



STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Hansard Verbatim Report

No. 25 – December 2, 2013



Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

Twenty-Seventh Legislature

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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Batoche

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Saskatoon Centre

Mr. Mark Docherty
Regina Coronation Park

Mr. Greg Lawrence
Moose Jaw Wakamow

Mr. Paul Merriman
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Ms. Laura Ross
Regina Qu'Appelle Valley

Ms. Nadine Wilson
Saskatchewan Rivers

[The committee met at 19:20.]

The Chair: — Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the Standing Committee on Human Services. I'm Delbert Kirsch, and I'm the Chair of this committee. With us tonight is Mr. David Forbes, Deputy Chair, and we've got Mr. Paul Merriman and Ms. Nadine Wilson. Also sitting in is Mr. Greg Ottenbreit and Mr. Scott Moe.

We have two items to table this evening: HUS 10/27, Ministry of Education: Response to questions raised at the May 6th meeting of the committee regarding child care spaces, dated May 13th, 2013, distributed on May the 14th. Also we have HUS 11/27, Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety: Responses to questions raised at the April 24th and the April 30th, 2013 meeting of the committee regarding maximum wage benefits, dated June 18th, 2013, distributed on August 8th.

I would like to advise the committee that, pursuant to rule 148(1), the following supplementary estimate was deemed referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services on November 27th, 2013: vote 36, Social Services.

This evening we will be considering the supplementary estimates for Social Services. We now begin our consideration of vote 36, Social Services, central management and services subvote (SS01), and income assistance and disability services, (SS03). Ms. Draude is here with her officials. Madam Minister, please introduce your officials and make your opening comments.

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

Subvotes (SS01) and (SS03)

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Good evening to you and to the members here tonight. I'm looking forward to this evening. I like to believe that the Ministry of Social Services doesn't spend money. We invest money in people, and I believe that that's the right thing to be doing.

So I'd like to introduce to you the officials who are with me tonight to discuss our estimates. We've got Ken Acton who is the deputy minister; Alan Syhlonyk who is the assistant deputy minister of corporate services; Bob Wihlidal who is the assistant deputy minister of income assistance and disability services; Lorne Brown, executive director of enterprise projects and risk management; Bob Martinook, the executive director of community living service delivery; Miriam Myers who is the executive director of finance; Gord Tweed, executive director of program and service design, income assistance, and disability services; Jenn Clark who is the director of disability strategy; and Gary Hutchings who is my chief of staff.

As you know, the ministry has reported a forecast of \$39.9 million over what we had forecasted this spring. Of this, more than \$35 million will support people with disabilities, one of the most important priorities of our government. Saskatchewan assured income for disability program had income increases in

the program I'll refer to as SAID, Mr. Chair. The program accounts for \$30.2 million of the \$39 million we're discussing tonight.

When we first launched this new income support program for people with disabilities in November of 2009, there were about 2,500 people enrolled. By the end of this fiscal year, we expect to have just over 12,000 people with significant and enduring disabilities to benefit from the SAID program.

For many years the disability community has been lobbying the province for a dignified support program that was separate from the traditional social assistance program. We know for a fact that there were people who preferred to live in hardship rather than face the stigma of being on welfare. These people had not been part of our caseload in the past, but today they are coming forward and they're being supported under the SAID program. And in addition, people with disabilities under the Saskatchewan assistance program, previously the only income support option for people with disabilities, have enrolled in SAID at a much faster rate than we had originally anticipated. I'm really proud that we now have an income support program that offers people with disabilities the dignity I believe they deserve.

I'd like to offer some perspectives from the people who are benefiting from the SAID program about this investment and how it's making a difference in their lives. Front-line workers have received phone calls, letters, and emails after people began receiving their SAID benefits, sharing how their lives have improved. People on SAID are now enjoying some of the simple things that most of us took for granted all of our lives. They're going out for dinner on occasions or giving back to their church once in a while. And for these people, SAID has been life-changing.

As Merv Bender, the Chair of the program implementation advisory committee, once said, and I'm quoting him:

The development of SAID over the past few years has proven to be a model of how government can work collaboratively and productively with the disability community. These enhancements demonstrate the provincial government's ongoing commitment to people with disabilities right across Saskatchewan, and will make SAID a meaningful income support program for Saskatchewan people with significant and enduring disabilities.

I'm very proud of our work to date. I'm proud of our continued partnership with our disability partners to further improve the program. And SAID is here to stay.

Our government is also committed to supporting people with intellectual disabilities, another key to making Saskatchewan the best place in Canada to live for people with a disability. We've provided unprecedented support to community-based organizations to expand the residential, the day, and specialized programs needed right across the province to respond to the needs of individuals and their families.

The costs of services for people with intellectual disabilities

related to contracts with our community-based organizations are expected to be about \$5.5 million, more than we'd originally budgeted this spring. In part this is because we've developed services to respond to the circumstances of individuals as they emerge so that people don't fall through the cracks or end up in a crisis situation. The increase is also due to the timing of new services, which in some cases can be affected by the construction delays or, in our cases, early starts. This can impact expenditures.

In the area of information technology or IT, we anticipate to spend more than originally anticipated by about \$1.7 million. IT costs have risen for several reasons, mainly because of costs to operate our production system have increased beyond our expectations. The ministry's IT system supports a core business function of two things: child welfare or protecting our children at risk; and secondly, income supports for low-income families, for seniors, people with disabilities, and for those out of work.

We are currently in the midst of a multi-year plan to implement a new system called the Linkin enterprise program to complete work on the child welfare side and begin work on the income assistance side. Our goal is to have one new system for the entire ministry that will support our needs well into the future.

In the meantime, there's a need to support our existing and, I might add, very outdated system. For example we had unanticipated costs such as we have in other areas of government like the need to incorporate a 10-digit phone number.

Finally the \$1.6 million of the ministry's increase in costs relates to fires and floods that occurred during the spring and summer. Emergency social services responded to 17 disasters that affected more than 1,800 people in our province. While there's a small base amount, and that's — by small I mean \$150,000 — that is budgeted to do the high-level planning for emergency events, we cannot anticipate the number or the nature of disasters that will occur or the costs that will come from assisting those impacted by disasters. We do not know . . . What we do know is that people rely on our province to provide emergency shelter, food, and clothing when a disaster strikes.

Before I close, Mr. Chair, and to the members, I want to acknowledge the efforts of the many community partners and of the ministry staff throughout the province. Whether they're responding to people in a disaster situation or whether they're providing the day-to-day help of our most vulnerable citizens here in our province, I can honestly say they're some of the most dedicated and hard-working and passionate people I know. They work very hard to ensure that our most vulnerable citizens get the services they need.

Mr. Chair, that concludes my remarks, and I'm going to be pleased to answer questions that you have. Thank you very much.

The Chair: — Thank you, Madam Minister. And I understand Mr. Forbes has questions. The floor is yours.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, and thank you for your introductory remarks. I have a few questions and I'll get right into it. I'm looking at page 11 of the Supplementary Estimates

book here, so I just want to be clear I understand these numbers. The first one was on vote 36, central services, the 3.3 million. And you had just alluded to 1.7 million for the ITO [information technology office], the computer systems. Is that part of the 3.3 million? Or what was the 3.3 million for?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Just tell me your question again, and I think we can answer it.

Mr. Forbes: — Is Social Services, vote 36, and central management and services (SS01), central services, and three point . . . thirty-three hundred thousand dollars. So 3.3 million, I . . . My math is correct. So I assume part of that 1.7 million that you had alluded to with the computer systems?

[19:30]

Hon. Ms. Draude: — That's correct.

Mr. Forbes: — Right. And so what would be the other 1.6 million?

Mr. Syhlonyk: — Yes, so that's made up of 1.7 IT expenses, as you described, and 1.6 for emergency social services.

Mr. Forbes: — And then for the 1.7, you know . . . And the floods and that, I mean it's hard to believe in Saskatchewan now we're in the middle of a blizzard, to be reflecting back on a flood. And what a winter we had last year. But I really want to focus in on the IT. And so 1.7 million, and you talked about the Linkin system as part of that. Now I just figured out, I thought it was the linked-in system but it's the Linkin system. How do you spell that?

Mr. Syhlonyk: — L-i-n-k-i-n.

Mr. Forbes: — K-i-n, okay. Not like the car. No. Sort of like Lincoln except for . . .

Okay. Now where would you find this? I was trying to find out in the Public Accounts, how is it tracked, the IT. You pay for IT as parts of goods and services, and that's what comes out of this. You pay to the . . . How does this money get tracked in this book, in Public Accounts?

Ms. Myers: — Miriam Myers, executive director, finance. Yes, in Public Accounts it would be included in the central management and services.

Mr. Forbes: — I'm trying to find it and, you know, this is where the BMO [Bank of Montreal] purchase contracts . . . So Linkin is not . . . I don't see it in here.

Ms. Myers: — Linkin wouldn't be specifically identified in there.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay, what would it be identified as?

Ms. Myers: — Most of the payments for the Linkin are going to ITO, to information technology. Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — Well that's what I was wondering. Okay. Because I think ITO is identified in here. Yes, Minister of

Finance, ministry of information technology office, \$11.9 million. Does that sound right with what was spent the previous year?

Ms. Myers: — For this year? For previous years?

Mr. Forbes: — For '12-13.

Ms. Myers: — I'm sorry, I don't have the public accounts book with me right now, but it sounds like it would be approximate, yes. Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Okay, and then we can go back and it should be in that, in their report, the Linkin system.

Ms. Myers: — Well but what we're referring to in our supplementary estimates is not the cost pertaining directly to the development of the Linkin project. These are costs associated with the production services . . . And I probably should have Lorne Brown speaking to this. He's more knowledgeable about that part of it. But there's two parts to what we're talking about here right now, and the Linkin development project is not really the part that we're addressing in our supplementary estimate discussion here right now.

Ms. Ross: — Point of order. I think we're to be dealing with the . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . You're fine?

A Member: — Yes, absolutely.

Ms. Ross: — Okay.

Mr. Forbes: — I just want to know the part that we're dealing with.

Mr. Brown: — Lorne Brown, executive director of enterprise projects and risk management. So just to clarify, the amount that's under discussion right now is \$1.7 million is required for operational support to kind of keep things going from an IT perspective. Linkin is one piece of that. So we have implemented already a system for child and family case management system, so that's now part of what some of this money goes to support that system, as well as money to support our legacy systems that we've had for many, many years in the ministry.

Mr. Forbes: — How much is there going to the legacy systems? And when you say that, are you talking about personnel who operate the system or . . .

Mr. Brown: — In terms of the costs associated?

Mr. Forbes: — The 1.7 million, how would you spend that?

Mr. Brown: — So there's many facets of this. This particular envelope includes money that's paid to ITO in terms of keeping our desktop devices operational and paying for the lease on our desktop devices. It goes to pay for the people that . . .

Mr. Forbes: — [Inaudible] . . . this supplementary estimate would be above and beyond what you would normally have budgeted for. You would have budgeted for that and we would have dealt with that in the regular estimates in April, right?

Mr. Brown: — Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — Now this is stuff that's above and beyond and not just, so just to be clear on that.

Mr. Brown: — No, I understand. So the issue is, is that piece in terms of the desktop devices, the servers that we have in terms of running our systems, the support that we need from the application developers and so forth, that's part of this envelope. Money we pay for minor enhancements and fixes to the system, so that all goes into this bucket in terms of where the expenses are paid from.

Mr. Forbes: — And you had anticipated that in the spring or in preparing for the budget?

Mr. Brown: — Correct. So in preparing for the budget, we had certain numbers from our service providers that said the cost was going to be X amount of dollars. As things progressed and those estimates didn't end up being correct, so now we're paying, for example, more money in regards to our hosting our systems. So that goes for Linkin would be one piece of that, but it would also be for, say, our legacy systems for income assistance or things . . .

Mr. Forbes: — 1.7 million. So we'll leave the other part because that is the floods. So how much of that 1.7 would be for the legacy system? How much would this be for the new things that you're doing for child and family?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — If I may while he's looking up the exact numbers, can I just give you a general idea of the additional costs in the various areas? We had the hosting estimates from ITO was a little, they were, we were a little under budget for that. We have multiple server environments required to support our Linkin project. We have additional infrastructure required to support the Linkin system. We had two additional environments for the legacy system to improve redundancy and recovery. We increased cost associated to maintaining our legacy system. And for that I think I've told, I spoke last time about the fact that our system that we have right now is really outdated. We have individuals, we had to actually call somebody who had basically been retired to come back and do some, to actually keep our system going.

We had unanticipated costs required to keep our legacy system going for things like the new 10-digit phone number made a difference. We had to actually change our computer system to account for that. We had, SaskEnergy system replacement impacted our Social Services applications. Our personal care home benefits enhancement required to correct calculating reporting issues that weren't included in the initial system release. We had new seniors' income file transfer between the federal government and the ministry that again cost money. The SAID program reports required to support manual worked. We had increased Linkin application maintenance for additional software, and ongoing support is, for our systems, higher than we had anticipated because of data fix efforts and user security account maintenance.

So every time we turn around, when it comes to the system . . . I know that \$1.1 million is a lot of money. But when it comes to keeping a system going, the rights we have, we're keeping track

of not only our children in care, but we're also keeping track of the fact that we put out 60,000 cheques, I believe the number is . . .

Mr. Acton: — Actually it's over that. There's over 80,000 payments a month. So one point million payments a year.

Mr. Forbes: — But the question we're here tonight, and why I have to be very focused on this . . . And I've been corrected. That's fair enough. But what of these things did you not know before? We've always handed out thousands of cheques. That's not new. You would've known that a year ago. You know, we knew about the 10-digit phone numbers a year ago.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Legacy system did not, Mr. Forbes, did not . . .

Mr. Forbes: — Legacy system? No, no, but you knew or somebody should've known that. Did not anybody know a year ago that you're dealing with a computer system that did . . . you're going to have to deal with 10-digit phone numbers? And all of a sudden it happens and you didn't realize this? Is this what happened?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — I think though when the legacy system was built a number of years ago, it didn't know it.

Mr. Forbes: — But what I'm saying is that clearly ITO should've known that this . . . And not just your system, I assume throughout the government that there's lots of old computer systems. And we're moving into a 10-digit system, that this was news to the government?

Mr. Acton: — If I may. Ken Acton, deputy minister. One of our challenges with an old system is what would appear to be pretty simple sometimes turns out to be really complicated and expensive. And that's what you're seeing here.

You're right. You would think, how tough could it be to change a phone number to 10 digits? Well in an old legacy system it's sometimes not as easy as you would think or as the deputy would think when I, you know, it shouldn't be that tough. But with an old system, often there's unintended consequences and each one of those is a challenge. So did we know there would be a 10-digit phone number? Yes. Did we anticipate the kind of costs it would take to deal with that in the old legacy system? No, we didn't anticipate the time or the effort or the expertise it would take to try to manage that.

Just the same as SaskEnergy, if they changed some of their software, what you would think would be an easy interface sometimes doesn't work the way it's supposed to with an old system. And so then we're, you know, we're reliant on folks in the IT business to try to keep the old system running. And then that's where this . . .

And so we had a number of those surprises. So did we know that . . . phone number? Absolutely. Did we know the cost associated with it? No, we didn't.

Mr. Forbes: — And I want to be clear, I didn't think it would be easy because I know old systems are never easy. That's why I'm surprised that somebody thought it was going to be easy.

Because it's like, you know, YK what . . . You know, that whole thing. We all were . . . It's so expensive.

But anyway, do you have a number of how much that 10-digit phone number, what was the impact of that? Does anybody sort of circle that and said, gee that cost us \$500,000?

Mr. Brown: — Oh, it wasn't that much money certainly. It was probably in the range of about \$50,000 roughly. We might have budgeted 20,000 for that particular fix. But like all systems, especially the older systems, it costs us more money for resources just because there's less folks around that can actually maintain that system, so as a result their demand is greater than the supply. So that's one of the reasons that that particular one cost more money than what we anticipated.

Mr. Forbes: — So what of the other 1.7 million were things that you didn't know a year ago that added up to 1.7 million this year?

Mr. Brown: — One major piece that's hit us in the last year is our system hosting costs. And so that amounts for about \$520,000, in terms of those costs are much higher than we anticipated when we initially submitted our request through to Finance. So that includes both Linkin systems, and it also includes those legacy systems that I've spoken about.

Mr. Forbes: — And who is the . . . or what company is the system hosting?

Mr. Brown: — Well we, like all other government agencies, we use ITO in terms of they're our service provider.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. So they were the ones that when they gave you the bill, ITO was 500,000 more?

Mr. Brown: — Right. And they have their people that then they work with as well. So it kind of is the way it works, in terms of it's a straight pass-through cost to us based on ITO's vendors in terms of who does their system hosting.

Mr. Forbes: — All right. And the other large chunks of this 1.7?

[19:45]

Mr. Brown: — Another major part of this is we do have increased licensing costs through the Linkin system. So we have to pay the maintenance costs in terms of that software. That ended up being about \$540,000. So that maintains all of our licences that we have for the child and family area in terms of their case management system and their structured decision-making tool which we're implementing this weekend.

Mr. Forbes: — So where is Linkin based? What kind of company is that? Where is that from?

Mr. Brown: — Linkin, there's a bit of a history to that. But the current owner of the product is IBM [International Business Machines Corporation]. They bought the company within the last year, year and a half I believe.

Mr. Forbes: — Was it a private company before that or what

happened?

Mr. Brown: — Yes. It was a . . .

Mr. Forbes: — So now I have kind of followed this Linkin process, and as I've changed roles in opposition, I think the total bill — and correct me if I'm wrong — but it was approaching \$16 million through the Linkin system? What has been the total cost for Linkin?

Mr. Brown: — In terms of the implementation costs?

Mr. Forbes: — No the purchase, the implementation, the whole nine yards.

Mr. Acton: — So its total cost is \$37.6 million. That delivers the child and family side, but it also is some foundational work for the income assistance side as well.

Mr. Forbes: — Now is it completely purchased and it's completely up and running and we're just dealing with maintenance costs now?

Mr. Acton: — On the child and family side it is. We are still doing some work on the financial piece to issue payments, and of course we're just doing some foundational work as it relates to the income assistance side.

Mr. Forbes: — The 37 could grow?

Mr. Acton: — Sorry, pardon me?

Mr. Forbes: — The 37 million could grow.

Mr. Acton: — Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — Absolutely. Okay, and as well as the 500,000 for maintenance, 540,000. Okay. Now we have only an hour, so I've got lots of questions here.

I'm just wondering, were there any lean initiatives happening within Social Services that could have helped with these costs?

I know that we got into a debate in the House where we have made the suggestion that in health and education there has actually been cuts. The government says that there aren't cuts, that they've actually been lean savings, and that's why they're putting it that way. Has there been any significant lean savings in Social Services since April 1 that could've had an impact on this?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — To the member, to David, I'm not sure if there is anything particular. I'll ask whether there's any lean initiatives that we're working on. What we're discussing tonight, on the supplementary estimates, that's what we're talking about. So I'll ask him if there's something that was dealing with the SAID program or the emergency flooding or the ITO.

Mr. Forbes: — [Inaudible] . . . for sure.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Okay, we'll ask. I'm going to have Gord answer that. But I do want to remind Mr. Forbes that before we

started this project, in Saskatchewan we had . . . looking after our children was all paper-based. We had no way to be able to track the work that was being done for our children except by pieces of paper. We had people out in the field that were writing down information that could have an impact on our children's lives, and the only way they could transfer that information to another worker or keep track of it in a central base was by taking a manual piece of paper. We knew that as government that wasn't acceptable, and we were willing to . . .

You're talking about spending money? Yes we are. But I think we're investing in children. They're our most valuable resource. And every time we have an opportunity to ensure that our children are kept safe, we'll do that. So the investment that you're talking about, \$37 million, for me it's an investment in our children.

Now you've asked the question about lean and whether there's anything that we've done to ensure that we are spending our money wisely in Social Services. And I assure you that's the type of question that you should be asking and that I'm pleased to answer. And we have done a number of lean projects, but the overarching answer that I want to give you is that we now have a system in place where we can not only keep track of our children but we know where they are and what we're doing with them and what the programs that they're involved in. And that's the kind of thing that I feel comfortable about now as the Minister of Social Services.

So, Gord, if you want to answer the lean question I'd appreciate it.

Mr. Tweed: — Gord Tweed. So in advance of our planning work for the implementation of the income assistance suite of programs to the Linkin initiative, and as the minister and Lorne described earlier we're still in the formulation piece around that group of programs, but we . . .

Mr. Forbes: — So I want to make it clear, and I think it's not just, you know, I'm just talking about have you, through lean, established any savings that you could transfer to some of the programs that have had overruns? Not just the, you know, I'm not focusing on the computer ones. I'm focusing on just anything that, you know, within the ministry that you might be able to shift money from one to the ones that are over . . . to help that we're talking about tonight.

Mr. Tweed: — I think maybe the illustrations that you might be seeking, Mr. Forbes, are things . . . We undertook a lean review of our child care subsidy processes in an effort to expedite payment to providers. So going through a process that involved providers, staff, and people who actually deliver the program, we were able to expedite our processing such that we no longer experience delays in the child care subsidy program.

Mr. Forbes: — [Inaudible] . . . savings in money?

Mr. Tweed: — Sorry, different question. Sorry.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Forbes, we had a lean project we did on the homeowner residential rehabilitation assistance program. Incomplete applications have been reduced by a 5 per cent and inspection costs reduced by \$150,000. Social assistance

application process, the application process telephone call time had been reduced by 15 per cent and new callback strategy has a savings of 12 per cent per file. Family and youth automated payment outcomes include an 82 per cent reduction in the number of FYAP [family and youth automated payment] forms. Valley View Centre food service delivery reduced food waste from 25 per cent to below 10 per cent and increased kitchen free space by 10 to 20 per cent. I have a list of about 15, so I'll continue.

The respite transfer, the program mapped out a more efficient process for dealing with respite payments and defined roles and responsibility. The result was a more efficient process with less paperwork and less physical movement of files.

Incident reporting to standardize the naming conventions of four policies regarding incident reporting to create clarity, and severity and urgency to provide an efficient prioritization of work.

Duplex printing. An estimated 8.7 per cent of ministry staff have changed their settings to date, resulting in a project saving of \$20,000 a year.

Express address. The intent of this client-centred initiative is to streamline address changes, saving client's time and money.

So I'm not sure if you want me to go through a number of them.

Mr. Forbes: — Just give me the sum total of how much, if there's a sum total there.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — I don't have that sum total here right now, but I can tell you that what we're trying to do is to make sure that the processes that we undertake will make . . . The staff that we have working in the ministry, their time is now concentrated on the front-line work that they were hired to do, making sure that we are dealing with our vulnerable individuals and not spending a lot more time on paper and inefficiencies and duplication of work.

The overall goal of the ministry, and I think of the member as well, is to make sure that the staff that we have in Social Services are spending their time and their energy with the individuals. The ministry is working hard. We've had a number of lean projects and the type of thing that maybe they won't put the actual cash in the pocket, but it means that people are spending time, the staff that we have are spending time with the clients. That's our goal.

Mr. Forbes: — Well I want to turn now to the bigger chunk of money, and that is the 30 million for SAID, the overrun of that. And I found it interesting, and there were questions of this in estimates back on April 22nd. And the former critic from Riversdale asked a lot of questions about this, trying to get a handle on when we looked at the budget document page 121 and the estimates for Social Services and what was estimated in 2012-2013, the minister at the time talked about, you had talked about an increase of \$21.2 million as being committed to income assistance programs. And this included benefit increases for the Saskatchewan assured income for disability or the SAID program, the seniors' income plan. And you listed it in there on page 330, I think it was.

And then there was some, quite a bit of discussion about it. And Mr. Wihlidal talked about — and this is on page 343 — that the 310 million funding base for this current year includes 12.8 million for benefit increases and went through more or less the same list. I think I have that right. But what happened in the meantime, we've seen the Public Accounts release their document. And it is very interesting because at the end of the day the estimates for 2012-13 for the income assistance and disability services allocations, the estimates was 575 million and by Public Accounts it came out to 575 million. So it's pretty much spot-on between the estimates and the public accounts.

There was a huge variance though in terms of, you know, the SAP [Saskatchewan assistance plan] program was estimated to be 158, was 187. But my point — and you can go through the whole list; I don't want to go through the whole list — I just found it very interesting reading because the ministry obviously clearly did a lot of work keeping on budget and did a very good job of that. But like I said, a huge variance, and there was some explanation in terms of at first how SAID, the enrolment didn't quite take off the way they had anticipated last year and then really took off. And so yet set aside 112, but actually 98 million was spent, but you had set aside 112 for this year in April.

So I'm wondering if you have any mid-year numbers of where SAP is, where SAID will be, where the transitional employment allowance because you did group them together as the core group. The three, because even the minister had just alluded to, you know, some people, well it seems many people actually come from SAP into SAID. There may be a few that come straight into SAID, I don't know. But do you have mid-year numbers for how many, how much is being spent on SAID as a total amount?

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Again, I'm going to ask Bob to answer that. What I think, Mr. Forbes, you probably may not know and I didn't know, I was surprised to learn the number of people who'd never been on SAP and they came forward onto SAID. And when we asked the question, they had been either living at home with their own family or with someone else that they knew and didn't want to be on SAP. They just, they really didn't want the stigma of it. They believed that there was a respect and dignity that they deserved. They have a disability but it doesn't mean that they wanted to be a burden on society.

So as the numbers kept increasing, I was asking the question, where did these individuals come from? And the question is always . . . the answer given to me has always been, these individuals are now okay to say that in Saskatchewan if you have a disability it's okay to come forward. The government respects you, and there's a dignity that comes with saying that I'm living in a province where my capabilities or my abilities are respected.

So I'm going to ask Bob if he'll given you the breakdown of the numbers, but I do appreciate the fact that you recognize that has changed the face of the province when it comes to disabilities. It's changed the face of Saskatchewan and Canada when it comes to how we treat people with disabilities, knowing that we have a whole community when people are working together. So thank you, Bob.

[20:00]

Mr. Wihlidal: — Okay. So yes, you were explaining it very much how we talked about it in the spring at estimates. So that the acceleration in the SAID program happened very late in the '12-13 fiscal year and had us misestimate the timing of the growth, or rather transfer, from the SAP program to the SAID program. And so there was quite a variance in last year's bottom line expenditures between SAP and SAID, although the bottom line, through good management or good luck, was quite close to . . .

For this fiscal year, perhaps it's best that I explain the SAID story first and then we'll come to the gross numbers of the three programs combined. As the minister explained earlier, what we're observing in the SAID program is a budget that was provided of \$112 million. What we're projecting right now is in the order of 160 that's made up of two things: first of all, a growth in caseload that wasn't anticipated in terms of 1,450 cases new to social assistance. These are cases that were not moving from SAP to SAID but rather new people from outside of social assistance programs or at least had not been with us for a year or more and have come to the SAID program for support.

The other component of this, the caseload increase is about 2,000 cases that moved faster than anticipated and therefore cost more because SAID is a costlier or rather an enhanced benefit as compared to SAID. So those 3,450 cases are what drive the \$30 million expenditure as described in the Supplementary Estimates book. The other part is a 17 or \$18 million shift in base.

Again, similar to the timing issue between SAP and SAID we saw last year, there was . . . We didn't get the timing right, and so about \$18 million of that is being spent in SAID that we anticipated on the budget would be spent in SAP. So it's a net draw, no impact on the bottom line, but the real impact and the overexpenditure is the \$30 million related to those 3,450 cases.

Mr. Forbes: — Can you tell me what is the caseload? Because you were saying in the spring that there was a caseload in social assistance I believe was . . . yes, here it is. The average combined caseload of the three programs was 26,558. And so what would it be now?

Mr. Wihlidal: — That was, when we look at that number, that is the combined SAP, SAID, and TEA [transitional employment allowance] households or caseloads. They were made up of 16,557 on SAP, 8,050 average cases on SAID, and 1,951 average cases on TEA, adding up to the 26,558. Today, and the numbers that are sort of driving the overestimation, or rather the expenditures I was just talking about, we're predicting at this time anyway 14,545 on SAP, 11,469 on SAID, 2,013 on TEA, for a total of 28,027. So there's a growth of about 1,500; 1,469 I think is the variance overall.

So there's some variance . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes. So there's some variance because of under participation in SAP, but the real driver here is those 3,400 cases on SAID, as I described earlier.

Mr. Forbes: — So of the 1,450, all of these though would be

in, and it's not . . . It'd be interesting to know, where did they come from? Can you tell me more about it? Are they all from Saskatchewan originally or are they people who are coming here? Parents with work? What more can you tell me about that?

Mr. Wihlidal: — Our overarching observation about them at this point is that they're young adults who were previously supported by family, either in the family home or outside the family home. Regardless they were supported outside of social assistance. Some might have been with social assistance but at least a year previously. So none of them were in social assistance in the past 12 months.

So we've done a bit of a sample of 97 SAID case files just to understand some of those dynamics and demographics of those individuals: 48 per cent supported by family, 12 access SAID for reasons related to health or injury. Only 8 per cent moved to Saskatchewan from another province, so that number was not very large at all. Seventeen per cent applied for a variety of other reasons.

And so there's some nuances. Very small ratios of 4 per cent related . . . recently completed a training program. Four per cent transitioned from care to this program. Four per cent had recently separated or divorced, and so therefore their income situation would have changed. And while they had perhaps been disabled all along, they were supported in a different income environment. And 3 per cent of the status Indian clients moved from reserve to access SAID. So that's a picture of 97 files.

Mr. Forbes: — Now do you have a sense of the 11,500 on SAID? It probably is pretty interesting in terms of the demographics or age, the sex, gender, type of disability. Are you starting to develop obviously that kind of profile?

Mr. Tweed: — Gord Tweed again, Mr. Forbes. So just sort of just basically just starting at the highest level. And I have information from the month of October, so it's a little . . . The numbers, Bob was giving you some averages so the numbers won't quite line up.

But just demographically in October, the caseload reached 11,476 cases. Eighty-eight per cent of those cases were single individuals, 8 per cent were parents, 4 per cent were couples without children. There are children present in some of the families. They make up about 11 per cent of the people in households that would be on SAID.

A couple of other facts that might be of interest to you are the age of the caseload. Is that interesting to you? All right. Under the age of 24 . . . So you have to be 18 to qualify for the program but, so between the ages of 18 and up to the age of 24, we would have about 11 per cent of the cases. From the ages of 25 to 34, about 16 per cent; 35 to 44, 17 per cent. And then you can see that the SAID caseload is generally an older caseload population: 45 to 54, 27 per cent; 55 to 64, 25 per cent.

Mr. Forbes: — Now what about gender: male, female?

Mr. Tweed: — And gender. Good question to which I do not have the answer. Don't have the answer here at the very least.

Mr. Forbes: — And it's not an important one. It's not something I need to know.

Mr. Tweed: — Yes? We can certainly retrieve that information. I just don't have it here tonight.

Mr. Forbes: — But now in terms of SAID, you have to have a fixed address. You have to be living . . . You have to have, when you apply, you have to have a place where you're at, right?

Mr. Tweed: — Yes. With all the basic income support programs, you need to have an address so that we can assess your circumstances.

Mr. Forbes: — Right. And if you're homeless, then you're just dealing with crisis services then, right?

Mr. Tweed: — It's not a condition of being SAID or SAID eligible for those who find themselves without means and without a permanent residence. There are obviously . . . And I know you're familiar with some of the community-based organizations that provide shelter to individuals. It does not have . . . It's not related to your SAID circumstance.

Mr. Forbes: — I just want to be clear on that because actually on Friday somebody asked about that. I thought . . . They had lost their SAID . . . We'd heard they lost their SAID benefits and they were homeless. And I don't think you could have SAID benefits and be homeless at the same time.

Mr. Tweed: — Yes, I'm not familiar with the circumstance obviously, but if . . .

Mr. Forbes: — It was hearsay and I thought . . . It sounds like there's something, a piece of information we're missing.

Mr. Tweed: — Yes, if a person has had the misfortune of losing their cheque or something like that, obviously we have methods to reproduce those benefits.

Mr. Forbes: — How many clients would be living independently or living in group homes?

Mr. Tweed: — Yes, good question. So in residential care in the month of October, so in residential care we would have had, of the 11,400 approximate cases or households, about 4,600 would have been in residential care arrangements. About 7,500, 7,600 would have been in independent living arrangements.

Mr. Forbes: — Good. Now what will be the implications for . . . Are you anticipating any other major changes — I mean it would have been hard to know that 1,400 would have come out of the woodwork, so to speak — but any other big changes for next year when you . . .

Mr. Tweed: — For next year?

Mr. Forbes: — Yes.

Mr. Tweed: — So in terms of a significant change, there's a plan benefit increase that will occur in June of 2014. So that will be a further enhancement to the living income benefit that

people on SAID receive. In terms of caseload level, we expect that the caseload will continue to grow, although at a much slower rate than it has now. Your reference to the individuals that had not previously been on social assistance, the preponderance of those individuals we feel have come forward already.

Mr. Forbes: — This is a big amount of money when you think \$30 million when you had planned for spending 112 million. That's about 25 per cent variance. And while there seems to be good reason for that and there were increases happening and, as it has been explained, the two causes of a group moving faster and a group that wasn't anticipated, and that would be about a third of the enrolment, 3,400 out of 11 . . . Yes.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Forbes. And yes, there is a very good reason. Thirty million dollars is a lot of money, but it's also giving money to people who have never ever had the feeling that they were part of society and the right to be able to actually live life to the fullest, that they can possibly do it. I don't consider this an expenditure. I consider it an investment in people in a province that has lots of good things going for it. And we hear . . . we talk about it every day. And I believe everybody has a right to be part of this, of a community, and I'm not ashamed or embarrassed to say that our government is willing to invest money in people that have a disability and people that can't get out and get a job like you and I can.

This is the first time that they've actually felt like they were respected and they have a dignity. So our Premier says it all the time and my colleagues say it: this isn't something to be embarrassed about or angry about. It's something that we should be proud of in our province that we now have a program where people actually feel like they are part of it. It's not an easy thing to come to my colleagues and say, I need extra money. But there wasn't anybody who said this is the wrong way to spend money.

[20:15]

Mr. Forbes: — As you know, and you've been in my position in opposition as well, and you did that job very well, you know. But our role in opposition is to hold . . . to ask these questions, and that's what we've been elected to do. And so it's not passing judgment; it's just asking questions. Because if we don't do it, you know, then people say, hmm, there's a lot of questions there.

And it's not as . . . You know, I've never, I don't think I've ever said anything against SAID. I think it's a good program. I think it's a solid program. But this is interesting where you have this kind of stuff happening, and it's important we put our emphasis on the right things. And it's very, very important, and so I appreciate that.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you.

Mr. Forbes: — But don't get me wrong, but I will ask the difficult questions. And I think that's what makes this province great, is we can have a good, full, frank discussion about these things. And if it can't be defended, then there's a problem.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — I agree. I don't think they're difficult

questions. I don't believe they're difficult questions at all, and I believe, Mr. Forbes, that you understand it. I know that. I know that this is something that you probably applaud secretly as well, that it's a good thing to do.

So we're on the same page as this, and we should all be proud that the goal is to make Saskatchewan the best place to live if you have a disability. And everybody that's working with me, and my colleagues, and I believe yourself know that.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Well with that, Mr. Chair, I look over my list, and I think I'm pretty much finished. And we've had a good discussion. I want to thank the officials for their answers, and it's been very fruitful looking at the books tonight. Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Forbes.

We have now the voting. So vote 36, Social Services, central management and services, subvote (SS01) in the amount of 3,300,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Income assistance and disability services, subvote (SS03) in the amount of 35,700,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Social Services, vote 36, 39,000,000. I will now ask a member move the following resolution:

Be it resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2014, the following sum for Social Services in the amount of 39,000,000.

Ms. Wilson. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Motion to present report to the Assembly. Committee members, you have before you a draft of the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Human Services. We require a member to move the following motion:

That the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Human Services be adopted and presented to the Assembly.

Mr. Moe. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Madam Minister, that's the end of our voting, if you have any closing comments.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to you and to all the committee members. Thank you to Mr. Forbes for his questions. Thank you to the ministry staff that work with us all the time and for their dedication. And I want to say the best,

happy Christmas season to all of our clients and the people of the province. And I thank everybody for all the work they're doing in this province for our people with disabilities.

The Chair: — Thank you, one and all, for being here. And I ask for a motion of adjournment.

Mr. Merriman: — I so move.

The Chair: — Mr. Merriman. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. This meeting stands adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 20:19.]