



STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Hansard Verbatim Report

No. 49 – November 29, 2010



Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

Twenty-sixth Legislature

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Mr. Greg Ottenbreit, Chair
Yorkton

Mr. Cam Broten, Deputy Chair
Saskatoon Massey Place

Ms. Doreen Eagles
Estevan

Mr. Glen Hart
Last Mountain-Touchwood

Ms. Judy Junor
Saskatoon Eastview

Ms. Christine Tell
Regina Wascana Plains

Mr. Gordon Wyant
Saskatoon Northwest

[The committee met at 19:00.]

The Chair: — Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Seeing as it is now 7 o'clock, the chosen hour for our committee meeting to begin, I will call this committee to order. Good evening to everybody at home and to committee members. I'd like to welcome you to the deliberations tonight of the Standing Committee on Human Services.

On the agenda this evening we will be considering the supplementary estimates for the Ministry of Social Services and Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration.

I'd first like to introduce the members of the committee. On the opposition side we have committee member Mr. Cam Broten and Ms. Judy Junor, and also sitting in tonight we have Mr. David Forbes and Mr. Len Taylor. And on the government side we have Mr. Glen Hart; substituting for Ms. Christine Tell is Mr. Denis Allchurch; and we have Ms. Doreen Eagles and Mr. Gord Wyant.

Pursuant to rule 146(1), the following supplementary estimates were deemed referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services on November 24th, 2010: vote 37, Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration; vote 169, Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration; vote 5, Education; vote 32, Health; and vote 36, Social Services.

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

Subvote (SS01)

The Chair: — We are now looking at estimates for Social Services, vote 36, central management and services (SS01) outlined on page 14 of the Supplementary Estimates book.

And, Ms. Minister, would you like to introduce your officials and make an opening statement? And before you do though, I will ask all members or all officials as they speak to the questions the first time, if they would just reintroduce themselves for the purposes of Hansard.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I will introduce the officials I have with me this evening. We have Deputy Minister Marian Zerr; Alan Syhlonyk, he's the assistant deputy minister of corporate services; Bob Wihlidal, assistant deputy minister of income assistance and disability services; Miriam Myers, executive director of finance and administration; Gord Tweed, the acting executive director of strategic policy; Lynn Tulloch, the executive director of income assistance service and delivery; and Doug Scott is the director of benefits policy.

And to all the members, I am pleased to be here this evening to talk to you about the role of the Ministry of Social Services. We ensure that children are safe from abuse and neglect; that people have basic shelter, food, and clothing; and vulnerable citizens have the opportunity to participate in our community. Our key programs support these areas of business.

Tonight we are here to discuss three key programs — the social assistance caseload, the rental housing supplement, and emergency social services. To deal with the additional pressure in these areas, we are requesting an additional \$10.41 million, which represents just under 1.4 per cent increase to our total budget that's more than \$753 million.

Under social assistance, the Saskatchewan economy is reasonably resilient compared to other jurisdictions. However while Saskatchewan has been faring far better than most jurisdictions, since April 2008 we've seen increases in social assistance caseloads. We are monitoring these increases in cases and working to ensure that programs and services continue to help people make the transition to employment.

Under the rental housing supplements, there's also considerable pressure in the Saskatchewan rental housing supplement program, which is projected to be overexpended by \$1.5 million this fiscal year. This pressure results from semi-annual indexation and volume pressures. Our government has taken action to improve the rental housing supplement, which has resulted in more low-income families and individuals with disabilities benefiting from this program. Since August of 2008, government has adjusted benefits under the SRHC twice each year in line with the average market rents as reported by CMHC [Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation].

In August 2008, benefits under SRHS [Saskatchewan rental housing supplement] were increased to up to 30 per cent of the average market rent for families with children, and up to 40 per cent for people with disabilities. This means that when combined with the shelter allowances provided under SAP [Saskatchewan assistance plan] and TEA [transitional employment allowance], families with children can now receive up to 100 per cent of the average market rental and people with disabilities can receive up to 110 per cent of the average market rent.

And under emergency social services, I think we're all aware that last year was a busy, or last summer was a busy time for emergency social services. The province experienced a number of events in 2010 that required emergency social services, including flooding in Maple Creek, in Saskatoon, in Yorkton, and in North Battleford. There was a tornado in Kawacatoose and there was wildfires in Stony Rapids and Black Lake.

Ministry staff provided services to 929 individuals as a result of these unforeseen events. In many instances, protracted 60-day response was required. Today the unbudgeted cost of this service is estimated at a million dollars — that's \$1 million — not including the FTE [full-time equivalent] utilization increases.

So, Mr. Chair, and to the members, I'd be pleased to answer your questions on these three key program areas at this time.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister Draude. I will now entertain questions. Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much. And I appreciate the people being here to answer the questions so we can make sense of this very important area, and so I'll get right to the questions.

When I look at page 14 and I don't see the emergency social services listing. Is that where we're talking about central services when we're referring to emergency . . .

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Yes, it is.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay, that's what it is. Okay. All right. And then but you talked about, Minister, you talked about three key areas. I would think there might be four then because you are asking for an increase to the transitional employment allowance as well. So are there four areas or three areas?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Yes, all the programs who fall under the caseload. Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — And my question's thinking along those lines. So okay, good.

Then what I'd like to do is start off by talking about the rental housing supplement. And at that point where the government did see fit to increase it, and there was quite a need, can you tell us what it will be, the total spending then, on the rental housing supplement this year?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — The total cost should be \$24 million.

Mr. Forbes: — Twenty-four million. And now who's on it and how many are on it today, the supplements?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you to the member. Under Saskatchewan rental housing supplement in August of 2010, there was 7,442. The family rental housing supplement was 4,891 and the disability rental housing supplement was 2,765.

Mr. Forbes: — Are those your most current numbers?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — This is in August. I've been handed the numbers for October. In October the total caseload was 7,463. The disability was 2,820 and the family rental housing supplement was 4,846.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Now do you have it broken down by . . . The ministry's gone through a reorganization so you have three different areas, I believe, but you actually have four different communities, four different types of communities or tiers I think is what they're called. Okay.

So can you tell us in . . . You know, I'm very interested in this because I think it's a very interesting program and I'm thinking a lot about how it works. And so that's why I've asked for so much time to really get a good understanding of it.

How many people, how many families and how many people with disabilities are receiving this in Regina?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Pardon me? How many . . .

Mr. Forbes: — How many are receiving this in Regina right now? Families and disabilities.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — So the families? The families in Regina is 1,520 and with disabilities is 776. That is of October.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. And Saskatoon?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — And Saskatoon, families is 1,629 and people with disabilities is 1,115.

Mr. Forbes: — Moose Jaw?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Moose Jaw, families is 216 and people with disabilities 222.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. And Prince Albert?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Prince Albert, families is 417 and with disabilities is 128.

Mr. Forbes: — Yorkton?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Yorkton, the families is 105 and with disabilities is 78, disability rental housing supplement.

Mr. Forbes: — Seventy-eight. Swift Current?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Swift Current, families is 69 and disability supplement is 64.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. And Weyburn?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Weyburn, families is six and disabilities is 39.

Mr. Forbes: — Thirty-nine. Okay. Estevan?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Oh I'm sorry, Estevan is in a different tier. Estevan is 13 family and nine with disabilities.

Mr. Forbes: — North Battleford and Battlefords. I don't know if you've combined them together or not.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — North Battleford and Battleford. No, they're separate. North Battleford is 189 with families and 81 disability. And Battleford is 23 families, five with disabilities.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. And Lloydminster?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Lloydminster, 27 families and 17 disabilities.

Mr. Forbes: — Meadow Lake?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Meadow Lake, 64 family and 17 with the disability rental housing supplement.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Nipawin?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Nipawin, families is 25 and with disability supplement is 19.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Melfort?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Melfort, families is 19 and disability supplement is 20.

Mr. Forbes: — Twenty. La Ronge?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — La Ronge, 16 families and four with disabilities.

Mr. Forbes: — Cumberland . . . Okay I'm just getting sense of . . . How about Ile-a-la-Crosse?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — No, we don't.

Mr. Forbes: — And La Loche?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — La Loche we do. La Loche is seven family and there isn't any with the disability.

[19:15]

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Chair, if I'm getting off topic, just correct me. But I'm just curious about some of these northern communities like Cumberland and Ile-a-la-Crosse. If they don't have the rental supplement, do they have something else to take its place?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — We identified the communities where there's active cases. Right now if you're on assistance, then you're already under the program. So we don't have to identify them separately.

Mr. Forbes: — So on these communities, you were using CMHC to establish the increases based on their — twice, every six months — increase based on the market rent. So in that tier, Regina and Saskatoon, Lloyd and Estevan, did you do it as a percentage for that one tier? Or is it a percentage for Regina that's separate, then a percentage for Saskatoon? How does this work?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — To the member, they're actually applied by tier.

Mr. Forbes: — So every community . . . So Regina and Saskatoon, Lloyd and Estevan are in tier one, and that includes their bedroom communities. And has their rent supplements gone up twice this past year? And what were the percentages of their increases?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — To the member, we don't have the change. But we can tell you the average market rents in the tier A communities remained relatively stable, but there was rent increases in the tier B communities. I think you were calling them number two. And that's Weyburn, Yorkton, Prince Albert, Rosetown, Melville, and Kindersley. So if there was very much of a change, I will get the information to the member.

Mr. Forbes: — Pardon me. Sorry. The fan is . . .

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Oh, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. To the member, we can tell you what they are right now, but I can't tell you what the changes were. But I will get that information to you. But we do know that the average market rents in the tier A communities have remained relatively stable this year.

Mr. Forbes: — And what about tier B? And that would be the Prince Albert, La Ronge, Yorkton, Melville, Weyburn, La Loche, Kindersley, Rosetown, Creighton, and Macklin.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — We know that there was rent increases, but we can't give you the difference between the two months. But we will get you the information.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. When can you get me that information?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Right now.

Mr. Forbes: — Here we go. Good. I appreciate it because it's always good to have it on record in *Hansard*, and people are interested in it. Thank you.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — I'll ask Gord to give the answer.

Mr. Tweed: — Gord Tweed from the ministry. So just to backtrack just for a moment on your previous question, Mr. Forbes. And it was my inability to find the information quickly that prevented the answer from coming forward. So your question as I understood it was, was there an increase in the supplements for the month of April and then again for the month of October? And you asked specifically about the . . .

Mr. Forbes: — I asked about A and B and I'll be asking about C and D.

Mr. Tweed: — In April of this year there were increases to the family supplement in tier A. I'll just advance to your next question. There were also increases in the month of October. Now not all family types, but there were increases. Okay?

Mr. Forbes: — Now how does that work with . . .

Mr. Tweed: — The way the program is structured is that it will provide up to 30 per cent of average market rent for families. So if the supplement amount was already at that level, there wouldn't be an increase. So if the average market rents hadn't increased for a particular family type, based on a bedroom occupancy and that type of living arrangement, there wouldn't be a need for an adjustment. Is that not clear? It doesn't look clear.

Mr. Forbes: — Part of it is the volume here. Whether there's a fan on or something, I can't hear very well. I'm leaning into the microphone; that does seem to help.

Mr. Tweed: — Perhaps I can illustrate it more carefully with more specific information if that's helpful to the committee. Minister, you're okay with that?

So in April of this year in tier A — so the group of communities or constellation of communities that you're asking about — for families with one to two children, there was an increase in the amount of family rental housing supplement. For families with more children, there was no increase applied at that time.

In October of this year, for families with one to two children, there was an increase to the supplement amount. Again for larger families than that, or families with more children than that, there was no increase applied.

Mr. Forbes: — How did they get maxed out?

Mr. Tweed: — They would have already been receiving or the

amount of supplement would have already been at the base level of 30 per cent of average market rent.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. So this is where the issue of the rent increases being stable in their type of housing . . .

Mr. Tweed: — In those type of living arrangements. That's right.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. So they're doing three- or four-bedroom units and they're staying stable, where the smaller families were in a more . . . Their rents were maybe going up.

Mr. Tweed: — Their rents would have gone up and as such, the supplement would have followed the increase in rent.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. So the one or two children families did get increases in both April and May, or April and October?

Mr. Tweed: — April and October, yes.

Mr. Forbes: — And that's in tier A.

Mr. Tweed: — Tier A. Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — And what kind of percentage was that?

Mr. Tweed: — Modest percentage increase for the one to two children. Percentage increase in April was 2 per cent, followed by a 3 per cent increase in October.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. What about . . . And that is the biggest chunk of where people are receiving this. When I've gone through the numbers that you provided, Regina and Saskatoon, just really quick, but it's about half the people receiving it. And communities, tier B, what did they get?

Mr. Tweed: — Again for families?

Mr. Forbes: — Right.

Mr. Tweed: — The supplement in tier B in April for all family types with children was increased. And I can give you those specific amounts if you're interested.

Mr. Forbes: — Sure. But they would be different for each level? Like the 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 would be different.

Mr. Tweed: — Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — Can you just give me quickly what the percentages were?

Mr. Tweed: — Yes. For a family with one to two children, the percentage increase in April for the supplement was 13 per cent. Do you want me to keep going through? For families with three to four children, on the order of 18 per cent; for families with five or more children, 21 per cent. Do you want that same information for October?

Mr. Forbes: — Sure. Yes.

Mr. Tweed: — So for October the adjustments were, for

families with one to two children, 4 per cent; for families with three to four children, 7 per cent; for families with five or more children, 8 per cent.

Mr. Forbes: — And what about the folks living with disabilities? Were they seeing increases during that period of time?

Mr. Tweed: — The disability supplement has two sides to it. So I'll just, for ease, I'll reference one side, what we call accessibility supports. So specifically, do you have a question about a tier, sir?

Mr. Forbes: — Sure. Let's go with tier B. It seems where there is more things happening.

Mr. Tweed: — Tier B as in Bob?

Mr. Forbes: — Bob. Yes.

Mr. Tweed: — Thank you. So in April of this year, in tier B — because the disability supplement is available to single individuals as well — there was no percentage increase applied to single individuals. And for couples without children the increase was on the order of 6 per cent; for families with family members with a disability, an increase of 13 per cent; families with three to four children, 19 per cent; families with five or more children, 21 per cent. Do you want this same information for the month of October?

Mr. Forbes: — I think we just need the single and childless couple.

Mr. Tweed: — Single again, in October, no percentage increase was applied. And for childless couples, a percentage increase of 7 per cent was applied in October.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. And what about . . . Let's go to tier C with the . . .

Mr. Tweed: — Families.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes, families.

Mr. Tweed: — Okay, so for families in the month, or applied in the benefit month of April, for families with one to two children, there was no percentage increase applied for families with one to two children; for families with three to four children, 6 per cent percentage application; for families with five or more children, also 6 per cent increase.

Mr. Forbes: — October?

Mr. Tweed: — In October, again families with one to two children, no percentage increase was applied; for families with three to four children, an 8 per cent increase; and for families with five or more children, a 10 per cent increase.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Do you want to quickly just go through the disabilities column?

Mr. Tweed: — So in tier C, in April, for single individuals with a disability, no percentage increase was applied; for couples

without children, a 1 per cent increase; for families with one to two children, no percentage increase or zero per cent increase, pardon me; families with three to four children, a 6 per cent increase; families with five or more children, a 7 per cent increase. In October . . . I presume that you want that information as well.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes.

Mr. Tweed: — For a single individual with a disability, a nil per cent increase; for a couple without children, an 8 per cent increase; for families with one to two children, a zero per cent increase; for families with three to four children, a 7 per cent increase; and for families with five or more children, a 10 per cent increase.

Mr. Forbes: — Good. Thank you. In the rural areas, I'm interested in that. I think this would be . . .

Mr. Tweed: — Our reference in our parlance is tier D. So in April under the family supplement, for families with one to two children, a 14 per cent increase — this is in April; for families with three to four children, a 10 per cent increase; for families with five or more children, a zero per cent increase. In October, for families with one to two children, a 6 per cent increase; for families with three to four children, a 15 per cent increase; for families with five or more children, a 21 per cent increase.

Mr. Forbes: — That's tough times in rural Saskatchewan, I would think. That's tough times in rural Saskatchewan where you're seeing a 25 per cent increase in the supplement, if I'm reading that right. The April being 10 per cent and then October . . . I'm using the three to four children column, 10 and 15.

[19:30]

Am I reading that right, that there was essentially a 25 per cent increase in the supplement for families with three to four children in rural Saskatchewan?

Mr. Tweed: — On the order of 21, 22 per cent, yes.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes. And then with disabilities, if you could . . . And then that would be finished this sheet, and that's very good work.

Mr. Tweed: — Again in tier D, so our smaller communities, a single individual on the disability supplement in April would have received a 27 per cent increase.

Mr. Forbes: — Can everybody else hear all right? Is it just me?

The Chair: — Mr. Broten.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just if members, if staff of the ministry, if we could just speak clearly. It's not necessarily your fault, but we have a couple of fans going here, and if members would be kind just to try to keep the side chats quiet. I have good hearing, and I'm having trouble following things. So that would be appreciated. Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Broten.

Mr. Tweed: — So for tier D on the disability side of the supplement, the percentage increase that was applied to single individuals with disabilities, 27 per cent in the month of April. For couples without children, 16 per cent. For families with one to two children, 13 per cent. For families with three to four children, 11 per cent. And for families with five children or more, zero per cent.

Correspondingly in the month of October, for single individuals, an increase of 6 per cent. For couples without children, an increase of 6 per cent. For families with one to two children, an increment of 7 per cent. For families with three to four children, an increment of 15 per cent. And for families with five or more children, an increment of 21 per cent.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much. I'm curious about the support staff that you have to run this program because now it's 24 million. How many people actually work in the area to provide these services?

Mr. Tweed: — Approximately 20 staff would administer the supplement programs.

Mr. Forbes: — And has that been an increase over the past year or two? Has that been kind of stable?

Mr. Tweed: — Stable.

Mr. Forbes: — Stable? Okay. So 24 million, and maybe this is more a question for the minister: do you view this as an income supplement? Or you know, we are . . . because as we see rent becoming unaffordable, there's been suggestions what there is a gap in the income, so the rent supplement is actually an income supplement.

And some of the challenges may happen, and I'm thinking particularly of families. As your children age and you lose your qualifications because you no longer have a child under 18, or you maybe had three or four, and as they go things change, but you're still in the same place that you were. Is that going to be a problem with this program, do you think?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — I think, to the member, you're asking as your children age and you're leaving home, I would think that most people, if they have a house that accommodates five children and they're down to two children, they probably will be changing accommodations. Most of us who've had families leave home, we find out that we don't need the same type of area, living area that we had before. And many of us do change locations.

Mr. Forbes: — Are you looking into the future? Your policy development, in terms of what is the future for the rental supplement now that it's becoming as a program with 24 million — it's a well-established program; it's got a staff of 20 — what's the future hold for this? Do you see that perhaps singles, single employables will be able to qualify for this? Because as of now they can't qualify, I understand. That is a challenge for singles who are trying to make ends meet.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — There are definitely challenges for singles as there are for families. But I think putting it in context with the bigger picture of being on social services, part of our

goal especially for single employables is to make sure that there is an opportunity for them to have work. And we are finding that . . . We're not basing our programs on extending them forever. What we're basing programs on is hoping that people won't need to be using them. So in the short term we are there, and we're trying to do more.

I think the member had seen this as something negative. I think that the chance that our government working with people who need help with their supplement is a good thing, to be there to help them. And as the economy changes — and I'm sure it will, as I'm sure you hope it will as well — then there should be changes in their circumstance to allow them to . . . for their life to move on.

Mr. Forbes: — What about seniors? Do you eventually see this as seniors being eligible for this?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — To the member, because many of our seniors have income through old age pension or maybe through CPP [Canada Pension Plan], the number of people we have on the supplement is very low.

Mr. Forbes: — Well I don't think there . . . Are there any on the supplement?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — I'm told there are very few.

Mr. Forbes: — How would a senior be on the supplement now? I thought seniors couldn't qualify. Is it because they have families?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — They may be caring for a grandchild.

Mr. Forbes: — And if they are caring for a grandchild then they are eligible?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Or they may have a disability.

Mr. Forbes: — So if the grandparent is caring for a grandchild as part of their family, then they are eligible for this housing supplement?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — The answer to that is yes.

Mr. Forbes: — And if they are also . . . or if they have a disability, they could also apply for this as well?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Pardon me?

Mr. Forbes: — Or if they have a disability, they could also qualify for this program as well?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — That's correct. And thousands of seniors access social housing as well.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. But are there any limitations around the disability for seniors, seniors living with disabilities?

Mr. Tweed: — So the assessment of disability or eligibility related to that would be the same as any other individual with a disability, so not different at all.

Mr. Forbes: — But a senior who is receiving . . . Can a senior receive a disability allowance under social assistance today, or are they not on CPP [Canada Pension Plan] disability?

Mr. Tweed: — The question is slightly different now because you've shifted it to the social assistance program. So seniors can certainly apply for social assistance. And like any other individual who might apply, we balance their eligible needs against their available resources. So if a senior with a disability was to make an application for social assistance, we would consider the disability allowance available under social assistance as part of the assessment of need.

Mr. Forbes: — I didn't mean to go down that road as far. I'm trying to establish how a senior with a disability could establish themselves. What criteria could they get or would they have to meet to qualify for this program?

Mr. Tweed: — For the rental housing supplement, they would have to demonstrate the same type of eligibility criteria as a non-senior with a disability. So they would have to have a disability that impacted their need for housing, and they would have to have that support in place in their residence; so for example if a person needed a ramp to access their home.

Mr. Forbes: — And the good news is that when they do turn 65, then they're not disqualified because they're a senior. They would continue receiving the rental supplement and the disability supplement.

Mr. Tweed: — Yes, depending on the amount of income that was available to them.

Mr. Forbes: — And other things that come into play when they're turning 65. Okay.

Now part of the other issue around the rental housing supplement was the whole idea of home inspections, I believe, right? Have I got this right? Home inspections, that there was an idea that you were supposed to be living in a quality type of housing circumstance so when you applied — in fact I remember written questions on this — that there is no waiting list to get on this program actually because you get on and then they do the inspections after the fact. I don't know if that's changed or not. But am I correct on this? There's a home inspection to make sure the living accommodations are meeting certain standards?

Mr. Tweed: — Yes. The properties, the rental properties, there's a self-declaration by the applicant in terms of the quality of the home. There's a series of questions that staff would ask related to the quality of the home. And then subsequent to the application, an applicant may be selected or their residence may be selected for inspection.

Mr. Forbes: — Like a random audit type of thing?

Mr. Tweed: — Every file would be subject to inspection.

Mr. Forbes: — How many houses or accommodations have gone through that process now over the course of the time that the rental supplement has been in existence?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — The question you are asking is how many houses have actually been inspected?

Mr. Forbes: — Yes.

Mr. Tweed: — This would be not a precise answer to that question. We have contractual arrangements with the city of Regina, the city of Saskatoon, and a private contractor in the community of Prince Albert. Each year in Saskatoon and Regina the annual inspections are 960 properties. The same property may be inspected more than once, so it's not a pure number. And in Prince Albert we contract for 480 inspections in a year.

Mr. Forbes: — So that's per year?

Mr. Tweed: — That's per year.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay.

Mr. Tweed: — The contractual arrangements have been . . . They were put in place at the time the program was established back in 2005.

Mr. Forbes: — And what about rural Saskatchewan? How are the inspections done out there?

Mr. Tweed: — In communities outside of those three large centres, we have some ability to rely on Saskatchewan Housing Corporation inspectors.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Now with 24 million now being spent on this, have you thought about, or do you have a sense of the landlords that own the properties for which the supplements are being paid?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Pardon?

Mr. Forbes: — What I'm asking is, I'm curious to know, now that the government is spending \$24 million annually on this supplement and it's being given to individuals — that's how it works; it's not given directly to the landlord — but at some point are you curious to know who are the landlords that are receiving this? Is it generally individuals or could there be a potential for some large corporations to receive some of this? Is there any way that you start to analyze this?

Because I would, I mean, I could imagine that landlords are saying to people the rent is this much, but you really should follow up and apply for a rental supplement and then you would qualify for it. Some landlords would be much more proactive than others maybe. I don't know.

[19:45]

Hon. Ms. Draude: — To the member, we aren't tracking landlords at this time. And I'm not sure if the member is driving, is wondering whether the landlords are trying to drive up the cost of rent. Is that your, what you're presuming?

Mr. Forbes: — Not really. I'm always curious about when you get stats and you get information and you start to develop and you have a clientele. You start to have a registry of good houses

in cities, and you probably have a good registry, a registry of good landlords. And I'm just curious to know, do you know where the \$24 million is flowing to?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Twenty-four million dollars is flowing directly to the people. It's not going to, like to the landlords themselves. And I think that's probably the information that both the members opposite and we want to ensure, is that people who need help with their housing and supplements will get the money. And that's why the money is going directly to those people.

Mr. Forbes: — I'm not disputing that at all. I'm not disputing that at all. I'm just saying how can you plan for this as you're starting to . . . This is becoming a significant part of many people's rent income, and \$24 million is a significant amount of money. And if the Government of Saskatchewan doesn't have an idea of where that money's going other than these individuals, I think that it's worth a question to say, where's the money going? You know, are there certain landlords who are getting more? I think it's a fair question.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — To the member, we really are trying to support quality housing. And we make sure, like the inspections that we've carried out, 82 per cent of the properties passed inspection the first time that they were inspected. Of the homes that failed on the initial inspection, 67 per cent were reinspected and of those, 93 per cent passed on the reinspection. So we're making sure that these homes have smoke detectors, that windows don't leak or they aren't damaged and that they don't lock, that exterior doors lock. Our goal is to make sure that there is quality housing available for people, and that's part of the overall plan.

Mr. Forbes: — That's it. Well I'm ready to move to the next section. I don't know if any of my colleagues have any questions about the rental supplement.

Mr. Taylor: — Yes. If I could, just because it's very important through The Battlefords, if I might just ask a couple of questions there. Currently what tier is North Battleford in? B? C?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Battleford is in . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, pardon me. They're both in C.

Mr. Taylor: — I understand at one point there was thought of moving them up because of the circumstances of lack of available housing, and secondly prices were rising rapidly partly because of shortage. Has there been a review of The Battlefords' placement in tier C as opposed to tier B or any other thoughts along those lines?

Mr. Tweed: — So the most recent average market rental information as reported by the CMHC would suggest that North Battleford and Battleford are well situated in the tier C constellation of communities.

Mr. Taylor: — Okay. So the way in which that number is determined or that placement is determined is CMHC numbers. Okay. How far behind the market is CMHC now? A couple of months, six months?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — It's reported at six-month intervals.

Mr. Taylor: — Okay. Six-month intervals. I think the minister would be aware that a number of things have been happening in The Battlefords over the course of the last year, one of which was the flooding that occurred there, primarily in the central part of the city — older homes, a lot of them rental properties. I'm assuming because of the calls I get in my office, a number of those properties affected by flooding were residences for recipients of social services.

The Battlefords has also benefited from the Northland Power development. A lot of workers have moved into The Battlefords. They're actually displacing people from rental accommodation as landlords are taking working people as opposed to some social service recipients. We're seeing a number of people who are coming into my office who have been recently evicted because landlords are renovating their properties to accommodate workers for Northland Power.

And of course the city of North Battleford has taken a lot of what we would call deficient properties off the market. They bulldozed quite a number of properties over the course of the last year and a half.

So we've seen the availability of housing for particularly vulnerable people on social services diminish considerably because of Northland Power, because of the flooding, and because of the city demolishing substandard homes. So we have a real need for additional housing, but at the same time what we're seeing is the rents are rising dramatically in available properties because people are looking for housing.

So if we're six months behind — and based on some of these things, we could actually be more than six months behind the market in terms of assessing properties — are you comfortable, minister, with simply using CMHC numbers to determine the tier position and the application of the housing allowance in The Battlefords?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — To the member, this is a good question because part of what we're talking about is the growth that we have in the province and the fact that there's — you mentioned Northland Power — and that fact that there's more people working in the area. I've talked many times in the House about this, the fact that we have been working on a number of housing units that we've increased across the province. And we admitted there is more work to be done.

But at the same time, part of the problem, part of the issue, part of the challenge is because we do have more people in the province and more people working. And do we need to address the issue? Do we have to do more work? Yes we do. But at the same time, we are definitely working on it. And this is an issue that is, it's an important issue that we look at as we go forward. So there's no simple answer.

Mr. Taylor: — I understand. What advice to you have for me then, as the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] in The Battlefords? When I have a young woman with three children come into my office and she says, the landlord is raising my rent by 250 bucks a month. My Social Service cheque will only cover \$100 of that. What am I supposed to do?

She was told at the office, well look for other accommodations. And there is none. There's absolutely nothing. So what is she supposed to do? What advice am I supposed to give to her? Because the advice from the worker is, appeal. And the appeal under these processes don't allow for anything.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — I'm going to ask Gord to answer this question. But I know that there are members right across the province who have individuals come in with issues, and I know that there isn't one family that doesn't count to us as government. But at the same time, we are definitely working on these issues. The fact that we've got . . . now spending \$24 million on rental supplements should be sending the message that we definitely are working on issues. And we know that there's more work to be done. But I'm going to ask Gord to give specific details.

Mr. Taylor: — While he's doing that, we notice that for that family with one to two children, April and October, the rental supplement increase was zero for tier 3. So we've now gone a year, and we're probably six months behind for a family with two children. Zero increase in a market. That's not right. So I'll hear what the answer to my question is.

Mr. Tweed: — The first piece of advice I would offer to a low-income person is to make application for the rental housing supplement. If that program is available, the person should take advantage of that additional supplementation to provide for their rent.

The other services that can be provided, our caseworkers are very knowledgeable and help people across the province.

Mr. Taylor: — Your caseworkers are telling people to go see their MLA.

Mr. Tweed: — Okay.

Mr. Taylor: — And that's well-documented in The Battlefords.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — To the member opposite, there is no doubt that there are individual issues that you deal with in your office just like I do in my office. And we've put forward the rental housing supplement. We've invested money in housing right across the province.

And I don't want to get political right now. I'm trying to answer specific questions because this is what the estimates are about. We're telling you that we have put this forward. We're requesting another million dollars for the rental housing supplement, and we'll give you the answers that we have here. And as far as the public policy and what we're doing about housing, that's the question that we ask in the political arena.

Thank you to the member. I do not want to give the idea that this is not an important issue. It's absolutely huge. And we're going into the budget process at this time to talk about what else we can be doing. I'm pleased to be able to talk about the discussions we've had with the private sector, with SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] and with SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] and even some third parties who also want to be involved in issues like this. The Knights of Columbus in Saskatoon is a good

example of one of the third parties who want to be involved in working with us to meet this challenge.

So we are documenting what you're saying. We'll be reviewing it, not only as we go through the budget process, but in April and October. They looked at it through the CMHC lens as well. And we will continue to see this as an important part of what we're doing in government.

Mr. Taylor: — This'll be my last comment. I don't think there's a question in this, but just to . . . When you're doing the review of what I've had to say, just review this process of, is The Battlefords ideally settled in tier C? Because had The Battlefords been in tier B in April, there would have been a 13 per cent increase for one to two children — I don't have all the numbers there — and another 4 per cent in October.

Instead The Battlefords under tier C, one to two children, zero and zero, in a market that is not at zero and hasn't been at zero during the last two years, let alone the last 6 and 12 months. So all I'm doing is saying, in addition to whatever else you're reviewing, please review that part of the process.

The Chair: — Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Forbes: — I'd like to ask some questions about the transitional employment allowance. You're seeking an increase of \$900,000, I believe. And then that would bring the . . . What would that bring the total for transitional employment allowance to that you'll be spending this year?

[20:00]

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you to the member. The total that's expected for this year is 24.3 million.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Thank you. I do know that in terms of written questions you've answered how many TEA cases were opened. In March 2010, it's 3,169; in April 2010, 3,087; May was 3,078; June, 3,196; July, 3,356; August was 3,440; September, 3,438. Have you got the October number?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — The number is 3,131.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay, 3,131. And the low number was November of 2008 with 2,226. Are you anticipating that . . . What's the long-range plan for those clients on transitional employment allowance? Are you thinking the numbers will start to go back down to the . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . projections. Yes.

Mr. Wihlidal: — In terms of our forecast, you asked the question about the expenditure, and we answered it was going to be 24.3 million. That's based on an overall average caseload for the year of 2,945. So when you consider the ups and downs through the course of the year . . .

Mr. Forbes: — What is the average to this point after three-quarters of this year?

Mr. Wihlidal: — Average caseload over the first seven months, 3,247.

Mr. Forbes: — 3,247. So what will it have to be then to hit 2,945? You'd have to get into the 2,500, 2,600 range for the next three months? Is that right?

Mr. Wihlidal: — I don't have . . . [inaudible] . . . obviously.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay.

Mr. Wihlidal: — Well I think we can answer.

Mr. Forbes: — You think you got an answer? Okay. Here we go.

Mr. Wihlidal: — Our math shows it would be somewhere between 25 and 2,600. The number we've come to is 2,522 per month for the balance of the five months of the year in order to achieve the 2,945 as an annual average, given the actuals to this point in the year.

Mr. Forbes: — Good. Well thanks for that. I should actually back up just to make sure we're all clear because some of these . . . I want to understand for sure the transitional employment allowance. Now is this a program of the Ministry of Social Services, or is this also in conjunction with the Advanced Education and Labour folks?

Mr. Wihlidal: — This is a program of social assistance delivered by Social Services.

Mr. Forbes: — I just wanted to be clear on that. And the purpose of this transitional employment allowance is?

Mr. Wihlidal: — To provide social assistance on a short-term basis to those people who have a known event in the short term such as employment or employment insurance.

Mr. Forbes: — Now they can . . . And sometimes what gets them out of this situation is some education. Am I thinking of the right program here? They can use this towards . . .

Mr. Wihlidal: — You may be thinking of provincial training allowance which is a program within the purview of Advanced Education, Employment, and Immigration.

Mr. Forbes: — I think that's what I'm thinking of. Okay. So this is just a transitional employment allowance. It's not for the educational, but it might be used for some educational opportunities?

Mr. Wihlidal: — It's basic needs. It's very similar in terms of its application and eligibilities to social assistance. The difference is that it provides, some portions of it are a flat-rate structure as compared to the more individualized calculation for social assistance.

Mr. Forbes: — Can it be used in conjunction with any other program? Can it be, say the housing?

Mr. Wihlidal: — Could you be on the housing supplement and TEA?

Mr. Forbes: — Yes.

Mr. Wihlidal: — Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — Can you be on PTA [provincial training allowance] and TEA?

Mr. Wihlidal: — You can be on PTA or TEA.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. One of the two. Okay. Good. Now are you . . . Can we just quickly go through some numbers in terms of where the folks are that are in the . . . You've given me the October numbers — 3,131. Some are families and some are singles, but would there be any living with disabilities?

Mr. Wihlidal: — On TEA? Very few probably.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Regina, how many families and how many singles?

Mr. Wihlidal: — What we have is cases and beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Let's go with cases and beneficiaries. That would be . . .

Mr. Wihlidal: — For Regina — and these numbers are all implicit in the 3,131 number I provided earlier — Regina, 543 cases, 1,446 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay, 1,446. Saskatoon?

Mr. Wihlidal: — Saskatoon is 948 cases; 1,672 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. And Moose Jaw?

Mr. Wihlidal: — Moose Jaw is 81 cases; 135 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — And Prince Albert?

Mr. Wihlidal: — Prince Albert is 462 cases; 937 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Yorkton?

Mr. Wihlidal: — Yorkton is 89 cases and 182 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. And Swift Current?

Mr. Wihlidal: — 43 cases, 72 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. And Weyburn?

Mr. Wihlidal: — 6 cases, 19 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — And Estevan?

Mr. Wihlidal: — 11 cases, 31 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — And North Battleford?

Mr. Wihlidal: — 112 cases, 235 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — And Battlefords?

Mr. Wihlidal: — Included.

Mr. Forbes: — And Lloydminster?

Mr. Wihlidal: — Lloydminster is 26 cases, 65 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — And Meadow Lake?

Mr. Wihlidal: — 96 cases and 168 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — And Nipawin?

Mr. Wihlidal: — 77 cases, 112 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — And Melfort?

Mr. Wihlidal: — 49 cases, 80 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — La Ronge?

Mr. Wihlidal: — 80 cases, 182 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Cumberland?

Mr. Wihlidal: — We don't have Cumberland.

Mr. Forbes: — And Ile-a-la-Crosse?

Mr. Wihlidal: — No.

Mr. Forbes: — And La Loche?

Mr. Wihlidal: — We have La Loche: 219 cases, 296 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Am I missing any large, any . . .

Mr. Wihlidal: — If you want to add up to 3,131, I can give you the balance.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay.

Mr. Wihlidal: — Fort Qu'Appelle, 50 cases and 105 beneficiaries; Kindersley, 18 cases and 33 beneficiaries; Buffalo Narrows, 200 cases and 288 beneficiaries; Creighton, 22 cases, 28 beneficiaries. And that should get you to 3.131.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you for that.

Mr. Wihlidal: — 5,686 in terms of beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — Sorry, could you say that again?

Mr. Wihlidal: — Beneficiaries should add up to 5,686.

Mr. Forbes: — 5,686. Okay, thank you. Are there any areas that you've seen some dramatic increases? Is it more of an urban issue? Is it more of a rural, that we've seen the increases over the last couple of years?

Mr. Wihlidal: — Well if we speak in particular about this fiscal year, where we're seeing the expenditure increase in social assistance, the fully employables have increased in the first five months of the year by about 5.5 per cent year over year for that same period of time. So the same five-month period a

year ago, we're about 5.5 per cent higher. Non fully employables are about 6.2 per cent higher year over year.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. But I'm thinking more of a geographic area. Is it more of an urban issue? Is it more of a rural issue? Of the three regions, is there one that has a bigger increase, significant increase?

[20:15]

Mr. Wihlidal: — You're correct in assuming that it's largely an urban issue. Smaller increases in smaller rural areas, and larger increases in larger urban areas.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you. Now can you — I don't know if you have it within your demographics — is there, you know, particular challenges that any of the groups are facing, that when they're in TEA that they're . . . So it's a short-term help. Is there anything that's causing, is there any one thing that's causing these folks to find themselves in dire straits more than anything else? Are you seeing any kind of emerging issues why there is an increase in TEA?

Mr. Wihlidal: — The things that we would conclude is change in economic conditions. What we're seeing is that there's been an expansion of the labour market within Saskatchewan along with the general population. Also an expansion in the number of people employed in Saskatchewan, so the number of jobs or the employment base, which is a subset of the previous labour market pool, the number of people employed isn't increasing as quickly as the actual labour pool — people working or looking for work. And so there's a variance there.

Mr. Forbes: — Are you seeing an overrepresentation of First Nations and Métis people in the TEA clientele?

Mr. Wihlidal: — We'll look for those demographics. So we don't have that demographic profile broken out for TEA specifically, but I can provide you a constitutional status for the full of SAP, TEA, and SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability]. So that combination of programs has an Aboriginal subtotal of 11,860 cases in a total of 26,485 cases. This is October of 2010. So that's a percentage of 44 per cent of the total would be in that constitutional status demographic.

Mr. Forbes: — Do you say that this also including SIP?

Mr. Wihlidal: — SAID.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay, SAID. Okay, right, right, okay. Would you know, do you have it broken out in terms of recent immigrants?

Mr. Wihlidal: — No, we don't.

Mr. Forbes: — Anecdotal insights into that? Are they finding themselves in situations every once in a while?

Mr. Wihlidal: — We don't have the breakdown by immigration folks immigrating to the province, either from other places in Canada or from other countries.

Mr. Forbes: — Fair enough. What kind of supports . . . Are

there different, unique, or within your organization of the ministry that works specifically with TEA clients, or do they work with TEA and SAP clients together?

Ms. Tulloch: — Lynn Tulloch, the executive director of income assistance. We do have the primary administration for our TEA folks is done through staff in Regina through the client service centre. But some of the changes that we have been initiating in the past six months to try and assist employables to get to work do include some changes in how we provide that service, including we are now inviting and asking TEA cases or TEA clients that have been on for three months to attend to our regional offices for an interview with our staff there.

So we are now providing more support through the regional offices to check in and see the progress of those folks from time to time. So that's a new initiative that we've actually just started this fall.

Mr. Forbes: — When you say inviting, is this a requirement after three months or is this a voluntary attendance at the interview?

Ms. Tulloch: — It is a requirement that they attend and participate. And we ask them to come to the office for the interview to tell us what they have been doing and to verify that they have been continuing to search for a job and verify that for us.

Mr. Forbes: — I know a while ago we had been talking about this in terms of parenting as well. Is this something also that TEA clients are required to do? Anything in terms of parenting skills?

Ms. Tulloch: — Most of the initiatives we've been undertaking in the last number of months are targeted at the single employables because those are the folks who are most readily able to attach to the labour market. We do continue to recognize that parents have additional challenges, and we do still invite parents or ask that parents on TEA participate in our employment supports for parents workshop when they first apply. And in those workshops they're given additional information on where they can get supports for child care and that kind of thing as well.

Mr. Forbes: — Of the TEA clientele, what percentage tends to turn into the static caseload which then go into, you know, the assistance program? And how many. . . You've used the three-month time frame. Do you see many going . . . How many would hit the three-month time frame of the 3,000, or what percentage?

Ms. Tulloch: — Typically we are seeing that by the third month, about 60 per cent of new applicants on TEA have exited the program. And the remaining 40 per cent would exit at different points in time after that.

Mr. Forbes: — So do you see within that 60 per cent a return rate of . . . Do you see them coming back a year later? Or have you done any research in terms of them coming back, yes, within a year, two years?

Ms. Tulloch: — We do see some of those clients coming back.

Certainly there's a great deal of variation around that. We have done some reviews from time to time, but I don't have any data with me tonight on that.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. And then in terms of support staff, how many folks would be dedicated to the TEA program?

Ms. Tulloch: — We have, I believe — and I apologize I don't have the exact numbers with me, but — we have about 50 staff in Regina that provide support for the administrative benefits of the TEA program and then in addition, as I say, our regional staff are starting to interact with some of those clients across the province as well now.

Mr. Forbes: — So then do you establish like a caseload of 50 for the . . . I mean or do you just manage these because these folks are going through within three months, 60 per cent will be gone within three months?

Ms. Tulloch: — With respect to the TEA caseload — because they are supported through a different model, a client service centre, a contact centre based model — we actually monitor our ability to provide service to them in a much more rigorous fashion through how quickly we're able to answer the phones, how long we spend on the phone with them, and how many calls we're getting. And we're actually able to very closely monitor how effectively we're doing that and adjust our staffing levels so that we're meeting standards that are acceptable.

Mr. Forbes: — What kind of age group do you have with the TEA clientele? Are these mostly younger folks or they're older? Or are they . . .

Ms. Tulloch: — I'm looking to see if I have ages. I do have average ages of the head of the household of the TEA caseload. Just a minute. No. Sorry, this is a combined of our total caseload. I've got averages for the entire SAP, TEA case, SAID caseload. And on average the TEA folks would be younger. Would you like the breakdown for the overall caseload?

Of the overall caseload — and this was based on a caseload of 26,485 — about 4,846 are less than 24 years old; 6,001 are between the ages of 25 and 34; 5,237 were between the ages of 35 and 44; and 10,401 were over the age of 45. The average for a TEA client would generally be a younger distribution than this overall distribution.

Mr. Forbes: — Thanks for that. It's very interesting. Well that's the questions I have for TEA. I don't know if anybody else has questions on TEA?

An Hon. Member: — Not me.

Mr. Forbes: — Not you? I just want to ask just a few quick ones. I didn't realize when in the estimates that the central services, the \$1 million we're referring to emergency, and I don't know . . . I think that's a very important area. How much would you normally have budgeted for emergencies?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — To the member, we don't budget for the emergencies. So there is nothing set aside.

Mr. Forbes: — What I'm more familiar with is forest fires in

the North and the folks having to come down. In that case . . . I don't know if there was any this year, was there, where there were fires in the North? What fire was . . .

Hon. Ms. Draude: — We had, in Stony Rapids and Black Lake, there was evacuations. So that would be at that time we had 155 individuals from Stony Rapids and Black Lake that were evacuated.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. And how much did that cost?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — We haven't broken them down as to each area, but overall it's around \$1 million.

Mr. Forbes: — And bill it to Environment?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — I guess, to the member, it is broke down. Stony Rapids was \$93,136 for Stony Rapids and Black Lake was \$128,059.

Mr. Forbes: — So the two were about 210,000, something like that?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Correct.

Mr. Forbes: — And so, but you didn't bill it to Environment?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — No, that's correct.

Mr. Forbes: — [Inaudible] . . . Okay.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — No, this is shelter and food.

While we have a moment, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the people that are working in Social Services for the work that they did this summer during the emergencies. There was a tremendous amount of effort put forward from people that did their own jobs and then continued to do this on the side. I don't think as a province we can thank people enough for going to the aid of other people, and I personally would like to thank them.

Mr. Forbes: — And I would join in with you with that. I think it's important that this really is the essence of the action of Social Services when things really are in dire straits.

Can you go through the rest of the 1 million then that . . .

Hon. Ms. Draude: — One million. I can . . . Just to clarify, there is some bill-back for the First Nations to INAC [Indian and Northern Affairs Canada].

Mr. Forbes: — Okay.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Okay. So the Maple Creek flooding, the total cost estimate was 170,208. For Yorkton flooding was 285,976. For Kawacatoose was 83,694. The North Battleford flooding was 62,363. So that was the total project added up to 823,436 and then the standby costs, miscellaneous events added up to about \$150,000.

[20:30]

Mr. Forbes: — Can I ask: the fallout from Kawacatoose this winter is going to be pretty tough. I'm not sure about the other communities but I know from Kawacatoose that because of the tornado that went through, that many families are going to be without appropriate housing this winter. So they may be in our . . . People who would be normally in this, on the reserve, may be in our communities. Are you anticipating that? Or have you set up any kind of a contingency plan for the folks for Kawacatoose?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Now that the 60 days is over, the PDAP [provincial disaster assistance program] is under . . . Corrections and Policing is responsible for that area and we also have the federal government again responsible in some areas. And just for the member, there is a contingency for the bills yet to be received, that 150,000 that I talked about.

Mr. Forbes: — But I am wondering, are you anticipating members of Kawacatoose Band to be in Regina, Saskatoon, who may be applying for TEA? Are you doing anything to help them through? I understand you are saying Corrections. Should they be seeing those folks?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — There isn't anything that we have planned at this time for them. But if they come into the offices and are requesting support, then they will be treated as anyone would be that would be requesting support.

Mr. Forbes: — What about the other communities? Are you seeing in North Battleford or Maple Creek or Yorkton an increased need?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — I've spoken with my colleague in Corrections and we really, the number of people that are still expecting support . . . I guess that information would have to be received from the Minister of Corrections because we have completed the work within the 60 days that we are responsible for.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. I was wondering about the Salvation Army. These bills . . . My own experience, when I remember the fires of 2004, 2005, Salvation Army's often very actively involved. Do they receive funds from you folks in terms of services provided? Or who provides the services here? You know, the beds and the food and that type of thing.

Ms. Zerr: — Marian Zerr, deputy minister. Emergency social services are funded directly through whatever agency we can work with. Often we work with, specifically with hotels. However for meals and lodging, because it's very short term, it's within that sort of 60-day time frame until people can transition back to their homes.

Mr. Forbes: — So in this sense, especially North Battleford and Yorkton, Maple Creek, it would be local hotels picking up, providing shelter for the folks who were displaced.

Ms. Zerr: — So other partners certainly stepped up to help with clients who needed assistance, including the Red Cross and the Salvation Army and others. Our services are provided, however, for shelter and for food and lodging and people's basic needs. And Lynn, can you speak specifically to . . .

Ms. Tulloch: — I can elaborate a little bit more. It's dependent upon the community and the need wherever the emergency arises and the number of people that are impacted. So if we have to put people up in terms of shelter, if it's not too many we might use hotels and we would be billed by the hotels.

If it's a larger number of individuals or families affected, sometimes we'll use a community centre or a gymnasium. We would look to usually have food brought in as required and/or cots or beds. Sometimes the Red Cross provides some of those things. Sometimes we have to actually source them and are then billed for them directly. So it very much depends on the specific situation, and we do work closely with the Red Cross in most of those cases to go through the logistics for each particular case.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Can I also mention to the member that after the Yorkton flood I had the opportunity to visit that community and we went to SIGN [Society for the Involvement of Good Neighbours] . . .

Mr. Forbes: — Right.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — SIGN, and they are . . .

Mr. Forbes: — Good neighbours. I think that's what that is, isn't it? Yes.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — And they worked very closely with Social Services this summer. They provided a lot of help, ongoing help. And again that's another group of people that we really would like to thank, SIGN and the Salvation Army and the Red Cross. Because together they helped us go through an immense amount of work this summer where there was tragedy in lots of people's lives.

Mr. Forbes: — But this brings to mind, when you talk about emergency social services, this is all year around in all sorts of circumstances. For example, when a couple of weeks ago the Salvation Army in Saskatoon said they had to turn people away, but they actually were picked up by Social Services, would that have been considered an emergency social service circumstance?

Ms. Tulloch: — No, it wouldn't. The emergency social services per se that we've been talking about, where we engage with the Red Cross and those kinds of agencies, is typically a major natural disaster such as the floods, the fires, the tornadoes. The kinds of things that we're seeing day to day, like Salvation Army's response that they have in place, is more of a recurring need for shelter on any given night.

Mr. Forbes: — And have you planned for that? Or is there a contingency fund for that?

Ms. Tulloch: — We do plan for that certainly, and we do work closely with those same community partners — the Salvation Army and others that run shelters. And we are in regular communication with them, especially in the winter months, to monitor the number of beds, the capacity that is available. And where required, we step in and use hotels as well to house people. And that contingency plan has worked effectively for the last number of years.

Mr. Forbes: — That's all the questions I have about emergencies. I don't know if anybody else . . . Mr. Taylor, if you have any questions about that. Then I'd just like to go to the last section, and that would be the Saskatchewan assistance program, and ask a few questions about that. And the first question I would ask is, you're asking for \$7 million increase to the current budget allotment. And what would that bring the current budget allotment to?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — While we're looking up the numbers, I'd like to make sure that the member opposite is aware that there was an increase, but when I look at the increase in Saskatchewan, the number of cases, it's an 8 per cent increase from last year. But if I compare us to other jurisdictions, British Columbia has a 25 per cent increase, Alberta has a 28 per cent increase, and Manitoba has a 12 per cent increase. So although there is an increase, it's smaller. And we're definitely working on making sure that we have as few people as possible. The SAP number is two hundred and six million, two hundred.

Mr. Forbes: — Two hundred and six million. So that would be about a three and a half per cent increase?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Around 3 per cent, yes.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. And can we go through the SAP numbers for the communities?

Mr. Wihlidal: — You'd asked for the Saskatchewan assistance plan cases. We can provide you the same numbers as we did earlier analogous to TEA. Cases and beneficiaries starting in the Yorkton and area: Fort Qu'Appelle, three hundred and ninety . . .

Mr. Forbes: — No, sorry. Sorry. Can I ask you to go through mine? I don't have . . . That way I won't get my numbers all over my page. Regina?

Mr. Wihlidal: — Just to clarify, this is SAP and SAID combined.

Mr. Forbes: — SAP, SAID, and TEA, I think. Is TEA not included in this?

Mr. Wihlidal: — TEA we've given you already. This is SAP and SAID. So Regina, 5,509 cases, 9,624 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — Nine thousand . . . Sorry?

Mr. Wihlidal: — 9,624.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. And Saskatoon?

Mr. Wihlidal: — Saskatoon is 6,804 cases, 11,309 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. And Moose Jaw?

Mr. Wihlidal: — Moose Jaw, 1,037 cases, 1,541 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. And Prince Albert?

Mr. Wihlidal: — 1,465 cases, 2,654 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Yorkton?

Mr. Wihlidal: — 659 cases, 1,033 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Swift Current?

Mr. Wihlidal: — 444 cases, 640 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. And Weyburn?

Mr. Wihlidal: — Weyburn, 200 cases and 263 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. And Estevan?

Mr. Wihlidal: — Estevan is 98 cases, 139 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — And North Battleford, or The Battlefords all together if that's . . .

Mr. Wihlidal: — This is North Battleford and Battlefords combined — 814 cases, 1,550 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — And Lloydminster?

Mr. Wihlidal: — Lloydminster is 214 cases, 352 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — Meadow Lake?

Mr. Wihlidal: — Meadow Lake, 388 cases, 838 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — And Nipawin?

Mr. Wihlidal: — Nipawin is 393 cases, 709 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — And Melfort?

Mr. Wihlidal: — 342 cases, 495 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — And La Ronge?

Mr. Wihlidal: — 209 cases, 469 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — Now Cumberland and Ile-a-la-Crosse you don't have? Or do you have?

Mr. Wihlidal: — That's correct.

Mr. Forbes: — La Loche?

Mr. Wihlidal: — La Loche is 675 cases, 1,378 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — You know, if you were just to give me a total . . . I don't need for Kindersley, Buffalo Narrows, or Creighton, but what is the total cases?

Mr. Wihlidal: — The number at the bottom of my page is 23,354 cases and 38,319 beneficiaries.

Mr. Forbes: — And for what month is that?

Mr. Wihlidal: — That's October.

Mr. Forbes: — October. Okay, great.

Mr. Wihlidal: — So if you take the 23,354 and add it to the 3,131 TEA cases we mentioned earlier, you'll arrive at the 26,485 combined caseload that we mentioned earlier.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay, good. Now, Minister, you talked about the 8 per cent. That's this year's increase, right? . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . What part of 2008?

Mr. Wihlidal: — April.

Mr. Forbes: — April.

Mr. Wihlidal: — Since April 2008 there's been an overall increase in social assistance caseloads of 8 per cent in Saskatchewan. I think the comparison was to other jurisdictions where there . . . I think it was BC at 25, Alberta at 28, and Manitoba at 12.

Mr. Forbes: — Well because the lowest point actually for SAP and SAID and TEA combined was in November of 2008. And so you have gone significantly below that when the press release was released about the lowest number of social services caseloads.

[20:45]

So you've taken a higher point to get your 8 per cent because I have an increase of 16 per cent from the lowest point of this government's mandate. Whether it's this government or whatever, the best point in Saskatchewan in a long time was in November of 2008 where there was 23,678 cases.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Yes, but we're trying to show is that to compare to other jurisdictions, and that's important. It's important to know that as well. If we just talk about our own, that's not giving us a big picture of what's happening across Canada. So the numbers that we had allowed us to compare us to other jurisdictions. And I think that's kind of what people need to know is how is Saskatchewan doing. And that's why I provided those numbers to you.

Mr. Forbes: — But I do have to point out though, you know, the government did feel the need in November of 2008 to issue a press release to say we were at our lowest point ever. I'm not sure if it was ever actually, to tell you the truth, the lowest point and significant length of time. And at that point they made a big deal of saying that we're, you know, 23,678. And so from my reckoning that's a 16 per cent increase from the low point to the high point and it's not a good record to be proud of. So maybe 8 per cent when you're considering apples when you're saying, when we're comparing to other jurisdictions. But we know that there's been a 16 per cent increase in social services caseloads in Saskatchewan.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — The number . . . I haven't got the numbers in front of me but I do think it's important that overall as government, as people, we need to know how Saskatchewan is doing. And that's the information that we have. And I'm proud of the fact that even though there has been the times have been challenging in some areas, Saskatchewan has not only held their own, they are a model in lots of areas. And I think that everybody should be proud of the fact that Saskatchewan is doing better than most places.

Mr. Forbes: — Well I'm just saying what the facts are and what I see when I've got from written questions. And it has been a 16 per cent increase. And what I do have some questions about staff and offices being open. Has there been . . . We did have some concerns that we raised during the budget time in terms of the impact of the government austerity program in terms of employment, hiring, and what that was going to mean in terms of social services. Because there's a wide range of services that need to be offered and need to be maintained for people when they're in vulnerable circumstances. And so I'm concerned. My question is, how many staff actually work with people on social assistance?

Ms. Tulloch: — We have in the income assistance service delivery part of our ministry a budgeted FTE complement of, I believe, 320 FTEs this year.

Mr. Forbes: — How many would be actually working today?

Ms. Tulloch: — Today, in this fiscal year or this week, I believe we are running around 308 or 310.

Mr. Forbes: — So most of the positions are filled.

Ms. Tulloch: — Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — And what kind of . . . And are people . . . pretty stable workforce? Are you having much turnover in terms of the staff?

Ms. Tulloch: — We do have some turnover. Certainly a lot of what I do these days is monitor our staffing and our resourcing across the province. You might be aware that our ministry underwent a reorganization this past year, and the role that my position in particular has, related to income assistance service delivery, is in particular charged with monitoring our staffing and our service delivery around the province. So we have been doing that and paying a lot of attention to that in the last year. And as a result, we have balanced our resource usage across the province better than we probably have at any point in recent history so that we have a similar complement of resources to support the similar size caseloads across the province.

Mr. Forbes: — What size of caseloads are you . . . When you talk about that, what would a worker be working with?

Ms. Tulloch: — We use on average a range of 135 to 155 for a particular office area. Usually that's more than one office. Usually that's several offices in an area. And it is a range. It's not an absolute number because we do recognize that there is a number of factors that contribute to the actual caseload that we would run. Our rural offices would have lower caseloads, so they would be more at the 135 end of the spectrum on average because they have more travel and more of their cases are distributed outside of the cities. The urban centres would tend to have caseloads that are more at the other end, about the 155 on average, because their cases are all in one location.

We also know that within that complement of staff, some of our staff are specialized on intake, for example, which would be a much lower number of cases that they would see. Some of our staff are focused on maintenance activities and they would actually have a much higher caseload. So those numbers are

also blended but we monitor them.

And then lastly I would also offer that the different case types impacts the number of staff that we need. Some cases have much less interaction. For example, long-term, ongoing cases would have very little change in circumstances and very little interaction, so some of those cases would be with workers who might actually have caseloads of 2, 3, even 4 or 500 cases because there is very little interaction.

So all of those things are blended in but we're monitoring those factors quite a bit more closely now than we ever have and ensuring that we have the right resources across the province to deliver services.

Mr. Forbes: — Now one of the interesting areas that in terms of written questions that we have been able to see is an increase of people living with disabilities. It seems that over the last while it's been fairly significant. Have you seen an increase in the social assistance cases of people with disabilities?

Ms. Tulloch: — We have been seeing, yes, a gradual increase in the percentage of cases with disabilities.

Mr. Forbes: — What kind of numbers are you seeing?

Ms. Tulloch: — As of the October caseload on the social assistance on the SAP program in particular, we have 58 per cent of the caseload identified as being people with disabilities. And I don't have historical trends in front of me but we would, we do know that that has been gradually growing over the years, and I think a lot of it is that there is a wider range of disability that is now being recognized and observed on.

Mr. Forbes: — What would those categories of disabilities be that you are now accepting?

Ms. Tulloch: — I think we're seeing more people with mental health, cognitive disabilities, those kinds of things being identified as part of our caseload today than we probably would have seen 10 or 15 years ago.

Mr. Forbes: — See but I'm looking at some of the numbers I have from written questions, you know, that people with disabilities in September — now tell me if I've got this wrong — but it's 14,637. It's SAID in there as well.

Ms. Tulloch: — So we have a couple of different ways that we refer to people with disabilities today. As I think you know, we have the SAID program which is specifically for a particular target group of people with disabilities. It's those with long-term disabilities who are in residential care facilities. And I believe the number of people on that program within our caseload is just under 2,700 right now.

Within the primary SAP caseload, we also have a large number of people who have identified as having disability, and we recognize that in the SAP program as well. So these would be cases that are not generally in residential facilities because that group has moved into the SAID program. But this would be others with other disability indicators that they report to us.

And of those numbers . . . I've got October numbers in front of

me. So of the 20 . . . This number would include SAP and SAID: 26,485 cases, and 14,614 of those would have a disability. So the SAID group would be within that. So there'd be about 2,700 of those that are SAID cases and the balance that are cases with a disability on SAP.

Mr. Forbes: — Well and that sounds like that would fit in because the last one I have is September which is 14,600-and-some.

Ms. Tulloch: — Very close.

Mr. Forbes: — And the question I was asking was, when I compare it to two years prior, say in September of 2008 — and you may not have that number in front of you — but it was 13,277. So there's been an increase of nearly 1,400 people with disabilities on social assistance. And at that point actually it was pre-SAID times, I think. So what you're telling me is that there is a wider range of conditions that are accepted by the ministry now for disabilities, including mental health.

Ms. Tulloch: — Well it's not that we've changed our recognition in any way. It's just that, I think, within the general population there is more awareness, less stigma sometimes, so people are identifying and coming forward with disabilities that they may not have identified to us in the past.

Mr. Forbes: — It's interesting because I'm not sure if somebody is in dire straits and back's against the wall, whether they would have applied and whether have been just recategorized, or are . . .

Ms. Tulloch: — I think one area I would suggest, mental health. I think over time we're seeing more and more people willingly, you know, identify mental health issues whereas 10 years ago, I think, there was a little more stigma. And they might have come forward for social assistance, but not identified that as their problem or may not have even had a diagnosis that that was the problem.

Mr. Forbes: — Do you have it broken down in terms of the types of disabilities within social assistance?

Ms. Tulloch: — We don't have any specific data on the current caseload with respect to types of disability. We have some historical data that we've done some research on that, but we don't have anything on the current caseload . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, 2001 we did some research on that.

Mr. Forbes: — What about families? Are we seeing an increase in terms of number of families who are coming in to apply for social assistance?

Ms. Tulloch: — I don't have the trends right in front of me, Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Forbes: — You wouldn't know? You wouldn't want to hazard a guess in terms of this?

Ms. Tulloch: — I think we do know in the last recent year most of the shift has been in the employable portion of the caseload and most other aspects of the caseload have been relatively stable. So I think the employable part of the caseload is where

we're seeing the swings, and to the extent that some families are deemed to be employable, they would be part of that.

Mr. Forbes: — You know, from your written answers, we see about 2 or 300 more families on social assistance than a couple of years ago. It's not the same families, but the numbers of families are going up. For example in September there was 6,352 families, whereas in 2008 there was 6,000 families. And so that has been just a general trend, whether it's 200 or 300, somewhere in there. And that's alarming because that's children who are getting benefits from social assistance. So that's a major concern, so yes.

[21:00]

Hon. Ms. Draude: — I think, to the member opposite, we have to recognize there's also been a population growth as well, which does make a difference. And as we said, there's a greater number of people that actually have, you know . . . with a diagnosis of a disability.

Mr. Forbes: — Is the minister suggesting because we have more people coming to the province that more people are applying for social assistance?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — No, that's not what I said.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay, I wanted to clarify that. So I'm not sure what your point is then.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — I'm saying that there's more people here and our population is growing. So maybe there's a percentage of people . . . Not all of our people that come here are immigrants either. There's a population growth from births as well. So there's just, there is more people in the province, so there may be more people that have a, have disability.

Mr. Forbes: — We're not disputing that. But we're just saying that obviously you're asking for, and I believe the numbers you're asking for is, approximately, is it \$7 million? Have I got that . . . \$7 million, right? And for the people who are receiving that, whether they're 300 families or they're the employables or the now, that we can see, 1,000 plus, maybe 1,400 people who are living with disabilities, that's a huge issue, that they're up against the wall. They're up against the wall, and whether our population's grown or shrunk, what they're concerned about is where they're going to sleep that night. And that's why you're here for the \$7 million, right?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — The comment that I made, I think the member opposite does know this, that our dependency rate in our province, even though our population has increased, has remained relatively stable, around 5 per cent. So yes, there is an increase in various areas, but the dependency rate, which is an important factor, is relatively stable in our province.

And yes, we are coming to estimates for \$7 million in this area to ensure that people who need our help through government, through these programs get the assistance they need. And I'm sure that the member opposite does agree with the work that the people are doing within the ministry and out in the field. They are working hard to ensure that people can qualify, they can get the assistance they need, and that we are working hard to make

sure that those who need our help will get our help.

Mr. Forbes: — But, Minister, this is the second estimate. It's the second time in the fall that we've had to deal with increases, particularly to TEA. Last year we were dealing with the same topic because the previous year, the ministry had cut TEA by some 30 per cent based on over-optimistic projections based on this November of 2008 rate that they . . . Someone felt that things were going to go so great that they could cut the TEA budget for 2009. And then we were dealing with that in November of '09, and here we are in November of 2010.

Now you have talked about, across the country, the economic downturn. Everybody's been aware of it. Everybody's been aware of it. And you will share your stats, but why are we here tonight asking for \$7 million? Did not the ministry, did not the political leadership foresee what was happening and could project this into the future and say, listen, Saskatchewan's going to be hit a little hard too, maybe not as hard. And whether we say it's 16 or 18 per cent increase, it really is cold comfort to many people who are receiving social assistance who are trying to make ends meet tonight.

So my question is to you, Minister: how is it that we're here for the second time in a row? And are you planning to be back here next year in supplementary estimates making sure you're asking for a third increase?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — I'm going to ask to go through the forecasting model that we're using. And of course it's not only my goal and my dream, but everybody in the province, to believing that there should be fewer people who are employable that don't have work. That's what we're trying to do. And I know that the member opposite agrees that that is our . . . a laudable goal. And the forecasting model that is used has . . . I had an opportunity to talk about it with the ministry this afternoon, and they have worked very hard on their modelling. And I'm going to ask them to go through that exercise with us now.

Mr. Wihlidal: — Bob Wihlidal. Just a few comments about the process we go through and the kinds of considerations we have in developing the projections for the year that are the foundation for the budget, which at this point find us somewhat short as you have identified, and the reasons we're here. Just a few, sort of, preliminary comments around the economic conditions we're in right now, that we're seeing a time when there's some fluctuation in the population base for the province.

As I mentioned earlier, we're seeing expansion of the labour market, up by 9,400 year over year, expansion in the number of people employed in the province as well, up by 7,300. So as I mentioned earlier, expansion of the employed isn't as big as the labour pool, but both are expanding. So a slight, slight change or increase in the number of people unemployed is the effect.

Those are some of the variables we use when we do the calculations for the projections for the annual budget. And in a moment here, I'll ask Doug Scott, who does more of the technical work on that, to go through some of the changes that we intend to implement. But we have been working on designing better regression models for social assistance forecasting. They will use some of those same variables and

others.

What's important to understand is that we depend on projections for each of those variables from external sources, so we don't make up our projection of what the labour market will be a year from now. We look for external sources to identify what those projections should be, and we use those inputs into our regression models.

It's the regression modelling that we're trying to refine and try to reduce, if you like, the variability or the error rate in our forecast in our budget development which at this point sees us have an overexpenditure in and around 3 per cent. So a 3 per cent error rate, if you like, which might have been the other direction had some of the variables been different. We might have been underspent by about the same amount using the same calculations or methodologies. But I'll ask Doug Scott to come forward and speak briefly about the regression modelling that we're doing.

And just in closing, I mean, it's been a rare circumstance when we've been exactly right in terms of our forecast of our budget for the social assistance caseload. There's always a certain amount of variability. It, at the end of the day, is a predication based on other variables that are also predicted.

Mr. Forbes: — I just have a quick question before . . . When you talk about the external sources that you get information from, what would those external sources be?

Mr. Wihlidal: — That's what I'm going to get Doug to speak to if you don't mind.

Mr. Scott: — Yes. Doug Scott from the strategic policy branch. I don't know that I have much to add to what Bob described there. He gave a fairly complete description. It's a regression model that currently uses 12 regression equations. We try to predict the caseload by program type but also by what we call case type or family type.

We've been working on this since the spring of this year, the new model. We're getting fairly accurate results, and we're refining it over time. We're experimenting a bit to see if we can forecast entries and exits from assistance as well as the aggregate caseload. And so time will tell how accurate we are with that. As Bob indicated, the forecast model does rely heavily on external forecasts of the labour market and particularly for unemployment.

Mr. Forbes: — And what would that external sources be? Like do you have the name of a company? Is it a private company? Is it a public company?

Mr. Scott: — We use the Ministry of Finance forecast. They have a fairly . . .

Mr. Forbes: — Who are they?

Mr. Scott: — The Ministry of Finance?

Mr. Forbes: — Of Saskatchewan?

Mr. Scott: — Yes, Saskatchewan's Ministry of Finance. Sorry.

Yes, they have their own model that predicts unemployment rates and labour force statistics. They rely also and do a survey of the private forecasters, and quite often they keep track of the average or the median forecasts of the private forecasters. So we use both of those.

Mr. Forbes: — Any federal sources?

Mr. Scott: — No.

Mr. Forbes: — Really?

Mr. Scott: — No, not right now. No.

Mr. Forbes: — I was just wondering whether you use StatsCan at all?

Mr. Scott: — Well we use StatsCan. StatsCan doesn't produce forecasts for the future. They certainly collect the data on a monthly basis, and they report what's happening currently and keep track of historical trends. But they don't do forecasts for the future.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Interesting. Okay. Well I do appreciate the good work. I mean I think it would be a difficult business to manage. And how do you do this? And of course the kind of changes the province has seen but of course the country and the world has seen has had a huge impact. And so I do want to thank the officials for their good work there.

But I do think that it is something when we are back here . . . I don't know if it's a regular appearance for social, you know, Ministry of Social Services every fall. But I think it is something here . . . Because I know last year was particularly tough because in fact we . . . And I remember this discussion with the former minister when TEA funding was cut by 30 per cent, and everybody knew what was happening in the rest of the world. But for some reason this budget was cut, and we had to come back. And in fact I have the minutes of the last *Hansard* of that last meeting of November 23rd, 2009. And we're here yet again and it's fairly significant. So 3 per cent maybe is something else.

But I do want to say and I do want to . . . The minister when she was talking about how it's everybody's goal, everybody's dream in this province that somehow poverty is, you know, maybe it's eliminated, being reduced, it's a huge thing. And I even think of the Premier last Thursday talking about Danny Williams, the Premier of Newfoundland, who cut the welfare rates in Newfoundland from 12 per cent to 6 per cent because he was just committed to it. He just decided he was going to make that happen with that kind of leadership.

And so when the minister here quotes other provinces and talks about stats from other provinces, many other provinces have decided that they will go on and take up the challenges of eliminating poverty. And we see that in Saskatchewan. We see that in Saskatchewan. And I'm sure you've seen the document about *Let's Do Something About Poverty!* There is a call out there about having a poverty reduction strategy in this province. And yet this government, the leadership in this government, the ministers have decided, no they won't do this. They won't do this. And I don't understand why.

And we rely on answers that are full of stats that can be twisted or spun or whatever. And I think it is time that we do something about poverty and we do embrace the community and talk about doing a poverty reduction strategy so we're not back here every fall in estimates to talk about this kind of thing. And so I'll ask the minister: is this government going to do something about poverty? Are you going to get involved with the poverty reduction strategy?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Chairman, I think that the member opposite should know that from 1992 to 1998 the difference in . . . There was up to 8 per cent — 3.4 per cent, 4.8 per cent, 5.3 per cent — change when, under the previous government, Social Services was not right on their numbers either. So I think we . . . Tonight we're talking about what we're doing right now. There was three, and the member opposite changed it to four areas that we wanted to discuss tonight, and I'm pleased to answer questions on those areas. And I am pleased that the people that work in this ministry have fell within the 3 per cent which is less than it has been in previous years when it comes to being with a budget difference.

[21:15]

Overall the \$10.41 million that we are requesting is 1.4 per cent of our total budget, which isn't a bad number to be within. I wish it could have been under, but right now our goal is to make sure that people who need our support are getting our support, and that's what we're putting forward to the members opposite at this time.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Thank you very much. And I too want to thank the officials for their very thorough work and particularly the front-line workers who do this every day, day in and day out. And I do think that it's up to us and when we have the opportunity, to learn more about the programs and making sure we're speaking accurately about the details, including the statistics because we all know we can make statistics say whatever we want. And so when we get thorough answers like I have received tonight from the officials, I sure do appreciate it.

So with that I'd like to thank the officials and thank the Chair for allowing me some time to ask the questions. Thank you.

The Chair: — Are there any further questions? Seeing none, we'll move to the vote of 36, Social Services. Central management and services subvote (SS01) in the amount of \$1,000,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Income assistance and disability services, subvote (SS03) in the amount of \$9,410,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Social Services, vote 36, \$10,410,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. I will now ask a member to move the

following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2011, the following sums for Social Services, in the amount of \$10,410,000.

Mr. Hart. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[Vote 36 agreed to.]

The Chair: — I'd like to thank the officials and the minister and the committee members for their time tonight, and thank everybody watching at home. Are there any closing comments from any other members? Ms. Minister.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — I'd like to thank my officials, thank the members for their questions, but I'd particularly like to thank the officials and the people that work within this ministry. I have said this many times, and I mean it. There is lots of . . . Most of the people or all the people that work in this ministry could probably make more money someplace else, but it's because they believe in what they're doing and the heart they have for the job. And I'd like to thank them for their work.

The Chair: — Thank you, Madam Minister. With that we will take a recess to 9:30, and we will be back for the second part of our committee meeting tonight, Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

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

Subvote (AE02)

The Chair: — Welcome back, committee members, and people in the committee room and people at home. We are now looking at the estimates for Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration, vote 169, loans to Student Aid Fund (AE01), lending and investing activities outlined on page 16 of the Supplementary Estimates book; as well as estimates for Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration, vote 37, post-secondary education (AE02) outlined on page 11 of the Supplementary Estimate book.

Mr. Minister, would you . . . Before we begin, I'll just reintroduce our committee members. With us this evening are committee members from the opposition, Ms. Judy Junor and Mr. Cam Broten. And on the government side, Mr. Glen Hart; substituting for Ms. Christine Tell is Mr. Denis Allchurch; Ms. Doreen Eagles and Mr. Gord Wyant. And I am the Chair, Greg Ottenbreit.

So, Mr. Minister, would you like to introduce your officials and make any opening comments? And as well, I'd ask all officials as they come to the microphones to just introduce themselves

the first time for the purposes of Hansard.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair, and to all members of the committee for the opportunity to return to the committee and to engage this discussion regarding the supplementary spending estimates. Before offering details about our expanded investment in this vital component of our health care system, namely the education and training of nurses, as well as I anticipate we'll also be addressing the additional dollars that we'd like to invest in student financial assistance.

I'll certainly take this opportunity to introduce, as you've instructed, Mr. Chair, key members of our Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration. Once again we're delighted to be joined by our deputy minister, Clare Isman. As well in behind us, we have our assistant deputy minister, Rupen Pandya. Beside me, Mr. Dion McGrath, executive director of public institutions, and back behind me, Tammy Bloor-Cavers, the executive director of student financial assistance, as well as Karen Allen, executive director of corporate services, and Rhiannon Stromberg, the senior executive assistant to our deputy minister.

And if appropriate, I'd like to just mention that our ADM [assistant deputy minister] on the post-secondary side, Dr. Reg Urbanowski, is recovering at home from a bypass surgery. By all reports, his recovery's going well and I just want to extend to he and his family our very best wishes from those of us within the ministry, and I'm sure from the committee, and we wish him a speedy and rapid recovery.

If it's appropriate, Mr. Chair, I'm happy to continue with some initial and brief remarks at this time.

The Chair: — I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you, sir. The ministry is seeking committee approval for an additional 11.25 million in the 2010-11 budget to support the addition of 170 training seats for registered nurses within Saskatchewan. This will bring the total number of RN training seats to 720, and broken down that is 690 RNs in addition to 30 registered psychiatric nurses by the fall of 2011. It will meet the government's platform commitment to create 300 new nurse training seats, essentially ensuring that another promise has been made and another promise kept by Premier Brad Wall's government.

[21:30]

It also reflects the government's commitment to the nursing education strategy which, beyond the increasing training seats, also identified the need to develop new nursing education programs to best meet the evolving needs of learners most especially, and of course our students.

In a moment I'll elaborate on some of the aspects, but I thought what I'd do is start with a little bit of background regarding why, or in essence the key rationales to expedite this strategy. Over the course of the last three years, our government has taken important and required, essentially very real steps to recruit nurses from other provinces and indeed other countries. And we have also seen the increase in the number of training seats for nurses grow by 130.

Importantly when I talk about other provinces, 2009 has seen a net increase from other provinces for the first time in more than a decade, but we're not being complacent on the successes that we've had. We have achieved targets ahead of schedule. However we know that these initiatives are not sufficient to stabilize the labour force of nurses for today and for tomorrow.

We anticipate that approximately 500 registered nurses will be leaving the workforce in Saskatchewan on an annual basis for a variety of reasons in the coming years, most specifically driven by demographics. Let me be specific. We anticipate that there will be about 3,600 nurses in the province between the ages of 50 and 69, which translates to again what we anticipate: about 2,000 RNs [registered nurse] or one-fifth of our workforce that could retire over the course of the next three to five years alone. And that's consistent with demographics that we see across other sectors as well.

With approval of this expansion in training seats, we expect that approximately 400 nurses will graduate by the year 2015 and each year thereafter thereby ensuring that we have a consistent cohort of nurses available in Saskatchewan. The increase in the number of training seats is a build strategy, if you will, Mr. Chair, to help ensure that we have a ready labour force to meet these demands that will be driven largely by demographics but overwhelmingly also by the commitment to care for the people of this province. That's why certainly we want to encourage the committee to support this significant investment in the education and training of registered nurses within contemporary Saskatchewan.

In order to accommodate these additional training seats, we've been working diligently with our partners across the post-secondary system to ensure that we have a system that offers the best results not simply for stakeholders, but most especially for our students and for others, but most especially in the end for patients across Saskatchewan. We have also worked to ensure that we are accountable to taxpayers and that these increased investments will be instrumental in supporting an effective, coordinated, and responsive health care system for the people across our province.

Frankly we've consulted widely before making these investments. A task force was established two years ago with representatives from educational institutions, regulatory bodies, and officials from the Ministry of Health as well as our own ministry. And I'd like to thank all of those who have participated. And there have been many groups that have had the opportunity to weigh in on this investment.

Importantly, based on this commitment to consultation, we know that not only do we need to add additional seats, but we need to see the existing nurse education program of Saskatchewan, referred to frequently as NEPS, evolve and be replaced by a two-provider model or, if you want, a dual-track option for students.

And what we see from this evolution will be one program offered by the University of Saskatchewan and a second offered by the University of Regina and SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] working in partnership. The degrees will be offered by the University of Saskatchewan and University of Regina, respectively. Both of these options

will offer more choice for more students across our province. Classes will be offered by all three institutions, and this is important as we move forward.

In addition to this two-provider model that we are moving to, the program is also working towards extending nurse education, nursing education to various parts or regions of our province. This offers the vision that the two programs will eventually be educating more learners closer to a variety of centres that students call home. We believe that this approach will help to address key labour force challenges in health care across Saskatchewan while reducing current congestion of clinical placements in Regina and Saskatoon.

In closing, regarding this component of our deliberations, I would welcome the committee members to support this sound investment in helping to secure the workforce of nurses in Saskatchewan and contributing to what is known across the province as a high quality of health care already in Saskatchewan.

If I could, I'd also just like to make a few brief comments regarding our proposed increased investment in Student Aid Fund. And the Student Aid Fund borrows from the General Revenue Fund to finance loans to students under the Saskatchewan student loan program. And for the fiscal year 2010-11, the Student Aid Fund has approval, pre-approval to draw \$42 million in loan funds from the General Revenue Fund.

However, for the first time in years, this program has seen an increase in loan applications, not surprisingly, as enrolments continue to rise and as our government has been focused on getting more resources into the hands of students. To ensure that there are adequate resources in the Student Aid Fund to meet our guaranteed levels of assistance to eligible applicants, the fund requires authorization to borrow an additional \$4 million to increase the fund from 42 to \$46 million.

As a result, we anticipate that there will be about 11,000 students who can be assisted in the pursuit of post-secondary education, we think helping to ensure that they can focus more of their time and attention on their studies. This financial support reflects the ministry's efforts to be increasingly responsive to the needs of our students.

On that note, Mr. Chair, and to you and through you to the committee members, I welcome the opportunity for a dialogue and discussion this evening regarding both initiatives. That is, increased investments in nurse education in Saskatchewan to ensure that we have and will sustain high-quality health care for the people of this province as well as additional dollars invested into the Student Aid Fund thereby ensuring that more learners have the opportunity to focus more of their time and attention to their studies, thereby allowing them greater success not simply in their studies but as they look to the future career opportunities in Saskatchewan, that they're not simply studying in Saskatchewan, that they're staying in Saskatchewan and, most especially, positioned to succeed in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Chair, thank you very much for the opportunity to be here tonight.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Broten.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Minister, for your opening remarks. We can start with vote 37 on page 11 in the Supplementary Estimates. For the 8.25 million for the nursing programs as you described, could you give a breakdown, please, of how the 8.25 is divided between the different institutions, please.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. For the University of Saskatchewan, there will be \$3.5 million. And for the University of Regina, there will be \$4.75 million. In addition to this and in anticipation of some additional questions, I'd like the record to show that we anticipate that there will be \$3 million in capital that will also be focused on the University of Regina.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Minister. Out of the amounts to the institutions, could you give a little bit more description as to what the funds are being used for in the programs? For example what percentage of the 3.5 going to the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] would be for supporting the hiring of additional faculty, additional instructors for the program? I guess a bit more of an explanation about what the amounts are to be used for, please.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Sure. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Most of the dollars for the University of Saskatchewan will be focused on enhancing the faculty complement. And for the University of Regina, there are start-up costs, and I'll just go through a brief list again. We can get down into more detail. That includes hiring a dean, recruiting faculty, the development of detailed curriculum, along with some operating costs for both institutions.

And again anticipating some additional questions, capital costs or investments for the University of Regina will be invested in facilities, including the design and construction of lab space, which is going to be required to address the increase in students at that institution within this program.

[21:45]

So overwhelmingly for faculty at both institutions. For the U of R [University of Regina], we're going to see some additional dollars invested as they stand this program up, and that's to be expected mostly in program development and curricula development.

Mr. Broten: — When you're referring to lab space being expanded, are you referring to that that would be part of the \$3 million capital?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — That's right. Yes.

Mr. Broten: — So out of the . . . If the lion's share for salary is in hiring a faculty and so on, out of the amounts that are listed for U of S and U of R, what percentage would be ongoing costs that would be in additional budgets? And what amount of those would be one-time expenditures to do with the start-up?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Most of those dollars are going to be continuing, will be considered operating, and that is to meet the commitment to the program and commitment to the students.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you very much. So in your remarks, Mr. Minister, you suggested that the start-up date was fall of 2011. Is that on track?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — You know, I certainly don't want in any way put into question the work that's under way. Importantly, and this fits into the timing of the initiative, the SRNA [Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association] is leading an approval or accreditation process. That process continues.

What we wanted to do was make sure that the SRNA knew full well of the support and investment from this government, but I don't in any way want to speak on behalf of the SRNA. They're just beginning their process, and that's one of the reasons we wanted to ensure that those dollars were ready and available to help offer reassurance to the SRNA of the significance of this program as it moves forward.

So it's not in any way to detract from the question. It's an excellent question from where we stand. These dollars mark a significant indication of our investment and our commitment to this program, but the SRNA is undertaking its own review and analysis that will ultimately lead to the accreditation of this program, and we respect the independence of the SRNA as it's going through its own work. But from where we sit, things are on time, on track. And we remain attentive to the work of the SRNA and supportive as we are called upon to be.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. So this amount is for 170 seats, as it states in the explanation on page 11. What would the breakdown be between the two tracks that you referred to, the U of S track and the U of R-SIAST track? I guess, what's the breakdown of the 170? And then at the end of the day for the total seats that you referenced in your remarks, what would the breakdown be for the two?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — What does that complement look like? Great.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. If I've got the question correct here, it was focused on the immediate investment, then the overall cohort, and then I'll offer an explanation of the psychiatric nursing positions as well.

So the breakdown is 85 and 85. This will lead, as discussed, to 690. The total 720 comes from the 30 psychiatric nursing positions. Those are within the SIAST stream and will remain as such and the overall number will be 345 and 345 on those tracks, the additional 30 resting within the SIAST stream — that is those within the psychiatric nursing stream.

I hope I've got the details included there.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. In your remarks, Mr. Minister, you spoke about steps for decentralizing or taking nursing education out into other parts of the province. And I think of two other examples in the health care education sector; I think of the LPN [licensed practical nurse] and the care aid program, for example, at Kawacatoose and Cowessess. Within the seats that you just mentioned, is there a plan to have that similar type of rollout for RN seats in other locations? Is that part of what you mean when you talk about other parts of the province?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. The notion that here is would be referred to as a distributed learning network or distributed learning model, and the significance of having the two-provider model available to students speaks to a couple of different aspects. For the University of Regina-SIAST stream, there is going to be an increased emphasis on technology and the goal here is to allow and enable students from other communities from across the province to utilize technology in accessing this degree-granting program.

And obviously as the program is just getting under way, we're going to wait to see what that looks like. But the models . . . I would offer obviously the LPN has been very successful as has frankly our work with medical students. And just recently in conjunction with the Ministry of Health, we've seen the reopening of an auditorium here within Regina over at the General, and the inclusion of third-year medical students. And the technology I have to say I was deeply impressed with during the announcement.

We had students in the classroom in Regina, in the auditorium within the hospital; we had students within the College of Medicine proper in Saskatoon — both working through the College of Medicine. Both able to access full views of the class as well as full engagement by the respective professors, as well as full accessibility to the materials that were included within the work that day. And so I'm very, very pleased and optimistic about the prospect of enhanced technology being drawn on and utilized within the U of R-SIAST stream.

On the U of S model, there's certainly a number of discussions that have occurred from some initial stages about the opportunity to continue to engage specific locations, and we've had some conversations about what that might look like for especially northern communities. And again we'll take the lead from the respective institutions as they get rolling.

Certainly the goal here is to have opportunities through both streams to have more students engaged in the RN programs, degree-granting programs, and to provide more students not simply these opportunities but opportunities to train either within or closer to home communities, thereby enhancing the opportunity for them simply not to have access to education but access to service once they're completed their degree granting.

So we're happy to keep the committee members up to date as those deliberations and discussions are under way about the rollout of this distributed learning model. I'm very, very optimistic, and I'm very pleased that students are going to have these choices.

Mr. Broten: — I would agree. When it comes to the distributed model, there's many JURSI [junior undergraduate rotating student intern] that really chase after the Regina seats because of the learning environment here. So it's good if technology can support that.

So as the institutions perhaps take the lead in what a distributed model can look like, and especially if it is involving or focusing on First Nations learners, is there the possibility of additional partnerships with SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies] or DTI [Dumont Technical Institute], for example, with either of the streams? Is that a possibility and is

there an appetite for that?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well I certainly wouldn't want to speak on behalf of the institutions, nor would I in any way want to affect or influence the work that's under way by the SRNA. We know how significant that process is. That being said, certainly the goal here is to ensure that more students, and included in that description of more students — and in this case we're talking about 170 additional nursing seats — that there are more opportunities for more First Nations and Métis students across the province to engage this process.

And you know, again we're going to let the institutions . . . Because these are both degree-granting streams, we're going to allow the institutions, as appropriate, to take the lead on this. And again the significance here is regarding the review by the SRNA to continue the work that's under way regarding accreditation and program review. So I wouldn't rule anything out at this stage. That being said, it's most appropriate for the institutions and the SRNA to see the rollout of this.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. Turning our attention to the \$3 million capital transfer amount that you referenced in your remarks, you said that that was for creation or renovation of lab space at the U of R. Could you please just give a brief description of what that work looks like and what location in fact that's all being done, please?

[22:00]

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Sure. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. The University of Regina will receive this funding for immediate capital requirements. And most of these are going to be invested here within Regina, and that will be largely in the new Lab Building. And we've seen how significant that building is for the campus. We also . . . And specifically we anticipate an enhancement of a microbiology lab, equipment, and videoconferencing requirements as just referenced by the distributed learning model.

We also see that there needs to be some enhancement for some leased space, and that will be in Saskatoon as both of these programs, if I can help to ensure that there's an understanding here, and that is both of these programs are on offer in both cities, both Saskatoon and Regina to start, and so there will be some capital requirements in Saskatoon, as well for the U of R.

Mr. Broten: — So would the Saskatoon enhancements to the lease space, would that fall under the U of R banner or the U of S or be under the SIAST banner?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — It'll actually fall under the U of R-SIAST banner. It'll take place in Saskatoon, but most of those dollars will go here in Regina.

Mr. Broten: — So for the . . . Has any of this construction work or renovation work . . . Or what stage is the construction work that needs to be done for the changes? I know obviously the new Lab Building is there, but what is the status of the actual work?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Of the actual enhancements? Sure. Given that the authorization for this funding is still being discussed

and debated here, it's our hope that over the course of the next 12 to 18 to 24 months, these dollars will roll out.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. For the work in the projects that have to be, that are required to make the changes, will those projects be tendered?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — The respective institutions will have their own policies on this. But we anticipate that as those thresholds warrant, obviously that there will be tenders that will go out.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. So the request here in supplementary estimates is to approve the amount, and then the work and the tenders or whatever process needs to occur could begin. In your remarks, you said that the funding would roll out in the next 12 to 18 to 24 months. So are these enhancements to leased space and the labs at the U of R, are they not a requirement for the rollout in fall of 2011?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Not all of them. Some of them can be phased in over the course of the first two years.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. So would the changes that are being made to the physical properties, are those changes, are those changes what is deemed necessary to accommodate the 345 and the 345 in the programs? So my question is, in 2011, in fall 2011 if there's the X number of seats that have been stated that will be provided at that time, can students expect to have facilities that are not adequate, based on the work that will be done over the coming two years?

I guess my question is, if this funding is needed to make the changes to accommodate the numbers and the changes occur over the course of two years but the goal for the numbers of which these changes are required is in about one year, how's it going to work for that gap time before the work is completed but the number of students are still there?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much for the question. There are two aspects to this, as I've said. Number one, the dollars are significant, especially to the SRNA review. And so we wanted to make sure that those dollars that are going to be required over the course of the first two years are demonstrated. That's why we've obviously put this forward.

The second piece relates to the students, and the students are going to have the facilities they require as they start the program. That program requirement on the capital side is going to continue to evolve and that program evolution is going to take a couple of years for these dollars to actually flow into the program requirements. So it's meant to ensure that, for the SRNA most especially, that these dollars are available.

Mr. Broten: — Thanks. So if I can understand you correctly, to have the full complement of students by fall of 2011, there may be temporary measures taken to accommodate those students to ensure the quality of education is there. But then in order to satisfy the demands of the SRNA, as they ought to be, they needed to feel like there was an assurance that the funding would in fact be there to move from a temporary accommodation or classrooms or labs into a more permanent structure or permanent environment. Do I have that understanding correct?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Again I'm not going to speak on behalf of the SRNA. What we've said is the SRNA is undertaking its work. We wanted to assure and offer reassurance that those dollars are available as required by the institutions; those dollars are available to help ensure that they meet the programmatic needs as required.

Mr. Broten: — So if the funding is not needed all at once, if this simply starts the process of making the changes to the buildings that are required, so if the funding is not needed for up to 24 months as you described, how is that money kept aside? Where is that money kept? What ensures that it's . . . Where does that money live until it's spent?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — These are targeted funds that again will flow to the institutions as required by the institutions.

Mr. Broten: — So will the money stay within the Ministry of AEE [Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration] or will it be transferred to the institutions? I apologize if that was just your answer, but just to be perfectly clear.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — It'll flow to the institutions as required by the institutions.

Mr. Broten: — So the amount of, the \$3 million amount will stay in AEE and then, as the institutions need it for their work, funds will be disbursed?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — If the institutions require it, as they require it, then it'll flow.

Mr. Broten: — How does that work? Pardon me. How does that work for the annual budgetary process for what the ministry's allowed to keep in a reserve fund, for example, and not have to dole it out?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — We'll make sure that we fit within all the parameters necessary and we'll make sure the institutions receive it. We do this on a regular basis. It's with the best practices and, I don't know, I'll turn it over to the deputy minister who happens to also be an accountant to provide any assurance.

Certainly what I want to put on the record is, we work very diligently and we have very high regard for both the University of Saskatchewan, the University of Regina, and obviously with SIAST as well regarding funds. And this, you know, there can be no doubt about that. The actual rollout, I'll turn to the deputy minister.

Ms. Isman: — Clare Isman, deputy minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration. And yes, we anticipate, based on the projections of the University of Regina, that the \$3 million that they've asked for in the current year are the funds that they need for the investment that they'll need for next year. So I anticipate that those funds will flow in this current fiscal year in order to be able to accommodate the purchase of the equipment that they needed as well as the upgrading of the Lab Building in microbiology, in order for it to be ready for the fall of 2011-12 based on what they're currently projecting in terms of their time frames.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. So the \$3 million for the capital transfer, you expect it to be used up in the first 12 months, not over the course of 18 or 24? Because those were two different answers. When I asked the first time for the 3 million, the minister said 12, 18, or 24, and then the deputy just said that it'll most likely match exactly what the U of R wants, so I was just curious which the answer is.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — No. Actually, Mr. Chair, they're exactly the same answer. The construction is going to roll out over the course of the next 12 to 18 to 24 months. It's an important distinction. The dollars, and of course there's no surprise here, the dollars that our deputy is talking about is going to roll to the institution as required. The actual construction is going to take some time to actually take place.

Mr. Broten: — So is it anticipated that the \$3 million would be the total amount needed to make the necessary changes for the, necessary capital changes for the expansion of the program? Or might there be additional asks in coming years for additional changes?

[22:15]

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. We anticipate there could be additional requirements on capital in the out years and we'll work with the University of Regina as well as other partners to focus on that as needed.

Mr. Broten: — So with these supplementary estimates, the request for the \$3 million, that means the funds would transfer from AEE to the respective institutions for the construction, as what the minister says would occur over the next 12, 18, 24 months. So are those funds held in trust? Is that the correct understanding? They're held in trust by the institutions while they're doing the work over a period of time.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, as based on best practices, these are transferred to the institutions. These are targeted funds in the institutions, ensured that they're utilized for the requirements as prescribed.

Mr. Broten: — So the \$3 million would have to be transferred by end of budget year, March 31st, but would not have to be spent right away because they're held in trust by the respective institutions?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well they're certainly held. They would be held most likely in their capital funds and then rolled out because they're targeted for this initiative, yes.

Mr. Broten: — Okay, thank you. A question on the timing of the additional 170 seats and then the work that needs to be done, the physical capital work that needs to be done to accommodate the additional students. In explanations that have been given, it's been indicated that there very well could be a lag between the number of seats that are available and the completion of facilities to accommodate the students.

I'm curious. Why was the fall 2011 time frame used? Would another approach be to expand the seats at a rate that the facilities are there to accommodate them?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — There are a couple of dynamics here. I'm happy if the member wants to elaborate on his question regarding 2011. That is, we are enhancing, as promised on numerous occasions that we would, we're enhancing by 170 seats nurse training, and we are also rolling out the two-provider model.

And the suggestion that somehow there wouldn't be the requisite number of seats is empirically inaccurate. There will be a full complement of seats. And we're doing this at this time because over the course of the last couple of years, there has been extensive work done, and the recommendation was put forward to us to move to a two-provider model.

And so we're seeing the seat expansion, the two-provider model undertaken, and most importantly, the commitment that the SRNA requires in order to undertake and complete its analysis. But if there's something that the committee member was offering regarding 2011, I'm happy to speak directly to that if he can elaborate.

Mr. Broten: — That actually concludes the questions I had on the votes, the vote for vote 37. I would like to move attention now to vote 169.

In the minister's remarks he indicated that this was an increase of funding from 42 million to 46, so an additional \$4 million that is being considered. And it's an increase helping or assisting 11,000 additional students. Could the minister please give the number for the amount of students that were being helped at the beginning of the year. I guess my question is, the plus 11,000, what is the total for the number of people receiving benefits?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — If I could, Mr. Chair, I just want to make sure that I clarify my remarks. I think I was clear on this. It's not an additional 11,000. It's for 11,000 in total benefiting from this fund. But your question still stands?

Mr. Broten: — Yes, the question still stands.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — We've seen an increase of about 10 per cent. That is somewhere in the range of between 900 and 1,000 students.

Mr. Broten: — Does the ministry have information as to what students in which institutions are receiving the increase, where the increase of recipients has been? Is it evenly across the board, or is it focused more in one area than in another?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — So the distribution?

Mr. Broten: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — What we're seeing is about a 10 per cent increase at the university level and about a 15 per cent increase for SIAST and the regional colleges.

Mr. Broten: — Does the ministry expect a similar amount of growth next year, or what is the level that is estimated for next year?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Given that the loan period runs through

two fiscal years, and that is to accommodate the academic year, there are projections undertaken during budget preparations. And then there are follow-up projections and reviews done subsequently, and that is obviously in the fall.

And so your question about projections, there are a couple or three factors that come in here. First and foremost, past practices; secondly, the reconciliation between the estimates and the review that is to account for what's happening on the ground during the initial weeks of the academic year; and then finally, what's happening in other jurisdictions across the country.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. For the additional individuals that are assisted through this funding, is there a sense in the ministry . . . Does the ministry know if these are individuals that are new starts in the post-secondary system and are enrolling in a program for a first time? Or is this increase individuals that have been in a program for some time but are now in a place where they need to seek the assistance of the loan system in order to carry on with their studies? Is there any understanding about that distinction between the two types of people that may be applying?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Chair, we can get that data for the members of the committee. We're happy to do that. It'll take a little bit of analysis and work, but we're happy to do that in the coming days.

Mr. Broten: — I'd appreciate that. Would that information, could that be sent to the committee Chair and then could be tabled at a future meeting?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Happy to do that.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you very much. That concludes my questions. So with that I will turn it back to the Chair, unless Ms. Junor has anything . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Back to the Chair. Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Go ahead.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you to the minister and the officials for the answers on a Monday night.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Broten. Any further questions? Seeing none, we will move to the votes. Vote 37, post-secondary education, Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration, page 11 of the Supplementary Estimates, subvote (AE02) in the amount of \$11,250,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration, vote 37, \$11,250,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2011, the following sums for Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration in the amount of \$11,250,000.

Mr. Hart. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[Vote 37 agreed to.]

**General Revenue Fund
Lending and Investing Activities
Supplementary Estimates — November
Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration
Vote 169**

The Chair: — We will now move to vote 169, lending activities for Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration, page 16 of the Supplementary Estimates. Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration, subvote (AE01) in the amount of \$4 million, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Vote 169, Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration, \$4 million. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2011, the following sums for Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration in the amount of \$4 million.

Mr. Wyant. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[Vote 169 agreed to.]

The Chair: — Well thank you, committee members and Mr. Minister and the officials. And I'd like to also thank the people at Hansard that stay up these late evenings to look after our committee meetings. I will invite the minister to make any closing remarks.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Chair, thanks very much. I'd just like to echo your appreciation most especially to the committee members, to the officials from the ministry who have joined us tonight —time away from families — and to those from the legislative services here within the building that help to foster and facilitate the work of this committee and the important work that was undertaken tonight. Special thanks to everyone.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I will now ask for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Eagles. This committee now stands adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 22:30.]