together or what level of core funding would be appropriate for DTI. I think some of the numbers that they suggest would be for every dollar of program delivery, core funding to DTI would be 52 cents and for a regional college it would be one fifty-five about. What discussions have you had with DTI in terms of providing a greater amount of core funding?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — We've had some discussions. I guess, on a go-forward basis, in March last year we signed the labour market agreement with the federal government. That's a \$90 million agreement, multi-year, five-year agreement. What we're working on right now, and the significance of why I'm going there, is that we've been able to use some of those dollars within DTI, as we're undertaking negotiations with the federal government on shifts.

[21:00]

And I highlighted these two elements, both to the LMA [labour market agreement] — and the LMA again is for those individuals that are not employment insurance eligible — as well as the LMDA [Labour Market Development Agreement]. That agreement is for those individuals that are employment insurance eligible.

As we're going forward on the LMA conversations because the federal government has just come out within the winter '09 budget, and I think that was January 27, that we're going to see an expansion of LMA funding. And I anticipate — again I don't want to speak on behalf of the federal government — but I anticipate that we will be receiving some additional dollars for our LMA. And we anticipate — again I don't want to prejudge it — that we should have some additional dollars, the tune of which, combined, probably we're focusing on somewhere around 12 million, \$13 million, somewhere in there that should be coming to Saskatchewan.

So that we anticipate that some of those dollars will then be eligible for use as we have in the past with DTI. So certainly aware of the discussion as it relates to operating and programmatic. We're actually actively working on this right now. And I don't know. I anticipate within the next six weeks, a six-week time frame, we'll have a better sense of what that looks like.

**Mr. Broten:** — In six weeks you might know if it's 12 or 13, or in six weeks you might know how you might pie up the 12 to 13?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes. No, how we'll actually . . . Because (a), I'm taking a million dollar negotiation with Ottawa — somewhere between 12 and 13. But the point I'm making is I anticipate that portions of those dollars will go to both the LMA and LMDA, and portions of the LMA money we're hoping we'll be able to use in additional investments in DTI, given some of the work that's under way. And we should know, again, within about the next six weeks how that plays itself out.

That's certainly, I think, it's a fair question and one that we're attentive to and certainly informs the deliberations that are under way with Ottawa.

**Mr. Broten:** — From your perspective as minister, was there any commitment made to DTI that the amount of core funding would be increased?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — I don't recall any either deliberations that were that definitive, or certainly any written correspondence that would go there. Certainly a commitment that we're going to do our best to do better, sure.

**Mr. Broten:** — Of the 12 to 13 million that you identified of possible additional funding, how many organizations would conceivably be sharing in that \$12 million?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Again it's one of the reasons that I put some frames of caution around that. We want to make sure that these deliberations proceed apace, which we're confident in. We want to make sure that we're not setting any false expectations up, because the parameters within which those dollars are used, those are some of the key questions that we're still working through. So it's our hope, when I make reference to DTI.

There is a potential for dozens of organizations to be eligible for this, is how I would frame that. I think so far — what? — we've had about \$10 million in? We've had \$10 million in. And the number of participants, we've had about 4,500 individuals participate through various programs. So I'm pleased so far.

As I say, this is still rolling out. It was part of the federal government budget. Pleased that we're at the table. I think we're making some solid progress here, both on the infrastructure piece but also out of HRSDC [Human Resources and Skills Development Canada]. I anticipate it'll be over the next six weeks and somewhere in the range of 12 to \$13 million. The potential: dozens of organizations may benefit. But I don't want to get hopes up too high because those parameters have yet to be finalized.

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you. Moving on to training programs (AE05), the line item, basic education, 17.688 million. Could you please identify how many basic education training spots are currently in the province and in what institutions or through which institutions, please.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Adult basic education, as far as training spots available right now, 6,240. And we'll get you the institutional breakdown. I'll go through the . . . That 6,240 comes out of the '08-09. Again we anticipate that the LMDA and LMA dollars that are under negotiation right now are going to help us to increase those. And we'll know that within six weeks.

I'll just go through. Carlton Trail, Cumberland, Great Plains, Lakeland, North West, Northlands, Parkland, Southeast, DTI, SIAST at Kelsey, SIAST at Palliser, SIAST at Wascana, SIAST Woodland, and SIIT. Those would include the institutions that we partner with, as far as on-reserve adult basic education as well.

And certainly I think there's certainly room for more seats, but one of the areas that we're also focusing in on and received some very helpful, constructive feedback from stakeholders, how we're actually structuring some of the programs; how that's been done in the past, both the previous government and ourselves; how can we actually encourage individuals not simply to enrol but to complete. And so issues of mentorship we're talking about; issues as well about how we actually roll out specific programs, and those are important too.

**Mr. Broten:** — Is there a waiting list for basic education currently in the province?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes, the list right now is somewhere in the range of about 1,500 people.

**Mr. Broten:** — And how has that — that 1,500, that about 1,500 people — how does that compare to, say, the last two or three years?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — There are a couple of elements to that question. I would say static right now, hence the significance of some of the discussions with Ottawa on LMDA and LMA.

I think the other insight on this is some of the barriers that we're running into. Certainly we've seen this at CMEC [Council of Ministers of Education, Canada]. That's the Canadian ministers of Education and Advanced Education for Canada. We just had that conference in Saskatoon on Aboriginal education, first time in Canadian history, but it's part of our deliberations.

We've talked about issues of literacy for example, and literacy certainly is a key indicator when it comes to adult basic education. And there's certainly recognition on literacy, as there is on adult basic education, that the seats are one component but the mentorship, if you want the level of investment and not just financial investment, but actually investment in supports is probably going to increase on a per seat basis. Because certainly what we've heard from experts around the CMEC table — they've brought in experts from both Ottawa and Vancouver — on issues of literacy there would be a range of somewhere between 200 and \$2,000.

And it's important to recognize stakeholders that you're dealing with on literacy for obvious reasons. And I think that we are probably going to be in a position where we're going to the level of greater investment increasingly. So that's the only insight I offer.

I will give you some of the specific references on waiting lists: '06-07, 2,113. Last year it was 1,361; this year, 1,546 is about where we are.

**Mr. Broten:** — Of the about 6,240 you mentioned, are those actual people in training programs or is that capacity for 6,240 people? So there may be a capacity for 6,200 people, but in some areas you might have a wait-list but in certain areas you might have vacant spots through a certain program. So that's the first question. And out of that 6,000-odd, would you be able to, either through tabling or reading, give a breakdown of how many students would be in each of those institutions where it is being offered, please.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Sure. The first question that . . . What was that number, 6,240? Those are individuals that have participated. And the actual institutional capacity, we can get you that breakdown of what that looks like per institution. I don't know if we can do that tonight, but we can get it back to the committee.

**Mr. Broten:** — That would be quite fine if it was just provided to the committee. Thank you.

Let's move on to (AE15), graduate retention program. The increase in funding is, as I understand it, part of the multi-year rollout of the program. I know in speaking with a few graduates of post-secondary programs, especially now as they're doing their taxes — and some people have a tendency to leave things more towards the end than they perhaps should or could — the process for receiving the certificate saying they're eligible for the program, I've heard some frustration from people where it was not clear to them that they had to apply for the program. They assumed that if they convoked from U of S, U of R [University of Regina], that there would be a cross-referencing going on and that a certificate would be automatically sent to them.

[21:15]

Are you finding that to be a major issue in the ministry where there are people who could be eligible for this program, but they're not receiving the benefit of the program or there's a delay in it because of an administrative challenge?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Actually I appreciate the feedback on this, and we'll get you the details of how it goes. The institutions actually do provide a list to the ministry, and so there are a couple of categorical exceptions to that. Those, since we've expanded the program, who have graduated from institutions outside the province, the onus is on the individuals to apply. That would be the first part. But out beyond that, as I say, I'm pleased to follow up on your question regarding individuals that have had some problems.

University of Saskatchewan, University of Regina, SIAST . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . okay, and the SIAST campuses — these institutions provide data, electronically, right into the ministry. There is one caveat, and it's a check-off by the graduates. And the rationale there is for privacy reasons, and that is to ensure that the rights and privacy of the individuals are respected, hence the check-off system.

**Mr. Broten:** — Any idea on what percentage of the students might be in that, what percentage of the students don't actually make the check mark or cross the box? Is it a small amount?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Yes. But for those that do, I mean obviously we're — both through the office and through the ministry, any questions that arise out of that — happy to address on a, you know, case-by-case issue. There have been some that have had questions, but certainly not in any programmatic level. And we've had individual cases.

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you. One of the major changes in the retention program from years past is the exclusion of graduate students from receiving a benefit through the program. Am I



correct in my understanding that the increased funding of 8.5 million does not include a benefit for graduate students through this program?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — You know, I think the categorization of including graduate students, I think the program is designed for those engaged in apprenticeship, in finishing apprenticeship programs through to the completion of their undergraduate degrees. In fact on campus, on the respective campuses for graduate students, there are graduate students on campus that are receiving the graduate retention program based on their undergraduate studies.

So to simply kind of hypothesize that graduate students are not benefiting from the graduate retention program, there are graduate students in fact benefiting. The benefits accrued come from their time and completion of their undergraduate degrees. The fact that they've enrolled in graduate studies or the fact that they may be employed, that's up to the individuals involved. So there are graduate students that, based on their work as undergraduates, are receiving benefits under the graduate retention program.

**Mr. Broten:** — Yes, there are some. There are others who do not though qualify for benefit through the program based on when they completed their undergrad and how long they're in their graduate program, where they came from, and so on. At this present time . . .

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Well if I could just, on where they came from, hence the significance of the expansion of out-of-province students, and so again, the phasing comes 2006 onward. For those that are going to graduate studies in Saskatchewan out of their undergraduate degrees, they're eligible. Now this is, and we probably need to make sure we're doing this and need to make sure we're following up on this. They need to ensure that they have adequate information. And if there's something we can do there, then we should be more attentive to that. Because as they arrive in province, oftentimes just graduating from an undergraduate degree, they're eligible to receive the benefit to the GRP [graduate retention program].

**Mr. Broten:** — No, the expansion of the program to include students from out of province, we certainly support, and pleased to see that you made that change to have it more closely aligned with the previous program. That is certainly a good move.

At this current time, how would you describe the possibility of expanding the graduate retention program to graduate students? Would you describe it as zero chance? A 5? A maybe chance? Or a 9.5 and you're going to announce it tomorrow? What is your openness to expanding the program — having expanded the geographical eligibility to now expanding the level of study?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Well I think it's a helpful question. I'm not certain I would kind of go along with the matrix of how you'd measure that. But I think the key questions that I've asked, and I've certainly had helpful conversations with student representatives, graduate student representatives, as well as both deans, and there isn't a clear consensus on public policy instruments in support for graduate students. So I would reframe it. And that is, what is the perceived or potential

objectives that would be associated with the expansion of the graduate retention program for graduate students?

So the range of options that I've heard go from, do more to support more commercialization of research and start-up through that death valley where there's a lack of capital during cycles of innovation, to ensure that there are more with commercialization, that that commercialization actually occurs within Saskatchewan. I like that. That will actually trigger additional employment opportunities along the career path that several graduate students can then engage in.

So that would be here and that could take any number of options as far as tax regimes which encourage commercialization, venture cap. That is, the employment piece within the knowledge sector, how do we help to accelerate that? Because that will help ensure that graduate students stay. All the way through to saying, quite simply, just expand the graduate retention program.

But along the way, certainly you've heard, including from students, excluding some of the students including, certainly what I heard from one student representative, including excluding the mid-career professionals.

So along the way, what would increased scholarship dollars do for graduate students? What does that look like? So actually offer increased — potentially — support for those graduate students during their work, what would that look like? What would it look like as far as having greater connectivity, as I've said before before this committee, between to ensure that education, experience, and employment; and that is, how do we close that gap for graduate students?

And so putting greater emphasis on experiential learning, co-op education, at a graduate level. You've seen the expansion of the MITACS program started under the previous government — three seats. We've expanded that to 21. Again the goal is to get a sense of how that's going to work.

Through to helping support to a greater level the actual outcomes of the research because it's based on those outcomes that graduate students will stay within the province.

So the question for me I approach with an open mind. The question for me is, what are the public policy goals? Obviously the retention piece is very important. The recruitment piece, very important. But there's also recognition of the anticipated outcomes that we hope these graduate students, as they graduate, will actually play on regional economic development and the greater diversity of our community.

So open-minded about the instrument, delighted to be in this exploratory stage. I think it's a helpful stage, and pleased to report that I find the discussions fruitful, happy to be engaged in them. We just held for the first time a session, a working session on experiential learning with — Reg, how many? — 25 stakeholders or thereabouts?

**A Member:** — 26.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Twenty-six stakeholders. There's now an action group on that that's been established. So I think it's

across a continuum. Do I think there's a magic wand on this? I don't, and I think that's reflected in the dialogue that I've had. That is, there's no clear consensus from stakeholders regarding an expansion of graduate students of the graduate retention program. I don't rule it out, but I approach this with an open mind. I continue to explore a range of options.

**Mr. Broten:** — Okay, so no announcement tomorrow? I don't need to wear my favourite orange tie tomorrow?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Well you can always wear your favourite orange tie.

**Mr. Broten:** — All right. One last question, as I know the time is ticking. Out-of-province recruitment such as trips to Ontario — there's been a few over the last year. Are more trips planned within this budget, and under what budget line item would one find those trips? And as those trips occur, how is the ministry striving to have the correct balance of finding individuals that the province needs, but at the same time recognizing that there are people here in Saskatchewan faced with layoffs, people who are already here that deserve the opportunity to compete for those jobs in the same way?

Where is the money? Are more trips planned? How are you going to take care of people here at home?

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — I'll start with your last question, because it's the most important, frankly. Taking care of people in Saskatchewan is the first priority. And it goes back to the points I outlined during my opening remarks, and that is, how do we ensure that people within Saskatchewan are positioned to participate in and benefit from the economic growth that's under way? A key element on this: skill sets, education, personal and professional development.

So what we've done today — the announcement came out, you probably saw that — on our rapid response programming, and that is we're willing, able, and well positioned to work with employers, to work with employers as they may run into a short-term challenge or longer term challenge regarding layoffs to say, and we're working closely with Service Canada on this, how do we prevent the layoffs to start with? And certainly we're seeing some interest in work sharing, and pleased with that.

But if there are layoffs, and certainly we have seen some, our rapid response teams are there to help ensure that the transition is as smooth as possible. And that is today in Saskatchewan there are 6,500 jobs available on the SaskJobs website alone. So how do we better ensure, and that's why we've established the rapid response initiative, better ensure that the basic skills, resumé writing, posting online, and transition planning are under way and our rapid response teams are ready to go on short notice? So that's part of how we're helping to assist people in this transitional time. How do we help with that transition because there are still thousands of jobs in Saskatchewan?

[21:30]

The broader question that we've focused on is really one of the key elements of the entire ministry and that is helping to ensure

that the people of this province — and we can put a special emphasis on the First Nation and Métis peoples, education, skills training, personal and professional development. Gary Merasty and Eric Howe wrote a recent article in *The StarPhoenix* and they just summarized it as education, education, education. We have about 13,000 First Nation and Métis learners across the programs that the ministry has responsibility for. I'm pleased with that but there's a lot more to do. That's one of the reasons I was just in the North. We need to continue to evolve our programming.

So happy to report that that is our primary focus, but we're still going to continue to invite expats back. We're receiving feedback from families saying, this has been a long time coming. There are a lot more families having Sunday dinners together now than there were in recent years. And I think the statistics of 15,000 people coming either to Saskatchewan for the first time or back to Saskatchewan helps to demonstrate that with an empirical reference that is hard to overlook.

We're also welcoming newcomers. We're welcoming newcomers and that welcoming of newcomers is going to continue. The work in Ontario . . . About 1,000 people came to Saskatchewan in the fourth quarter from across Canada; 921 of those came from Ontario. And I think that speaks volumes to the pretty remarkable work that our Premier does to help reinforce that Saskatchewan is playing a leadership role in the country.

So that's the third question. The answer is, our talent challenge is such that we need to do all three of those. As far as the dollars, the line item, yes, it's a combination of communications and career and employment, straddling those two.

And I will say we're open to future opportunities. And at the same time there's a degree of prudence right now that we have, and that is certainly cognizant of the position that we occupy — a position of leadership, but that we're not immune from what's going on. And so a sense, as I say, a sense of prudence and there are, to be direct, I have no plans to participate any further.

That being said, one of the elements that we have expressed, Mr. Chair, if you'll just forgive me for one more minute, it's an important point. We work co-operatively and collaboratively with employers. And if employers come to the table and say, look these are the current demands that we face, then as a government we are going to listen. We may not always act, but we are going to listen to those employers that are helping to fuel the economic growth that's under way in this province.

We will be attentive to those because a strong economy provides the foundation for making those most significant and important reinvestments in our society that you've seen this government make over the last 18 months. So we're going to keep working on the talent challenge. We'll be prudent about this, but we're also going to make sure that we're positioned to continue with economic growth because economic growth, not just for its own sake, but it's the precursor to social investment.

Mr. Chair, thank for the opportunity to just finish those points.

**The Chair:** — That more than concludes our time with Advanced Education, Employment and Labour. Mr. Broten, a

very short comment — very, very short please.

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you to the minister. Thank you to the officials.

**The Chair:** — The committee will take a short recess to facilitate the change in ministries and officials.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I would just like to echo a thanks to all the committee members, and a special thanks to all the officials from the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour, from the Apprenticeship Commission, and to my office. I know it's late in the evening, and this is time spent away from family.

And I would like to extend that thanks as well, Mr. Chair, to those that work with you in helping to ensure that this committee runs so smoothly. So thank you very much, everyone.

**General Revenue Fund  
Corrections, Public Safety and Policing  
Vote 73**

**Subvote (CP01)**

**The Chair:** — The last remaining item on our agenda this evening is the consideration of the '09-10 estimates for the Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing, vote 73. We have Minister Hickie and his officials here with us this evening, and I would at this time ask the minister to introduce his officials.

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. With me today to my left is Al Hilton, my deputy minister. To my right is Mae Boa, acting assistant deputy minister of corporate services. In the back is Tammy Kirkland, executive director of adult corrections; and over my right shoulder as well, Dr. Brian Rector, director of program development and therapeutic services. Also with me is my chief of staff, Rob Nicolay; and, I believe, my ministerial assistant, Rebecca Gotto when she comes back with my glasses. And with that, that's the introduction of my officials. And do you want me to do a bit of a preamble or . . .

**The Chair:** — If you have a preamble, I would ask you to keep it very short in view of the time of the evening.

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think the most important part of this talk today is going to be about the external investigation team report and adult corrections possibly. So my focus today really is that the budget that we allocated in Corrections this year actually places a priority on necessity versus any other means because of the results of the EIT, external investigation team report into the August escape from Regina Provincial Correctional Centre. And the budget remedies that, some long-standing issues of infrastructure and systemic issues that threaten the safety and security of adult corrections facilities.

So I think we'll leave it at that because last time I went through all the allocation of money for the adult corrections for infrastructure security. And I'm prepared to take questions, as

are my officials.

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

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'd like to start if I could by getting an update where the counts are in the various institutions. How many individuals are remanded, sentenced, and the total populations in Pine Grove, P.A., Saskatoon, and Regina — by institution, if I could.

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Absolutely. Give us a second to find those for you. Just a quick clarification, do you want it broken down per institution, right now? You want the exact count today, or you want the average daily counts?

**Mr. Yates:** — Average daily counts is fine, by institution and a total system-wide, if I could.

[21:45]

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Okay. What I can do is I can give you the 2008-2009 average daily count. Custody was 1,442, with a breakdown that our average daily sentenced count was 870 and average daily remand was 573. That's for adult corrections. And we'll look further to see if we have the breakdown per institution. If we don't have that, we can get it to you, Mr. Yates.

If you want to move on, we'll let the officials look for that number for the breakdown per institution for you, if you like. And we can move on to the next question.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. My next question has to do, have we seen a reduction or increase in remands over the last 12 months?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — In regards to the remand count, it's remained level for the most part, and it hasn't changed that much in the last 12 months.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. We have speculation that the federal government is going to actually move ahead with the changes in the two-for-one system allowed by judges for remand. What impact do you believe that will have on the remand inmate count in the province?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Well that's a good question. I guess the issue would have to be that it's still up to the offenders to have their legal counsel manage their files for them and their cases. So I guess certain particular crimes, we may see increase in speed through the system where some inmates may in fact want to get on their sentence time, whether provincial or federal. And there could be other cases, of course much more complex, that would have definite federal implications with inmates. Legal counsel may have no choice but to extend the time in remand.

So I guess really we're talking about a system in the justice component of our government where between prosecutors, defence counsel, and then people from the Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing that compile reports like pre-sentence reports, could be a factor where we still see the end sentence may result in more federal time for the severe criminals versus those who would remain in provincial systems

because of the two-for-one credit.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. One of the reasons put forward for the potential change was the fact that it would alleviate some pressure on remand in the system and have individuals resentenced earlier and deal with some of the insecurity certainly that comes with being remanded. Have you done any look at changes that may need to be made within our system in order to facilitate people getting to the point of sentencing earlier?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Thank you for the question and, Mr. Chair, the answer to that is that it's not necessary that the two-for-one comes into play to expediate the remand time. We have a very complex process in Canada where truth in sentencing has been lacking for a number of years, where victims of crime see themselves put through a very horrendous process having to testify, having to wait for court dates, where offenders can sit back and for whatever reason stall the system. At the end of the day, they get a lesser sentence, which results mostly in provincial time for a lot of these offenders that should be doing federal time. So the two-for-one issue is to actually get truth in sentencing, more so, and to acknowledge the victims in Canada.

What it will mean for us though is that we're hopeful that the sentences do come down quicker and the inmates don't stay in the provincial system for sentenced inmates. What we do recognize though is that, although we have had some levelling out in remands, we do see that we have the 4 to 5 per cent increase in counts in general, year to year, in corrections and hence the need.

This year we're planning for a remand centre in Saskatoon because what that does is that does give us the capability of addressing an increased influx in remand counts, plus opens up bed space for us for our sentenced offender population. Plus it opens up very much the need for program space, which right now is being used to house inmates, quite frankly. So we're unable to provide programming to the scope of inmates we wish we could because of our counts being so high.

So that's what the cost of remand does. It results in programming being scaled back in some cases to inmates that require it sooner in their sentences, and with the two-for-one sentencing we're hopeful that we'll see the federally sentenced offenders out of the system quicker versus being housed in provincial facilities.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. Have you looked at all the implications of a need to have predisposition reports and reports from the institutions available quicker if people are going to in fact be before the courts sooner?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — You're talking about the pre-sentence reports and those issues? Well right now our staff that work in the community offices and the staff in the correctional facilities haven't addressed that as a concern. At this time, we're seeing that the flow of information to the courts is expedient and that we haven't had any case where the courts have condemned us for not providing reports sooner.

So what'll happen now is that we'll have to build capacity of

course, and we'll do that inside the institution by making permanent part-time staff into full-time positions. And we have our community staff which will be dedicating themselves to those pre-sentence reports as they always have. So we don't foresee that as being a concern, but we will monitor the cases and the situations as they develop.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. One of the major problems with the current system and people being in remand for so long is the lack of programming while individuals are on remand. Could you give us an update if there's been any changes in programming available to remand over the last 12 months?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Well what we have right now is that in remand centres we have counselling — chaplains and elders — for the inmates. We do have some addictions counselling available, AA [alcoholics anonymous] programming and such. The extension of education programs to inmates on remand has started, although somewhat difficult, based on the availability of classrooms and of course having remand offenders in with the instructors as well. Some of our institutions are so crowded we can't provide a secure space for that.

But we have difficulty in doing any long-term programming for remand inmates, quite frankly, for two reasons. There is a need for remanded inmates to not profess their guilt. Sometimes they believe that taking programs will result in their admission, so they tend not to do those things. That's why we've extended Aboriginal elder counselling and chaplain counselling for reasons other than just worrying about addressing criminogenic factors. We can actually have them talk to people while they're in there, as opposed to doing what's called dead time.

So on that note, all of our facilities have those available. We in fact this year will be expanding chaplaincy and elder programs, counselling services in all of our adult correctional facilities, as well as looking at expanding those in our young offender facilities as well.

So on the remand side, central office staff will be tasked with, along with the directors, to implement those changes this year to ensure that our remanded inmates have more availability to programming than they would have had in the past.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Could you outline for us what potential addictions counselling or training is available to inmates while on remand?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Certainly. I can start that and let my executive director of adult corrections step in then too, and maybe even Dr. Rector might want to jump in here as well with some of his other initiatives he's doing. But for now the addictions counselling is available that we have the contracts to the regional health authorities, and we also have some availability for inmates to take part in AA programs, although not widespread through our facilities. That's an initiative that we're looking at expanding upon.

But I'll turn it over to Tammy here. Tammy Kirkland, executive director of adult corrections, can answer in a little more detail.

**Ms. Kirkland:** — We do have addictions counselling

opportunities in each of our facilities through partnerships with the regional health authorities. We have trained, qualified addictions workers that work in each facility and that can be available to remand offenders for educational programming around addictions. We also have a dedicated addictions unit at the Regina Correctional Centre. It's the only facility we have it in right now, and we are studying the impact and success of that and looking at some point to expand that type of programming that's dedicated on-unit programming.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. My understanding though that the dedicated addictions unit is for non-remanded inmates, only for sentenced inmates, and that actual services for those on remand that have addictions problems is very limited. Would that be a true characterization of the current status of services?

**Ms. Kirkland:** — Yes, it's accurate that the dedicated unit is for sentenced offenders, and remand offenders would have access to, as I said, to educational, to the early stages around addictions information rather than treatment itself.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. Has there been any thought put to allowing remanded inmates — particularly if they're going to continue to be remanded for longer periods of time — access to, as an example, the dedicated addictions unit if they request it?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — The problem with that particular component of remand is that we have inmates who have various security needs, and allowing the basic rudimentary counselling services is probably the most effective means to deal with them right now, given the fact that they're going through an assessment process and they are waiting for their court date.

So we want to ensure staff safety all the time and other inmate safety as well, so long-range programming is being looked at by the ministry through the director's division. And is there a program that can be provided to offenders in remand that's able to be given safely, plus also one that we can look at that may or may not get full buy-in? We have to make sure that the inmates in remand don't want to divulge their . . . If they have a drinking problem or a drug problem, that may lead into a criminogenic factor that could have created the problem initially, why they're in there, why they're in remand.

So we want to ensure that we provide a program base that allows the offenders to have counselling services, absolutely. But also we don't want to have a program that they have to leave because they refuse to or they feel their rights are violated by having to make a self-disclosure admission which could have a direct link to the allegation of the crime they have committed. So we'd love to expand programming to inmates in remand, all the programming. But recognizing that most of those programs result in inmates having to come to a conclusion where they have to admit guilt and move on from their precursor — what got them in this system — so they can get eventual release and possibly early release, we have to be cognizant of the fact that we don't want to force their hand and result in them leaving the program early. We want success at all levels.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. What I was talking about though was a voluntary entry into the program for those

individuals who voluntarily would like to seek help for their problem at the earliest possible opportunity. Often treatment could be a factor in sentencing. It could be a factor in their future as well. It's an opportunity that is not readily afforded today in the system, as I understand it.

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — I can answer that question quite frankly, that we have such a high, pressing need for those already sentenced that our particular resources are stretched to the point. We have to dedicate those to our sentenced offenders. And the resourcing of that particular program involves that the inmates have to move to the unit and have to have dedicated interaction with staff, class time, counselling time. And right now we have an exceptional backlog of programming needs because of the lack of space because overcrowding not being addressed for a number of years, for the past 16 years, before we became government.

All of sudden now, we're seeing that inmate counts have been climbing, and we have the similar criminogenic factors that can't be addressed because of a lack of program space. So those who are sentenced to the system already, we want to make sure that they can have their needs addressed, so we can return them to the population or communities when it's safe to do so and when it's safe for them to reintegrate as well.

So we don't want to cut our programming options, for sure, for remanded offenders, but we have to recognize that we have inmates who are sentenced who will return to our communities. We want to do the best we can to make sure that they are safe to do so and pose the least amount of risk to reoffend again. So hence the priority goes to those already sentenced.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. My next question has to do with programming available to inmates that are sentenced. The biggest complaint that comes to my office from families, as a critic, is that a judge will say that prior to release an individual has to have this program. The program's not available in-house. So my question really goes to, is there a communications opportunity between the system and the judges to make them aware of what in-house programs are available within the province on a regular basis?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Well I'll let my officials answer in a second, but I think I'd like to start off by saying that you're the critic now and absolutely you get responses from the public. But you were the minister of this particular portfolio for a number of, well, months I guess, but for a number of years your party was in place. And I'll tell you what. From a policing standpoint, we always wondered what was going on with inmates that we used to charge and they'd get sentenced, why they wouldn't get program options before they were released back in the community and we had to deal with them again.

[22:00]

So I find your question to be somewhat ironic in the fact that you had an opportunity over a number of years as government to deal with this issue, and now we'll have to deal with it, I guess. So what I'll do is that we'll assure the public that those who do enter our sentence programs or sentencing will get programs once we find space, which is another problem we have in this government now, to deal with the overcrowding

situation.

So I think what I'll do from that point is I'll let my official answer that remainder of your question.

**Ms. Kirkland:** — In response to what's the communication link for us to let judges know what's available, certainly our community probation officers through the pre-sentence reports — when they do their assessment and provide that information to the courts — identify what they have assessed the needs of that individual to be and at that time also speak to resources available in facility and in community that would meet those needs.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. When a judge would recommend a program for an individual that's not readily available in the system, at that time is the judge notified that that program isn't available? Or is there an oversight, I guess, of that? What I'm getting at is if a judge recommends a program that's not available, do we then tell them it's not available? Do the community workers tell them it's not available, particularly if it's a condition of early release?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Yes, I can get an answer for that one.

Thank you for the time, Mr. Chair. It's actually a joint effort that pre-sentence reports do talk about factors that result of course . . . As you are aware, Mr. Yates, you brought them into the system. If the judge does have a court order at the time of sentencing and a specific program should be taken or will be taken by the inmate, the community corrections and the adult corrections will in fact do that. They will fulfill that obligation by the judge if so ordered.

That may involve bringing in resources into the institution for certain programming, as well as planning for that eventual release into the community to actually take it. So we have CBOs as well as other organizations that we can tie into in the community to afford that programming. And absolutely, if a judge orders that through sentencing, we will comply and we have.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. I think that concludes my questioning on that line. Do we have yet any statistics broke down by institution?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Yes, I was going to get to that, absolutely. We have Pine Grove Correctional Centre, including the Sharber unit, has a peak count of 147; Prince Albert Correctional Centre, peak count of 346; Regina Correctional Centre, peak count of 518; Saskatoon Correctional Centre, excluding the urban camp, at 416. So that comes out to 1,427, so slightly lower than what the peak count breakdown was according to what I read earlier off. We also have our community corrections and stuff as well. Want me to go through that for you as well?

**Mr. Yates:** — Battleford and Buffalo Narrows?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Yes. Battlefords Community Correctional Centre, 39; Buffalo Narrows, 19; Besnard Lake Correctional Camp, 26; Prince Albert Healing Lodge, 20; Saskatoon Correctional Centre Urban Camp, 48; Men's CTR, Community Training Residences, Regina, Prince Albert, Saskatoon at 52;

and the Women's Community Training Residence in Saskatoon, the 17; for that particular total of 221. So we also have the Saskatchewan Impaired Driver Treatment Centre for 33. Total is 1,681 from all those numbers I provided to you.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. Mr. Minister, over the last 12 months have we seen any significant changes in the movement or the catchment area of offenders in the province? Have we seen an increase as an example in the central region of catchment area, the Saskatoon region versus Regina or the North? Are there change in patterns in . . .

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — I know what you're asking for, so give us a second. We'll just get that for you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. What the officials are telling me is that there's been no real trend change. It's been consistent from year to year now. It's the same kind of catchment, some kind of numbers from all the different areas in the province, so it's been nothing out of the ordinary.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. All right, my next question has to do with the remand centre that's being proposed in Saskatoon. Could you tell us where that remand centre will be built? Will it be built on the grounds of the existing correctional facility?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Yes, it will.

**Mr. Yates:** — Okay, thank you very much. What are the plans as a result of building the new remand centre with existing areas that are currently being utilized, like some of the dormitory areas that previously were used for training and educational purposes?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Well what we're going to see with the remand centre is that we're going to . . . It's a four-year project by the way, so it's not going to alleviate our needs immediately. But what we're going to do with the remand centre is we're going to allow our entire adult corrections to feed that centre with our most dangerous, violent remand offenders, recognizing there are different levels of remand offenders — a person who comes in possibly on his first alleged break and enter offence will be different than a hard core criminal who's waiting for a murder trial. So recognizing that, we have a planning mechanism; we have to design it properly.

We also look at the concept that we will be looking forward to previous projections and future projections in our design concepts as well, and that when we get the actual final design phase after this year, that we'll see . . . Well we're hopeful in four years time, we'll be able to have all of our adult program spaces, dormitories, gymnasiums being utilized for different mechanisms now than we see today. So it'll take time to get there, absolutely. But in the interim, the planning that we'll be doing as a ministry will project increase demand on remand and be ready for those fluctuations.

We also have the availability by the way within the remand centre to design a wing of it or maybe even partially design an area for some of our most problematic sentenced inmates that could be transferred there as well who are very difficult to deal with right now in our current secure custody facilities that we see in adult corrections. So we want to give that availability as

well to that, and that means the possibility of females as well.

We have some female inmates that are very problematic to deal with on remand, so we have to be possibly looking at their trending as well. We're starting to see their trends increase now, compared to previous years, so we want to be able to address it properly. Not saying that that's going to be what we're going to do, but we have to look at corrections as an evolving science and try to project where the numbers are going to go.

So let's hope that in four years time that, when the building gets opened, we'll be able to alleviate our program space problems that we see now because the remanded offenders may not be in the same units right now that quite frankly aren't designed for remand. But the corrections officers are doing the best they can, given the limited infrastructure that was there provided to them.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. Could you give us any update on any proposed plans for changes or modifications or improvements to Pine Grove?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — At the time of budget, we were proposing a new, pre-constructed, prefabricated building to go on site. And given the demands this year within Corrections to address infrastructure security needs in all adult correctional facilities as a result of the external investigation team report, the decision was made at the cabinet finalization level to hold off on Pine Grove.

However we are hopeful that there will be some possible federal funding that might come available as the government rolls out some initiatives to do shovel-ready projects still that we may be able to access still. And we're investigating that through contacts in Ottawa.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. Mr. Minister, I now would like to move on to the issue of the external investigator's report and specifically the recommendations that have been put forward by the government in response to the incident. At the earlier meeting, you had indicated or there were conversations that the findings of the Regina Correctional Centre would serve as a template to look at system-wide changes. Although the problems were identified in Regina, many of those problems are systemic and system-wide.

So I would like to start by asking, to date this report's now approximately, oh, six months old. What changes have been made to date, identifiable changes within, as a result of that incident?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Well I'll clarify, Mr. Chair, I'll clarify the member's timeline. The report actually got released about a month ago. So although the report was constructed by the investigators and presented to my deputy minister and myself, draft version, on New Year's Eve, the work still hadn't been done yet. And it wasn't finalized to about the week before, till we got a government response.

I indicated before in the release of the report, that a government who would ask for a report to be completed and then release it without an action plan would be very much in jeopardy of not having the plan available to staff and to ministry officials so they could actually take steps to correct long-standing

problems. And, you know, on that note I find it ironic again, looking, doing some research, that previous reports of course weren't released by your previous government.

But even a report from 1993, the Rankin report, had some very interesting recommendations that are mirroring some of the recommendations in the external investigation team report. And that seemed to be an action plan and it wasn't followed.

So this government action plan, as a result of this escape, will take some time to implement. We've had the budget passed now and we very clearly stated that we will be looking at some resourcing for part-time, permanent, part-time staff to full-time staff, looking at changing some of our dynamics inside our institutions with some training for individuals as well, accountability for our staff, but also in central office, central headquarters where we have to consider other issues involving the policy directive kind of development for these long-standing issues that for some reason never were addressed in the past.

So I will turn it over to my deputy minister now. He can give you some more highlights as to where we're going. Just in closing though, I will say that the report is very direct in what needs to be done, and this government has an action plan as given out the day of the media release that prescribes an effective tool and effective mechanism to act on the recommendations with action. And some have already, and some will be more so over the next 12 months. So on that note I'll give it to the deputy minister to follow up on that.

**Mr. Hilton:** — Oh sure. Thank you, Minister. I think it's fair to say that the various recommendations in the EIT report thematically fall under six or seven broad themes, legislation and policy being one; compliance, accountability being another; intelligence and population management being another; training and professional development.

So it's really the ministry's intention to take a look at all of these areas with a view to identifying what we need to do on a go-forward basis to address the challenges that the report identified and that the government response spoke to. And that's going to require a lot of work and it's going to take some time.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I fully understand the depth of the job and what it's going to do to undertake it. I'm wondering, in the last 12 months have you met with employees? Have you had the opportunity to move forward towards putting that plan into action since the original report came down?

[22:15]

**Mr. Hilton:** — I would describe our work as being in its very early stages. We are going through a process of thinking through how we can best approach these issues. In many cases it might involve establishing task teams of officials to deal with these different categories that I've just described. So it's sort of very preliminary, and decisions around how best to move forward are going to have to be made over the course of the next two or three months.

**Mr. Yates:** — So we can expect that decisions on the various

recommendations will be made in the next two to three months? Or is that too aggressive a time frame in your mind?

**Mr. Hilton:** — I think that would be too aggressive, perhaps too optimistic. To give you an example, I mean, you know, a lot of the issues identified throughout the report spoke to issues related to legislation and policy and the ministry's ability to fulfill its commitment to act fairly. So there's going to have to be a fairly significant policy-based review around pretty well all aspects of the adult corrections system.

And that's not a review that one would want to rush. One wants to get it right. And it's a process that I think probably needs to involve members of the organization at all levels, and we may find it necessary to bring in some outside experts as well.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. So over the next few months, when you were talking about decisions being made, it'd be decisions being made on more or less how to approach the various problems, not so much the solutions or the outcomes.

**Mr. Hilton:** — I think it will vary depending on what the issue is. So for example, if we determine that one of the things we need to develop is a code of professional ethics, then that's something that probably can be developed quicker than coming to conclusions based on a full-blown policy review.

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — If I can add, we have four points that actually align themselves that really tie in with the 23 recommendations. Improving infrastructure, safety, and security — we're doing that in the budget and we'll be rolling out that within the next year. You'll see improvements to the infrastructure and security infrastructure as well of our adult corrections facilities and young offender facilities.

The improving staff performance, preparedness, and accountability — that ties into again looking at policy development, looking at some long-standing issues that have been in place for a number of years, and tying those into the actual recommendations.

Improved intelligence and information flow, that was a recommendation. So that's going to take time to ensure that we have capacity built at levels within central office like the deputy minister said. And as well our institutions, some training has to be done as well to encourage the information flow, but also to ensure we get the information properly as well.

And overall improved correctional practices is the last kind of a pillar, or the point that's going to help tie the recommendations together, and that is the policy analysis and the direction that the ministry has to develop because there are some correctional practices that change from institution to institution for whatever reason. And we'll have to look at a better way of tying in all of our operations and our day-to-day routine operations together to ensure consistency as apposed to inconsistency, is what the report tells us happens.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. But even within each of these major areas, there are a number of things that would seem to be, having read the recommendations and looked at them, obvious thing that could be done relatively quickly and would

improve to some degree at least — wouldn't fix the problem but would make some significant advancements towards bettering the situation. Will those types of things be done in the next 12 months or are those the types of things that will be part of a longer term plan?

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — I'll just start off by saying that every recommendation has been looked at by the deputy minister and by the staff in central office, the management staff. Some of these things will be done sooner than later, absolutely. I mean, if you'd like us to go through them step one by one, we could for you tonight and tell you what the action plan says. I believe you have the book in front of you, as the public can have as well. It talks about clearly what we're going to do as a ministry to address every recommendation separately. And some of those will take time.

And you ask about the next 12 months. The infrastructure needs will be addressed within the next 12 months. The \$8 million is part of the 9.4 as allocated in this year's budget to be expended in this fiscal year. So in the fiscal year that money will be expended — \$8 million has to be spent on security upgrades. There's no carryover money will be spent. So that will be done within 12 months.

Other issues involving practices and policy development, it's going to take some time for the deputy minister, who has talked about some tasks that have to be initiated, and I'll let him finish up this conversation with you, Mr. Yates.

But to not do anything, as was the past practice according to Rankin and how the recommendations in Rankin all of a sudden are the same kind of recommendations we see in our report — had those been addressed years ago we may not be here where we are today. And now we'll have to do in the next short order take some time . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well you say it's not true. I heard you say that, but I can tell you right now that we have a problem with . . . If you want me to go through them, I can, just to show you that there are some things in the Rankin report that in fact I can say clearly should have been actioned in the past, and had they been actioned in the past we probably wouldn't have seen the same situation develop again.

I'll gladly go through those if you want, because I also recognize, Mr. Yates, that you received great gratitude from the people who put the report together — you and Mr. Wright actually, Gary Wright. Your committee colleagues thanked you for your invaluable assistance, advice, and stamina going through the process. So I do see that probably some of these things were followed up on, absolutely.

But I see one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, possibly eight recommendations that lacked follow-up, that we see mirrored kind of recommendations in the external investigation team report. So I will say now that the deputy can follow up on this, but time will be taken and it'll be done very methodically to ensure that we don't have a gap in how we implement the recommendations. Do you want to finish up . . .

**Mr. Hilton:** — Sure. I guess what I could add is in terms of the specific recommendations that were addressed in the EIT report, the government's response includes time frames around each of the specific recommendations. But what I'm speaking



to is really perhaps the more challenging part of the EIT report and the response. And that is when you read the report in its entirety and you knit all the recommendations together, it signals that there are sort of larger issues than just the specific recommendations in and of themselves.

So when I'm portraying a patient time frame for dealing with those larger underlying issues, I'm really not speaking to individual, specific recommendations. I'm speaking to those kind of systemic issues that, when you read the report in its entirety, reveal themselves.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, and I do understand that. When the Rankin review was done many changes were made, but the system is such that there will continually be an evolution of the system. The challenges will continue to be there. It may be different challenges in some ways than they were five years ago, but it may come across the system much the same. The problem may be different than the actual problem that was there 15 years ago, but it has the same impact on the culture or the system itself. And I would venture that 15 years from now, we're going to have the same types of challenges and problems. I think if you look at the systems anywhere in the world, you're going to see that. But nonetheless they do need to be addressed, and we do need to deal with the challenges.

I don't want to get into each of the specific recommendations tonight. We'll have another opportunity to do that. But what I was looking for when I asked if some of the things could be dealt with in a relatively short period of time, there are recommendations as to supervision, there are recommendations as to training; some of those things that are most immediate in need can probably be done in a relatively short time frame. And I'm looking for some indications that some of these things are in fact going to be done in a relatively short period of time.

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Well I'll answer that question, very clearly answered that question in the press conference. This is our report card mechanism now to the people in this province, and in the actions that will be taken and the timelines provided in this particular document called *The Road Ahead: Towards a Safer Correctional System*. It's there for a reason. We have timelines to hit for fall of this year. We have some other responses too, that might happen in the same time frame. And that's our report card.

So if you're asking if you're going to be testing the management staff to get the job done, this response is a result of their work after reviewing the report. This is the timelines that they believe are manageable and after discussing it with me, they brought those forward. So the integrity of the people that work in the central office and the people that work in our institutions is what we're looking at for this. They brought the timelines to us; it's not the government saying, this will be done by then. The government's response is the result of their hard work. So again we wouldn't put forth a document to the public that in fact is not attainable or measureable, and we can do both with this.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. I'm just cognizant, I know in the system that when there's an impetus to do something, there seems to be the ability to get it done and the funds. And over time that sometimes moves on to other

priorities. And that's where my considerations and questions were coming from on that particular issue.

We're approaching very quickly the time that we would wrap up this evening. I don't want to get into a lot of specific questions tonight on the recommendations, so at this time I'd just like to thank the minister and his officials for their answers tonight. And when we have our next hour, we'll be dealing specifically with a number of the recommendations.

So, Mr. Chair, that concludes my comments for tonight.

**The Chair:** — Seeing that it is near the hour of adjournment, if there are no other questions for the minister and his officials, I'd ask a member of the committee to move that this committee adjourns. Mr. LeClerc so moves. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

[The committee adjourned at 22:27.]