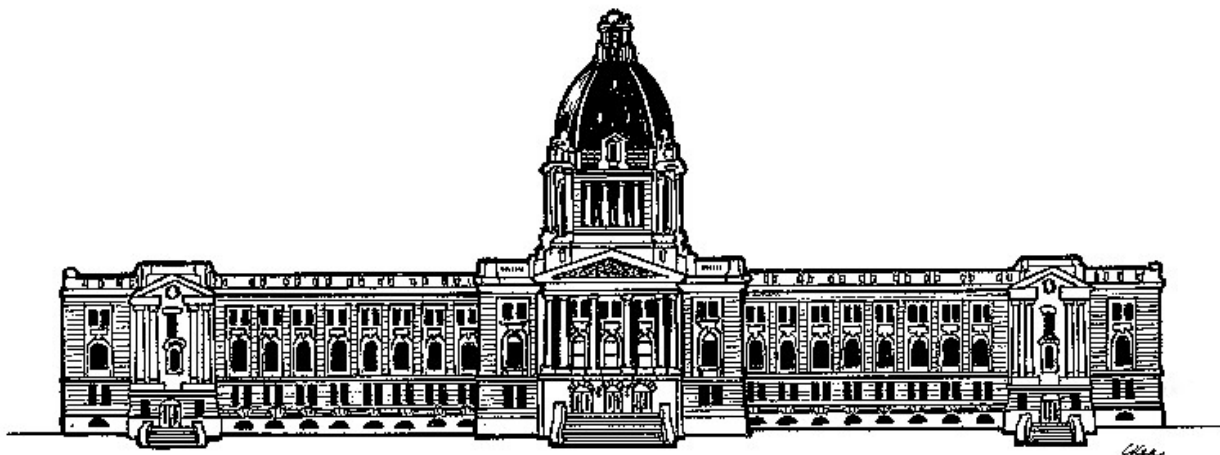




# **STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE**

**Hansard Verbatim Report**

**No. 31 — December 4, 2018**



**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

**Twenty-Eighth Legislature**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL  
AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE**

Mr. Fred Bradshaw, Chair  
Carrot River Valley

Mr. Buckley Belanger, Deputy Chair  
Athabasca

Mr. Ken Francis  
Kindersley

Mr. Hugh Nerlien  
Kelvington-Wadena

Mr. Eric Olauson  
Saskatoon University

Ms. Laura Ross  
Regina Rochdale

Mr. Corey Tochor  
Saskatoon Eastview

[The committee met at 15:58.]

**The Chair:** — Well good afternoon everybody, and I want to welcome all the thousands of people that are watching on television right now to Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice Committee.

We have myself, Fred Bradshaw, in the Chair. And substituting for Buckley Belanger we have Ms. Sarauer. We also have with us Ken Francis, Hugh Nerlien, Eric Olauson, Laura Ross, and Corey Tochor.

**General Revenue Fund  
Supplementary Estimates — No. 1  
Justice and Attorney General  
Vote 3**

**Subvote (JU03)**

**The Chair:** — This afternoon the committee will be considering the estimates of the Ministry of Justice and the Attorney General. We will now begin with vote 3, Justice and Attorney General, courts and civil justice, subvote (JU03). Minister Morgan, please introduce your officials and make your opening comments.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to attend supplementary estimates debate today to provide you with information regarding the additional funding provided to the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General for the 2018-19 fiscal year. I would be pleased to answer any questions following my brief remarks.

I'm joined by some of the ministry officials today. At this table is Glen Gardner, deputy minister of Justice and deputy attorney general; and Glennis Bihun, executive director of court services. Seated behind me are Mindy Gudmundson, who is the strategic portfolio and fiscal planning; as well as Scott Harron, who is the executive assistant to the deputy minister.

For the current fiscal year, the ministry required additional funding of \$897,000 to support its work in the justice system, and specifically the overall operation of the courts. These additional funds will support implementation of systems to support the courts and court security.

The ministry is implementing a solution that is aimed at replacing the existing manual processes and current stand-alone systems with an end-to-end solution for scheduling of judges, scheduling of court resources, automating court financials, and automating its case-tracking system and data collection. The solution will not only improve efficiencies in regard to scheduling but also provide clients with debit or credit card services in our Queen's Bench court offices.

With regard to court security, the Ministry of Justice recognizes the risk of violence in court facilities and takes the matter of court security very seriously. There are a number of ways that court security is provided in addition to court security personnel, including appropriate building design and features of the building such as video surveillance and creating secure areas.

In 2018-19, to improve security at the Victoria Avenue Court

House, a secure area is being created by the erection of a fence in its south parking lot. An alternate egress for jurors from a courtroom was built and work on improvements to the detention area is starting. These changes will improve the safety of the judiciary, court services staff, the accused, and the public.

I would now be pleased to answer any questions the committee may have on these additional costs for the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Well thank you, Minister, and I'd like to remind the officials that when you first speak, could you please state your name. Are there any questions? Ms. Sarauer.

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to thank the minister first of all for his opening comments and the officials for being here today. I'm hoping for a little bit more detail on the different areas you indicated that these funds are being implemented. Is it fair to say, I've broken out the implementation of these funds into two main areas: one being, broadly speaking, information technology; and the other being in-court security?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Yes, I think that would be a fair comment. Some of the things became necessary or apparent after the rebase that was done a year ago. There's additional staff and additional services that came over from Corrections and Policing. And we're processing additional fine revenue, and then the supports, the computer supports that we provide that are shared services. I don't know if you want to go ahead.

**Ms. Bihun:** — Sure. Glennis Bihun. So yes, they primarily fall into those two large buckets. When we look at IT [information technology] specifically, one of the areas that we really need and are making progress on is the IT that really supports not only the judicial scheduling but also the court resources scheduling in regards to the Court of Queen's Bench.

So there's really four systems that currently feed into all of the scheduling and tracking work that happens in those offices right now, and frankly they're manual. This is an opportunity to modernize those systems and allow them to integrate, to the extent that's appropriate, and also be able to provide a better service to the public by being able to provide debit/credit services at the end of the game. So we're bringing in the accounting and financial component as well.

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Okay. So just so that I understand, there's a judicial scheduling component to this. There's a debit/credit component to this for fine payment, for example. Is that correct?

**Ms. Bihun:** — So the debit/credit piece that will come is really for our Queen's Bench offices to be able to collect all of the fees that we would see applied at the local registrars' offices. And yes to your question about the judicial scheduling.

And then right now what happens with our court offices, if we think about the court resources that also need to go along with scheduling, each of our nine judicial centres is unconnected because it's manual. And so our judicial scheduling component is separate from each of those offices. From the court scheduling, we need to of course make sure that the room is available, that the clerks are available. And those are often moving targets if

something falls through or something new needs to get scheduled. So having that technology for them to be able to interconnect is really important.

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Absolutely. So when you're talking about judicial scheduling in particular, is that going to allow lawyers to be able to book rooms for trials? I understand that is done, I believe, or at least it was done manually. And there was always a bit of a difficulty when you were booking trials where you'd be in, you know, courtroom 1 booking a trial, but then someone else is in courtroom 2 booking a trial. And sometimes you'd book the same room on the same day, and it was a bit of a shemuzzle. So is this going to be addressing that issue as well, or is that already dealt with?

**Ms. Bihun:** — So the primary, the place that we're starting and the number one priority is to have judicial scheduling done electronically. The system will come with the capability to expand for other users, but our priorities will be judicial scheduling through the Chief Justice's office; then the court resource scheduling that our local registrars perform; then our ability to do the case tracking; and then our ability for financials, it'll have the capability. And we'll look at how we can build on those enhancements as the future unfolds.

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Thank you. Could you provide a breakdown of the costs and for what in this particular area?

**Ms. Bihun:** — It's been an unusual day for access to information as we try to move to more of a paperless system. So while I have this big book beside me — I simply brought it in case we need statistics because that was from the spring — I will give you a breakdown. I'll qualify it with, I don't have those printed details. I will give you general, sort of, overviews on that. They are from memory.

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Okay. Yes. This is a . . . [inaudible] . . . situation? Is that what's going on? That's fine if it is. Okay, yes. Fair enough.

**Ms. Bihun:** — Yes.

**Ms. Sarauer:** — It has been an unusual day in the city. That's very fair, and I completely understand. If that could be provided to the committee at a later date, that's completely understandable.

**Ms. Bihun:** — Yes. So I can talk at a high level for you.

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Sure.

**Ms. Bihun:** — So of the 897,000, with regard to the Queen's Bench scheduling system, that's a dollar amount of 289,000. That dollar amount is made up of the actual purchase of the software itself; that is about 170,000. The other costs associated with that amount are related to the project management, business analyst pieces that we need to really be able to drill in and do a good job on establishing business requirements. So we're investing in the planning of the project before we actually start doing the development of it. So that's a general breakdown on that one.

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Thank you.

**Ms. Bihun:** — You're welcome.

**Ms. Sarauer:** — I appreciate that. Let's move on to the court security piece. Could you provide a little bit more detail? You had mentioned that in particular there's been some upgrades that are in the works at the Victoria Avenue Court House, an egress and some updates to the detention area and a parking lot fence which I don't think is erected yet, last time I walked by there.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — The Victoria Avenue Court House has been a problem for the judiciary for a number of years. The concern that the judges express is the parking that they have is on the south side. It's not as well lit as it might be, and the area isn't regarded as secure. They're working it. So I've been contacted by judges of both levels of courts expressing the concern on that and then wanting to have a better method for prisoner drop. And I don't think they're doing a formal sally port, are they?

**Ms. Bihun:** — No, they're not.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — No. But anyway, a more secure area on assay. And that's largely as a result of overdue requests from the judiciary, and we certainly support wanting to meet their needs on it. So I don't know, Glennis, if you have . . .

**Ms. Bihun:** — Yes, I would add to that. We know as well that there's been a high profile on the needs for security, and not only for the judiciary or the users of the court, certainly also for jurors. I can provide you a high-level breakdown of the costs that might go along with that as well. So the overall project is intended to be done by the end of the fiscal year, and the estimated pressure in regards to that project, in addition to such things as the jury egress, is about 185,000.

I'd highlight a couple other things in regards to security changes that we're making in regards to tenant improvements as well. And so the projects that we want to focus on would be a new prisoner box, for example, in Fort Qu'Appelle that's been created. We've also done work on a jury box in Saskatoon.

So all of those things, when we contemplate the safety and security of the various users of and those involved in the system, it's important that we find ways to move some of those projects forward. And so this is an important priority that we'll be finishing off at Victoria Avenue Court House this year.

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Thank you. One of the concerns we heard — and I did not know this was a part of the estimates, so I haven't looked at it in a while — but when the guards were let go and the deputy sheriffs were hired, was that the original guards were armed and the deputy sheriffs were unarmed. Is there any work being done to bring those individuals up to a level so that they could be armed if they need to be?

**Ms. Bihun:** — So the current arrangements that exist are that the deputy sheriffs — what I'll refer to as court security deputy sheriffs — are armed resources, and they work at perimeter screening locations with unarmed commissionaires. And so there are both armed and unarmed resources always present at the perimeter screening.

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Have the staffing levels for that remained the same as they were prior to the change?

**Ms. Bihun:** — If we're speaking about the security that's present at the courthouses, then that's us. So the staffing levels within court security have undergone some changes. We worked very closely with our colleagues in Corrections and Policing and increased resources as part of a transfer of court services, armed deputy sheriffs assuming the transport of prisoners on those main corridors in the province.

A key area however that we're experiencing a pressure on this fiscal year is in regards to ensuring that we have the right number of court security resources to fulfill our commitment in regards to providing court security at the courthouses. And so within the court security comments that the minister made, those are both tenant improvements or design or facility changes, and they're also additional dollars related to having the deputy sheriffs available to provide all of the security as it's assessed to be appropriate.

[16:15]

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Sorry, just to clarify, when you said you were having some challenges, is that a retention issue or what sort of challenges are you being faced with?

**Ms. Bihun:** — Our courthouses are often, particularly in the Court of Queen's Bench, their matters are often scheduled for longer stretches during the day. So it's not unusual anymore for court to be starting right at 8:30 and it's not unusual to have more than one trial proceeding at the same time. So the types of things that we need to assess to ensure that the appropriate security is provided in the courthouse are different than what we saw even two or three years ago.

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Minister Morgan, you just reminded me of a question that I asked in supplemental estimates yesterday to your colleagues from Corrections, who punted it over to Justice. So I'll take this opportunity to ask you about it today.

They had mentioned again that there's been a challenge in retention of prosecutors in the Regina office, which I know is something that we spoke about in supplemental estimates last year, and Corrections mentioned it as a challenge in Regina still. So could you provide some further details about that?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I don't know whether to say necessarily retention, but we keep appointing them to the bench and they sort of come ready trained. So every time we do that and then you move somebody around, it creates either a domino effect or a hole somewhere. So most recently Brian Hendrickson from Moose Jaw, who'd been there 30-some years, was appointed, which will be part of the supplementary estimates. But that's the type of thing that it's caused the problem there.

So we've increased the number of articling students and are actively seeking to try and make sure that we don't have gaps or holes that are there. So far as I know we don't have scheduling issues where things can't go ahead because of it, but we certainly have got gaps there. But I think we're dealing with it, and I think we're catching up.

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Thank you for that. One thing I thought I would see in the supplemental estimates but haven't, are any further allocation of funds to the coroner's office after the

recommendations that were made by the, well the now Chief Coroner. There was, I believe, 44 recommendations, including six new positions, more training, and review boards to determine when a coroner's inquest should be held. Funding isn't available here.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — They're not in these estimates. We've met with the Chief Coroner in the last few days to determine what his plan is for staffing. As you're aware, we accepted all of his recommendations, so there'll be certain to be a cost in out years and then as part of the things they'd have to deal with this year. And some of it's hardware and spacing issues, and the other one is going to be some staffing issues as he goes forward. So part of it will fall into this fiscal year and part of it will be into next.

What we urged him to do is go forward as expeditiously as he could, not to wait. So the challenge for the ministry officials will be to see how much they have to absorb in this year and how much will fall into next year's. But I met with the chief in the last day or two and he was anxiously, anxiously going ahead.

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Okay. So based on what you're saying, it's fair to assume that there will be some further additional allocation of funding to the coroner's office in the next budget?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Yes. Yes, I think that's reasonable. I can't tell you how much, you know, will happen within this budget year and how much we absorb or whether we . . . But yes, certainly in the out year.

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Thank you. I have no further questions, but I do want to take this opportunity to thank the committee members for being here and yourself, Mr. Chair, as well as committee staff, the minister for answering my questions, as well as the officials for braving the power outage and coming to this well-lit building this afternoon, Justice staff for being here as well, and Hansard. Thank you for your work.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to thank you and the officials that are working here, Hansard and the building people and the officials that are with me today as well as their staff back at the ministry who do superb work all year round. So I echo the comments of my colleague and want to thank them for being out today on a powerless day.

**The Chair:** — Well thank you, Minister. And seeing no more questions, the courts and civil justice, subvote (JU03) in the amount of 897,000, 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, 2019, the following sums for Justice and Attorney General in the amount of 897,000.

Mr. Francis has moved. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried.

Committee members, you have before you a draft of the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice. We require a member to move the following motion:

That the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice be adopted and presented to the Assembly.

Mr. Nerlien has moved. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Well thank you, committee members and Minister Morgan. And thank you, Ms. Sarauer, for being here.

Seeing that we have no further business this afternoon, I will ask a member to move a motion of adjournment. Mr. Olauson has moved a motion to adjourn. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. This committee stands adjourned to the call of the Chair.

[The committee adjourned at 16:23.]