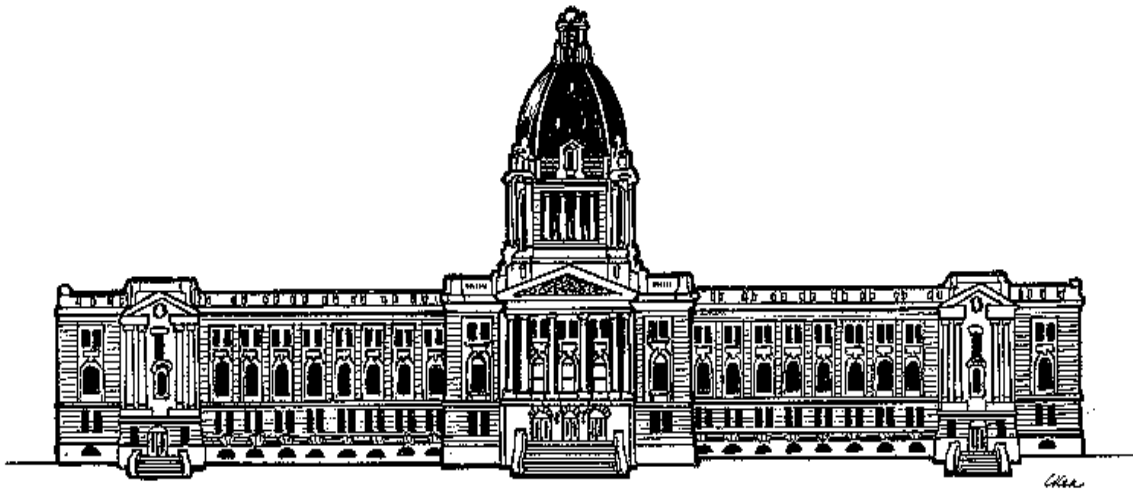




STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Hansard Verbatim Report

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Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
2004**

Ms. Judy Junor, Chair
Saskatoon Eastview

Mr. Ken Cheveldayoff
Saskatoon Silver Springs

Ms. Brenda Bakken
Weyburn-Big Muddy

Mr. Lon Borgerson
Saskatchewan Rivers

Hon. Joanne Crofford
Regina Rosemont

Mr. Glenn Hagel
Moose Jaw North

Mr. Don Morgan
Saskatoon Southeast

The committee met at 15:00.

The Chair: — Okay. Good afternoon. I'm Judy Junor, the Chair of the Human Services committee. First order of business today is a motion authorizing the broadcast of committee proceedings, if someone will move that motion.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Madam Chair, I move:

That pursuant to rule 119(2) the committee authorize the broadcast of its public proceedings.

The Chair: — It's been moved by the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs:

That pursuant to rule 119(2) the committee authorize the broadcast of its public proceedings.

Any discussion? Seeing none, all in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That motion is carried.

I want to welcome everyone, the viewing public today to the proceedings of the Standing Committee on Human Services. This is in fact the first broadcast of the Standing Committee on Human Services, which is the product of a series of very significant reforms of the Assembly.

The reforms were put into place at the beginning of this Legislative session. And by way of background, the reforms were worked out by an all-party committee over the course of the last four years. The changes are meant to strengthen the role of the members and provide increased public input into the legislative process. They are intended to help make the operations of the Legislative Assembly more open, accountable, and responsive to our citizens.

The biggest change to the rules and procedures of the Assembly is the result of the creation of the policy field committees. This committee is one of the new policy field committees. Policy field committees are multi-functional and designed to monitor four broad sectors of government activity, as well as the various Crown Corporations. The rules permit the policy field committees to review annual reports, legislation after first or second reading by the House, budgetary estimates, regulations and bylaws, and to conduct inquiries. The committee may also conduct hearings in relation to inquiries and the review of legislation regulations and bylaws.

To help achieve the goal of making the Assembly more open, the proceedings of the policy field committee are broadcast on television and on the Internet. Information on the business before the committee and upcoming meetings can be found on the Assembly website at www.legassembly.sk.ca. It is the hope of this committee that you will find its proceedings of interest and will tune in often.

And before we begin our business, I'd like to introduce the members of the committee and we'll start with the Deputy Chair.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Ken Cheveldayoff, the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs and Deputy Chair of the committee.

Ms. Bakken: — Brenda Bakken, MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for Weyburn-Big Muddy.

Mr. Dearborn: — Jason Dearborn, member for Kindersley.

Mr. McMorris: — Don McMorris, MLA for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. Morgan: — Don Morgan, MLA for Saskatoon Southeast.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Joanne Crofford, MLA, Regina Rosemont.

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Joan Beatty, member from Cumberland constituency.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Peter Prebble, MLA, Saskatoon Greystone.

Mr. Borgerson: — Lon Borgerson, MLA for Saskatchewan Rivers.

Mr. Hagel: — I'm Glenn Hagel, MLA for Moose Jaw North.

The Chair: — And as I said, I was Judy Junor, Chair of the committee. I'm from Saskatoon Eastview.

We'll now have to . . . we'll entertain a motion that the meeting hours of the committee during session should reflect the Assembly's recess and adjournment times, and I'll entertain a motion for that. Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — Madam Chair, it would be my view that the rules do put in place that the norm is that when we're meeting at times when the House is in session that the standing orders for adjournment are the same as the House.

And in order to achieve that formally I'd like to confirm that with the motion:

That in accordance with rules 110 and 3(4) of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, when this committee convenes during the hours specified by rule 3(1) for the daily meeting of the Assembly during the sessional period, it shall follow the Assembly's recess and adjournment times unless otherwise ordered.

The Chair: — Discussion? Seeing none, the question then. All in favour of the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — The motion is carried.

The business before the committee today are the estimates of the . . . for Community Resources and Employment. I recognize the minister and invite her to introduce her officials and if she wishes to make an opening statement.

**General Revenue Fund
Community Resources and Employment
Vote 36**

Subvote (RE01)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Would you like me to introduce the officials before that or after?

The Chair: — You can introduce them now.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Go ahead now. Sitting to my right is Bonnie Durnford, the deputy minister of the department. And in the row behind me — maybe if they just give a little wave as they're introduced — Shelley Hoover, assistant deputy minister; Darrell Jones, assistant deputy minister; Don Allen, executive director, finance and property management; Larry Chaykowski, executive director, housing program operations; Marilyn Headland, executive director, child and family services; Phil Walsh, executive director, employment and income assistance division; Wayne Phaneuf, senior consultant of vocational services, community living division. And with that I'll just proceed into my statement.

I wanted to just give you an overview first of all because it helps set the context for the discussions that we'll have around the department and its work.

As you know, government has a four-year plan for the province. And within this department, we too have a four-year plan that focuses on our goals and vision for the province. It guides us in our efforts on helping individuals and families address the issues that affect their ability to fully participate in their communities. And our goals are goals of economic independence and self-reliance, as well as inclusion in families and communities.

The budget focuses on six themes for this coming year: housing, building independence, child care, strong families, disability supports, and service delivery.

The first theme, housing — the new housing policy framework integrates housing into the broader social policy and will help us better address the current and future housing needs of Saskatchewan people.

If I could characterize the biggest change that's happened in the department over the past several years, I think there's two things that I would mention. One is that it used to be very focused only on people on social assistance. It's now focused on a broad range of low-income people, whether they're on assistance or whether they're — shall we say? — working their way up the income chain.

The second difference is that the department used to be largely confined to social service and child protection and those kinds of matters. And now it has a much broader mandate with the restructuring that took place that added career and employment services and housing to the portfolio in the belief that all of those services are necessary if people are going to really reach independence. And so the department looks quite different today than it did several years ago.

In addressing the current and future housing needs of Saskatchewan people, we're going to assist more low- and modest-income households to obtain affordable and quality rental housing and will promote independence and self-sufficiency. The policy positions the province to be able to continue to respond to the growing needs through a more integrated approach into the future, while sustaining the valuable asset of public housing that we've developed over the last 30 years. And I might just say, the change is necessitated by the slow but relentless withdrawal of the federal government from support for social housing.

Theme two is building independence. The best way to reduce poverty is through employment. And the Building Independence programs include, I guess, a basket of programs. There's a Saskatchewan employment supplement, the family health benefit, the Saskatchewan Child Benefit, the Canada-Saskatchewan Career and Employment Services. So there's a whole basket of supports now that make it different than in the past when it was a single kind of income support program.

The programs reduce the depth of child poverty and help to offset the child-related costs of working, ensuring that parents do not lose important income and health benefits for children. And with the help of the Building Independence program, low-income families are economically better off as a result of working.

Since the introduction of Building Independence, over 6,800 families which include almost 15,000 children no longer rely on social assistance. This year the Building Independence programs are being enhanced to increase their effectiveness in encouraging labour force participation.

Theme three is child care. In 2004-05 the second year of Child Care Saskatchewan initiative, 200 new licensed child care spaces will be developed, which will bring the total number of licensed spaces in the province to over 8,100. Over four years, Child Care Saskatchewan will create 1,200 new spaces which is the largest expansion in child care in the history of the province. The first 500 new spaces were developed last year in '03-04, and together now the departments of DCRE (Department of Community Resources and Employment) — I guess people don't mind if I use an abbreviation — Community Resources and Employment, and Learning are currently developing an early learning and child care strategy for the province, which we're going out on consultations in the next two months to complete that.

Theme four is strong families. Strong families I think everyone agrees are the foundation for strong communities and a healthy province. So over the past year we've been strengthening quality care for children and youth in care of the minister, promoting community involvement in child welfare, building parenting capacity and family self-sufficiency, increasing the capacity of families in communities to safely care for children and youth, and improving performance through accountability measures, preparing youth for independence, and working with Métis people and First Nations Indian and child family service agencies.

As a result the child welfare caseloads are changing. For

example the child protection caseloads are down, and the number of children in care has stabilized.

Theme five disability supports — and we have what is referred to as a cognitive disability strategy, where we bring all of the various cognitive disabilities under one umbrella, including persons with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, autism, and other intellectual and developmental disabilities. The primary target population is individuals between the ages of 6 to 24. However there is some variation with some of the specific initiatives.

Beginning in October 2004, government is committing over \$2 million annually in new funding towards the provincial strategy and will be working with individuals, families, professionals, and other key stakeholders in communities to increase their capacity to support individuals with cognitive disabilities.

And in regards to the responding through action to disabilities, we are committed to the concept of full citizenship for people with disabilities. The 2004-05 budget will further support initiatives consistent with the recommendations identified by the Saskatchewan Council on Disability Issues disability action plan. The government is responding to the council's action plan by funding over 4.3 million in this year's budget to support the inclusion of people with disabilities in the social and economic life of the province. This budget makes key investments in the areas of housing, supporting people with cognitive disabilities and their families, and supporting inclusion in families in communities, and accessibility, particularly access to employment. And I have met some very happy people when I've attended some of the places where this is being done, who have got work and are very proud of their independence.

Theme six, service delivery. The delivery system itself will also have to change in order to create an environment that enables all of the directions set out in the plan. For 2004-05, our priorities are to strengthen employment support services for those seeking to improve their job situation and to improve the quality of service delivery.

For this year we are going to pay particular attention to closing the gap between policy and practice in child welfare and in the social assistance program, and will continue to pay attention to defining new, simplified work processes, to supporting our staff, and doing what provides the best outcome for clients.

And I just thought it might be helpful to give that bit of an overview so you get a sense of all the different kinds of work the department does and what our priorities are for the coming year.

And with that, Madam Chair, we're ready to take questions.

The Chair: — Before we do that, the business before the committee is the Community Resources and Employment vote 36, but I just wanted to alert the committee that we've received an order from the Assembly dated April 27, 2004 to consider and report back on the estimates for the following departments and agencies: vote 36 is Community Resources and Employment; vote 73 is Corrections and Public Safety; vote 27 is Culture, Youth and Recreation; vote 3 is Justice; and vote 170 is Education Infrastructure Financing Corporation. Today we'll be considering the estimates for Community Resources

and Employment.

So I now open the floor to questions. Mr. McMorris.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Madam Chair. And to the minister and her officials, thank you very much for being here. We have roughly about an hour or two to spend together.

I have a number of questions regarding — I guess they have generated from a constituent of mine — but regarding community living or community . . . When I was just looking at the budget, community inclusion is the new term which is . . . when I look at . . . when I was listening to the minister's remarks, were kind of under theme number five, with dealing with disabilities, or as one person mentioned to me and it did kind of stick in my head, people with differing abilities as opposed to disabilities.

And my questioning is around care homes and the criteria and the process that the department goes through to select or license spaces in homes, in whatever community, whatever city it might be. What is the process that is gone through to okay, check out, and license these spaces?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Okay, now that is fairly specific, and I think it would be most helpful if I get Shelley to respond directly to that because obviously I'm not at the level of actually doing approvals for homes. Is it best that Shelley do it or do you want to do that, Bonnie?

Ms. Durnford: — I'll make a few comments perhaps and then I could turn it over to one of my colleagues. There's two pieces of legislation that we use to license homes. The first of them is The Residential Services Act, which is the licensing legislation for homes I think of about eight spaces or more, but I'll . . . we can confirm that for you.

The other piece of legislation that we use to license, these would be more in the family home style, would be the private service home legislation.

Those two pieces of legislation deal with standards relative to the numbers of people that can reside in the home. They would also deal with standards relative to the physical space and the requirements around safety and fire codes and numbers of things like that.

Mr. McMorris: — So there's no issues as far as where the home is located, whether it's rural, urban. Are urban communities preferred, large urban, over small towns? There's nothing like that at all. It would probably wouldn't be specified in the legislation but I guess I'm asking the department as they go through the process of licensing, is that ever taken into consideration?

Mr. Phaneuf: — When we look at licensing, typically there isn't a decision made whether it's an urban or rural split. Typically it's looked at whether there are employment opportunities, is there day programs requirements by the individuals, and whether there would be close proximity for those services as well. So it's not a question of whether it's urban or rural for people who maybe require less of a structured day program. Certainly there are a number of rural homes that

are licensed.

Mr. McMorris: — This may be . . . You may not be able to answer this question right now, but how many licensed spaces would there be then in the province? And further to that, what would the percentage of occupancy of those licensed spaces be? Those are very specific questions, and I realize you may not have that information in front of you.

But I was just made aware by a person that runs a care home that has two clients, she has been licensed for three and has been waiting for years for a third client. She also realizes that there are some vacancies as talking to different people that run care homes, and also realizes just recently that a number of new spaces were licensed. Would that be true?

And I guess my first question was, what percentage is being used and would there be a need to license a whole bunch of new spaces?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Maybe I'll just answer that because we have had a bit of discussion about this before; this matter has come up before.

And I think from a policy point of view, we don't have a policy that limits whether or not another home can open based on whether the other ones are all full. So if someone meets the criteria, they can open — and, you know, is approved — they can open a home. So you could well have a situation where there is somebody who has got a vacancy and another home still opens because we haven't capped people's ability to open homes.

I'm, you know, interested in your views on that. But to date, we haven't had any such policy.

Mr. McMorris: — So for the most part then, the people would come to the department and say that they are willing to take on clients. It wouldn't be the department going out and looking for more care home spaces.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I am just noting that as well, clients can choose where they live, that can be initiated by the client themselves. But as to the question of . . . I don't imagine we would actively seek residences unless there is a high-need area that . . . where no one is supplying the need. I'm sure it wouldn't occur in an area where there was already an established service.

Mr. McMorris: — I guess the person I am dealing with in my constituency has a care home, and as I mentioned has been approved for three spaces. She has two clients there right now and has been waiting for literally years for a third client. And talking to her just recently, she had received a phone call that there is another client available to go out there. She didn't happen to be home. That client was placed and then was told that it could be years again before there came another opportunity.

This person is in a small town about 20 miles from Moose Jaw — so not far. She has two clients that she runs in to Moose Jaw every day. She is finding it very tough to meet her financial requirements with only two, and has been approved for three,

set the home up for three. But seems . . . it seems almost impossible for her. She's been given many excuses, and one of them being that clients wouldn't want to live in a small town.

Now I find that very hard to believe, knowing that the community that she comes from and the acceptance of that community of those clients, and you know the . . . growing up in a small town, the community spirit that those clients would receive. And I have no doubt that that's you know the case.

And so that's the situation that I've been dealt with, and I'm trying to deal with, and really seem to have found no conclusion. I mean it just seems like she's licensed for three, there's only going to be two clients there, and there doesn't seem to be any movement at all. And she's finding it that what's probably going to have to happen is she may have to give up those two clients and move away. So you'll be looking at, then, placing two more clients out of a community that they've . . . not only have they grown attached to, but the community's grown attached to those two clients.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I guess there's a couple of things I'd say on that is, one, we have over the years — and I think since 1970, what is it, '72? — moved away from having locations be the focus of care and have the actual person be the centre of care. So there could be many factors, depending on whether a person has actually expressed a willingness to live in that environment. The fact that any institution exists does not suggest that a person has to live in it because they have personal choice and their families have personal choice as well.

I think in this particular instance I can commit to looking a little closer whether there's anyway to be helpful in identifying that person who might want to have that environment. But you know different factors come in — the person's preference, their family's proximity to family, the level of care they require. But very much there has been a shift from when the whole debate came up over individualized funding with people — it happened quite a bit with people who are quadriplegic, paraplegic — they didn't want to be required to live in institutions any more. They wanted their funding to be attached to them, not to the institution. And so people started to have a lot more personal freedom about making those choices.

And it's difficult for the people with the institutions because you can end up with a, you know, an institution that's kind of stranded in terms of whether enough people choose that as a place to live. But it has been a shifting model of care. And all I can say again, Don, is I can look into that particular one and see if there's anything we can do to be more active in offering that as a location to people.

The Chair: — Just one second before you continue on.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes.

The Chair: — In the interest of this new process, the television cameras are having difficulty identifying the speakers, so if an official comes to the mike, would you tell . . . would you say who you are for the benefit of the *Hansard* and the cameras.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Oh, okay. Who is that guy?

The Chair: — This is a different process than in the House for estimates, where now officials will be speaking, so we will need to see . . . have a process of . . . so *Hansard* can keep up and the cameras can put your names across the bottom. So if you'd just tell us who you are, please.

Mr. Phaneuf: — Wayne Phaneuf, senior consultant, community living division.

The Chair: — Thank you. Proceed, Mr. McMorris.

Mr. McMorris: — Thanks. And thank you, Madam Minister, for, you know, looking into it and pursuing this because it's certainly a . . . it seems, you know, maybe unfair — I don't know — until you look into it, and I'd be very interested in hearing the results.

I would agree with you that, you know, the funding should follow the person and not be institution-based. That certainly makes a lot of sense to me.

But some of the people — and whoever makes those decisions — I guess it would be the client himself that determines where they want to go . . .

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Ultimately yes, and their family.

Mr. McMorris: — . . . do or don't want to go, I would hope that there is no bias shown between small town Saskatchewan and being centred in a major centre where perhaps the social worker or anybody else who would be dealing with that client; I certainly would hope that there is no bias shown in that way. Because although it may be convenient to have more in the major centres, I think I would certainly be able to debate long and hard the qualities and benefits of living in small town Saskatchewan.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — And we will get you those numbers you asked for which will show the breakdown. But I know that when I've been to community living receptions and whatnot, that there are homes all around the whole province that are actively used.

Mr. McMorris: — Good. Thanks.

The Chair: — Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — Okay, Madam Chair, I'm just following up on Don's line of question.

I was just reflecting and I think in some ways in your last comment, Don, you went to the point that I was wanting just to have clarified. I think what I'm hearing you say is that it is accurate that the client will at the end of the day be the person who will make the choice. And it has, I think it has been for some time, policy of the department to take into significant consideration the preference of the family which may involve factors like how close to home you are or what their biases may be about the most preferred lifestyle, that sort of thing. Could you just clarify, because I think you said very clearly here, if all is said and done and there's not agreement, it's the client's decision that will be the deciding factor.

Could you just tell me to what extent the family, the family's preference enters into the placement, the degree to which it's recommended or encouraged? How does that enter into the process for a client who's moving from one location to another to ultimately engage in making that choice?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Again I'm going to ask one of the officials here to answer that because I think that falls within the range of how you assess whether a person has the capacity to make their own decisions, and I'm not sure how that's done.

Ms. Hoover: — Hello. I'm Shelley Hoover, assistant deputy minister responsible for policy. The families are very much involved in the process of planning with individuals and, as the minister indicated, very much dependent upon their capacity. The level of involvement varies of the individual, but the families are often actively involved and at all stages and phases as much as is able.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — If it came right down to it and a client and their family disagreed, Shelley, how would you determine then what to do?

Ms. Hoover: — Well ultimately the individual, the individual client's wishes are respected. And it's their . . . This is about their future and their needs. And that's kept front and centre.

Mr. Hagel: — I don't want to take too long. Just, is it the case that every one of the community living division clients will have an individual program plan and that . . . is family just routinely included in inputting into that so there's a history about decision making and goals and personal objectives that the individual may have?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — That's very much the case when there are family members, yes.

Mr. Hagel: — Thanks, Madam Chair. Thanks, Don.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Madam Minister, and your officials. I appreciate you being here today. I have . . . First of all I'd like to ask the minister a very specific question about Elmwood Lodge in Saskatoon.

We have been contacted by a family whose daughter is presently residing there, and until this year was receiving . . . they were receiving funding from the Department of Social Services for five days a week — four hours for five days a week — for therapy run by the Deafblind and Rubella Society. And they have been notified that effective May 1, 2004, the funding will be discontinued. I would like to ask the minister why.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'm just checking on that particular . . . what you're concerned about — I just want to be clear what the question is — what you're concerned about is an individual person receiving less support for specific services than they . . .

Ms. Bakken: — . . . receiving zero support from Social Services, zero funding . . .

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — . . . than they had received before. They had received it before, but then it was discontinued.

Ms. Bakken: — . . . at Elmwood Lodge in Saskatoon, currently receiving funding for 20 hours a week, and now the program is being discontinued. Or the funding is being discontinued by Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Again, Wayne Phaneuf will answer that particular . . .

Mr. Phaneuf: — Certainly. There may be . . . And without knowing all of the particular situations, or ins and outs of that situation, there may be indeed that one agency will not be providing that service, but it is not to say that services will not be provided to that individual. There are other players within Saskatoon that are being approached and are willing to look at providing services to the individual.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Maybe I could ask for a little more clarity on this question. Now, is the question that the individual is being denied direct funding from the department, or the place in which they reside has said they can no longer afford to offer the service; which is it?

Ms. Bakken: — The understanding . . . We have a letter written by the family indicating that word has been received that the current therapy program run by the Deafblind and Rubella Society held at Elmwood five days a week is being cancelled by the sponsor, Social Services, effective May 1, 2004.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well I'm not familiar with this, and I'm not sure if anybody here has the details. So we're going to have to take notice on that and get back to you with the answer, but we'll do that right away.

Ms. Bakken: — Okay. And just on that, because of . . . in light of this fact, and there are some other issues on similar — not the same program but other programs which I do not have the details with me today — which I will question the minister on in future, at future opportunity.

I did ask the question in the Legislative Assembly, receiving the answer on April 14. And the question to the Minister of Community Resources and Employment was: for fiscal year 2004-2005, how many third party grants will be reduced by this department, and which grants will be so affected? Further, I asked a question: which ones will be eliminated?

The answer came back that there will be no third party grants reduced by the department's 2004-2005 budget and that no organizations would be affected either for reduction of dollars or for elimination. And so this directly flies in the face of that answer, and I would like an explanation of that.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — No, I would disagree with you that it flies in the face of it. And the reason I would disagree is because an individual's plan might change at any time not related at all to reduction of availability of the whole package of services for people, but due to that individual situation.

Now I don't know if that's the case in the situation you're talking about, but that could well happen. It happens in home care all the time that people might sign up for a certain kind of service; then their situation changes; then they get a different level of service. So, I mean, I think generally speaking that

could happen.

Whether it should have happened in this instance is a different question. But certainly it could happen that someone's treatment plan would change or that their service plan would change because circumstances have changed in some way — either personal circumstances, economic circumstances, whatever, health circumstances.

But we'll check into this and see what the situation is. We work with thousands and thousands of individuals, so it's pretty hard to have each situation top of mind. But we will check into it. But it is conceivable that a person's plan could change.

Ms. Bakken: — Madam Minister, I appreciate that answer. But I do contend that it does fly in the face of this answer because if we're going to put forward questions in written question form and be informed that there are no reductions in funding to third party . . . This was not, is there a reduction in funding overall? This was saying, is there any reduction to third party groups? And if so what are they, and how will they be affected? And obviously the funding according to this letter has been eliminated for this program at this particular location in Saskatoon.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — But there could be some confusion whether the organization that they're getting services from is under the Department of Community Resources and Employment. Because there are NGOs (non-governmental organization) funded under three different departments essentially, well four even. Justice funds some. Health funds some. Learning funds some. So it depends whether their focus . . . If their focus is more a health organization, they may well be funded under Department of Health. Did they say specifically their funding came from us?

Ms. Bakken: — They did indicate that, but we'll look forward to your answer to this and then we'll . . .

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Did they say what their name was?

Ms. Bakken: — Yes, we have the name.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Of the organization? Just so we can be . . .

Ms. Bakken: — The name of the organization is Deafblind and Rubella Society, and the facility is Elmwood Lodge in Saskatoon. And, Madam Minister, I'd be happy to provide you with the actual name of the person. I don't believe it's appropriate to indicate that publicly, but we would be happy to give you that name so we could have this looked into.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — And I have had confirmation here that we do fund them, and their funding was not cut. But the individual situation we can still check into.

Ms. Bakken: — Actually, Madam Minister, there was a letter that did come addressed to you from this family, so we'd appreciate your answer to that.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes, it's probably been referred for an answer.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you. Should I continue? I'll continue if . . .

The Chair: — Sure, go ahead.

Ms. Bakken: — Okay, thank you. I'd like to now ask you about another program that has great concern for myself personally because it's about my own constituency of Weyburn-Big Muddy, and it's the whole program that is, takes place at the Family Place in Weyburn. And there's quite a few different components of that program.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes, I've been out there several times.

Ms. Bakken: — Yes. It's a great asset to our community and certainly could be a model for programming across the province.

And I did speak with some of the partners that are involved in it this morning and there is great concern about the lack of funding and how they're going to continue on with their various programs. And the one of major concern, of course, is the family support workers' program which was cancelled last year. They are no longer administrating that and it is now my understanding, being administrated directly under Social Services in Weyburn — or I should say Community Resources and Employment. Pardon me.

And I would just like to ask you, Madam Minister, are the same, are the families that were receiving it when it was administrated under Family Place still receiving those services; and if so, who's providing them?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I remember at the time this happened that I knew all the details, but I'm just going to check on them now to make sure that I know what all the details are here.

If I remember correctly — I'm going a little bit from memory here — but this was an issue regarding whether there was agreement about the level of funding.

Ms. Durnford: — As I recollect the discussion with regard to this issue, there was a discontinuation of services between the agency, Family Place, and the department.

In that context, the families that were providing services . . . or that were being provided services by the program out of Family Place did continue to receive services as they required. And we continue to provide services to ensure that the families are getting the appropriate services as they would need.

The families that would participate in the program would be ones that would be considered to have potential child protection concerns in them and it would be our responsibility to provide for them.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Madam Minister. My question specifically is: are the families that were receiving the services at that time still receiving them? And who actually, not just Social Services in a broad context, but who actually is providing them and under whose direction?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes, that there was a process put in

place to ensure that services would be available after June 30, 2003. And the department developed a service contracting system, with individual service providers and directly through the department, to provide services to those families who required in-home support. So that would be my understanding, that people continue to get services.

Ms. Bakken: — And is the level of support being given to these families the same as it was when it was administrated under Family Place?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Again the support is based on the assessment of the families' needs. So again I would have to assume that those assessments are done and that the families are receiving the needed support, according to that assessment.

Ms. Bakken: — Madam Minister, has there been any follow-up to actually see this? I know I see that this is happening. At the time that the change took place, there was great concern not only by the administrative staff at Family Place, but certainly amongst the workers that had been providing the support.

A lot of this support that they were providing was above and beyond what they were being paid for. They were also providing their own gas money. They were not reimbursed by the department for that. There was a high level of commitment by the individuals that were providing the support work. And certainly I have heard since a great concern by them, not knowing whether the families that they were directly involved with actually are still receiving the support that they need.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I guess that I would answer that in two ways. One is that they would have been receiving the same kind of funding that every other organization in the province who does that kind of work receives. And so they may not have agreed with that level of support and would have wished to have had more, but they would have been receiving the same kind of support that other similar organizations receive to provide the same kind of services.

I guess the other thing is we were very close to having an agreement with them at one point. And then the board decided it would discontinue the program, and the reason they gave at that time was the desire to focus on other program areas in the organization.

But I mean we constantly get requests from people to provide additional funding — whether it's for changes in wages, whether it's for recognition of skill development, whether it's for training services, a whole range of things. It's not unusual for us to get requests from organizations that we have contracts with to change their funding levels. And I mean we can't respond to all of them. That would be . . . there's large numbers of organizations around the province that are funded, but we try as much as possible to make sure that they have a basic level of support. It's always difficult. I think you can appreciate . . . when you're working with organizations that essentially are volunteer organizations that set themselves up to provide a service and oftentimes government contracts with those organizations to provide services but has not actually set them up. And so you can't always respond to everyone's needs for funding.

And we tend to place emphasis on I guess . . . this is difficult to say because it's very important services that they provide; I don't want to downplay that. But what I'm saying is sometimes a priority has to be placed on a service that has got to do with perhaps a little more life and death issues or very essential issues for some individuals, and services that are very good to have but not necessarily able to provide the full funding that everybody would like.

Ms. Bakken: — Well, Madam Minister, it's my understanding that the whole premise of this program is to have it run by a community-based organization, not by the Department of Community Resources and Employment. And at the time that it was cancelled and was not to be administrated under Family Place any longer, there was an understanding that another community-based organization would be found to replace that. And it my understanding that has never happened. I would like clarification on that.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — No one else has wanted to do it at this point. Now if it's found that the current arrangement for providing services is not suitable, I guess there's always the possibility you have to revisit . . . Is this an adequate program to get this job done? But again at this point I say that there's many people around the province delivering this same service under the same level of funding that this organization would've had.

Ms. Bakken: — Well, Madam Minister, I guess . . . And that goes to my original question: has there been any measurement taking of whether it is working when it is provided by the department as opposed to the excellent service that was provided to these families by Family Place?.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We have no reason to believe that there's not satisfaction with the current level of service. I mean usually I'll hear about it if there is. But aside from the usual measures of, you know — Is the plan for the individual working? Are they making progress? — those kinds of things, I don't think that there's any measurement beyond that. Marilyn, did you want to . . .

Ms. Hedlund: — Marilyn Hedlund, executive director, child and family services. I believe it would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis in terms of whether it's meeting the family's needs. And as the minister has said, we have no reason to believe there is any dissatisfaction right now.

Ms. Bakken: — Madam Minister, is the same level of funding now being used to provide the service, that it is through the department as was given to Family Place? Is that changed, and if so, in what way?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — It would be a little bit hard to check that out. I mean we could try, but some of it is being absorbed by existing, you know, people that already work in those areas. And so to segment out that portion of the work and to see in fact whether it is costing more or less than it did under the other model I think would be possible to do but not easy to do.

The question you raise, raises I mean a very large question because community organizations are usually a more economical way to deliver services which is why we do it that way. And there's many reasons for that. Some of it is the

volunteer support. People do not usually volunteer to work for government, but they will volunteer to work for a community organization, so many things get done. And I might say in this province, you couldn't run your sport and rec systems; you couldn't run anything if you didn't have volunteers.

So there's no question these community programs depend a lot on volunteers who are involved for a variety of reasons — everything from it affects their family to that it's something that they want to do and think is worth doing.

So there is a combination of paid staff, volunteer activity, and one of the reasons why . . . We used to actually do most of these services in government and moved to a model of working more with the community in providing services because they are able to fundraise and whatnot, which government can't. There's a whole bunch of things that you can do out in the community, that government can't. So this is a model that was chosen, and also we believe it's more involving of the community to work through community organizations.

But at the same time, it doesn't always work. There's not always someone who's prepared to provide that service. And in that instance, the requirement is still there to provide the service. So in the absence of a community organization who's able or willing to do that, then it falls back to us to do it.

Ms. Bakken: — Well, Madam Minister, I agree with what you have just reiterated. And certainly in the issue of Family Place, there was a willingness by Family Place to continue to administrate this. There were problems that were, that the government was not willing to deal with, and that is why Family Place found it . . . that they had no option. It certainly was not their first and foremost desire to not administrate this program, and they tried everything they could in order to be able to continue to do that.

And I know that we have discussed this last year in estimates with the minister, so I'm not going to go into that. But there certainly was a will by the Family Place to continue on being the administrator of this program, and it's certainly been a loss to the community. And not only financially, but it's also been a loss in the service that was provided by these very dedicated people. And I would hope that in the future that maybe that could be looked at again and that they could become providers of the service again.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — If I could just quickly respond to that . . . there's no doubt that that's a very good place. Like I say, I've been out there several times, delivering a variety of cheques for the many and different programs that they have there.

And I guess the one comment I would make is . . . a problem is never very difficult if you're only looking at one place. But whatever you do there then has repercussions for every other group you fund. So you don't have the freedom, quite, to just look at one place because whatever you do there, then you have to do everywhere else. And you might be able to afford to do it in one place, but you can't always afford to do it everywhere.

So one of the things we have to look at whenever we're making a decision is what kind of a precedent it sets for all the similar

organizations. So I don't know the details of what was the deal breaker — if you want to put it that way — in this case. I do know they were very close at one point to reaching agreement and then just decided not to. So I don't know the very inner details of what finally came to be the one issue that just caused it not to move ahead.

And certainly, you know, I'm always interested in . . . and again, if they were to say that something has changed or our circumstance changed and there's a possibility to re-discuss it, I have total respect for that organization and what they're doing and really quite envious of the space they have and whatnot. But it's, like I say, there is a precedent-setting question when you change how you deal with one organization.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you. Just further on the Family Place and their involvement in the community in Weyburn, they also run a program called mini-go and tiny-go which is directly related to children that, in the words of the program administrator, “children who experience poverty, physical, social, or emotional disadvantage or are born with conditions such as autism, Down's syndrome, fetal alcohol syndrome, just to name a few.” And over the years and being involved with the Family Place, they have continually struggled to have adequate funding to maintain their programs. And they are receiving \$50,000 from Sask Learning, and they do receive some funding from the three local school divisions, but they are in a shortfall situation, some \$17,000.

And I'd just like to say, Madam Minister, that this organization is very frugal. And as you indicated, they are housed in the Souris Valley building which, of course, sadly is going to be closed at the end of this year and they are at the present time looking for other accommodation. But they run a very, very tight ship and their dollars are by and large directly to care and programming for the children.

But my question to you, Madam Minister, is, in light of the fact that child care is . . . And the support of child care, and especially for children who need that extra help in their young years, that certainly pays big dividends in the long run. Because if they get that support prior to going to school, the whole goal of the Family Place, mini-go, and tiny-go school, is so that they become socially able . . . to be able to go to kindergarten and Grade 1 and are ready to become part of the system and to take part in the advantages offered instead of just, at that point, entering the system and certainly being at a disadvantage.

And so it's a very, very worthwhile program and one that I believe, from knowing some of the children and the families, will pay off in the long run — not only for them but certainly for the system in that they will not be needy of government programs in the future. And I was . . . the information I've been given by the administration of mini-go and tiny-go is that there are zero dollars coming from Social Services. Zero. The money that they receive comes from community initiatives.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes, they've actually . . . do receive money from the prevention support grant — 35,000 — from the . . . and the Community Initiatives Fund. And also 50,000 in annual funding from Sask Learning for a pre-kindergarten program — that's a mini-go and tiny-go — and fee-for-service funding from Sask Health of 32,000 via the Sun County Health

Region for parenting partners program as well. So they're getting their funding from quite a few different places.

But I guess I'll just say that we do value the service they provide, and I know that people in the region continue to talk to them about ways to continue to have a working relationship and to continue to have them as part of the service mix in that area.

And the government itself — like on the topic you were talking about, about the early learning — we have put 12 million under the Kids First program, very much for the purpose specifically of early intervention with high-risk families. And so this is not that we are investing money in this area. But the first wave of funding was targeted at the communities and the neighbourhoods with the highest risk indicators as far as economic well-being and crime and a whole range of other indicators — birth data and whatnot.

So places like this are very much in keeping with the kind of model that we have. And we'll just continue working with them.

And if you're able to be helpful in how we can make sure that they stay part of the service mix, that would certainly be my hope because I was, like I say, I was always impressed with what I saw going on there.

Ms. Bakken: — I appreciate that, Madam Minister, and we certainly will be — myself and members of this organization — continuing to speak with you, and hopefully there will be more funding available to continue these worthwhile programs.

The Chair: — Mr. Dearborn.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Madam Minister, and your officials today.

I have some questions regarding individuals who are receiving assistance who happen to have members in their family with disabilities, and specifically around housing. And I guess the first one is just a basic question of how much is allocated per annum to deal with families receiving assistance that have one family member or more who happen to be disabled? How much is allowed in that for housing?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Now that's a very specific question, so I am going to need some help on that because every person's circumstance is different.

Mr. Dearborn: — Certainly.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — And you'll have to . . . This is Phil Walsh, executive director of employment and income assistance division. Now did you get the exact description there, Phil?

Mr. Walsh: — I did, thank you.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes.

Mr. Walsh: — The shelter rates under the social assistance program do vary by family size, so there is . . . and it doesn't necessarily differentiate between whether there's a disabled person in the family or not. So that the rate structure, for

instance in a tier one, which would be a city like Regina, would vary from \$320 for a single person who may be disabled, up to \$500 for a large family.

There is also a provision to provide beyond that if there is issues around mobility access that restrict the type of accommodation that might be available for the individual family.

Mr. Dearborn: — Sorry, just so that I'm clear, sir. You're saying that, from the top, there's no special classification for someone on assistance on being disabled with regards to the housing allowance. Is that correct?

Mr. Walsh: — There are different categories. One of the categories is for a single person who is considered not fully employable. And that would include a number of people who are disabled. So they would be allowed a little higher allowance than a person who's not . . . who's considered fully employable for instance.

Mr. Dearborn: — Could you please . . . Thank you for that answer. Could you please comment on the nature around mobility? This is specifically what I'm looking for.

What is the department's plan for individuals dealing with wheelchairs? If it happens to be a family, and there are four members of the family, and the accommodations available to them need a lift to go upstairs or downstairs or whatever it may be? How much money is set aside on an annual basis just for the province? And secondly, how are those dealt with expeditiously?

Mr. Walsh: — There isn't a specific amount set aside for that need. Each family's situation is assessed individually. There is approximately \$100 million spent through the social assistance program for housing. That includes everybody, so it isn't sort of divided up into individual categories.

And then a person with a mobility issue would be assessed. Depending on what the actual cost of their rent is, they could in fact get the — depending on the particular circumstances and the extent of their need for that particular housing — could in fact get up to the actual cost of what that shelter is.

I don't know if you want to talk about the disability shelter program?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well I think . . . Yes. I think it would be a good idea to do that.

Mr. Walsh: — There is . . .

A Member: — I didn't hear that, Madam Minister.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes. What we were just talking about is whether we should go further into the disability shelter program and the renovation programs and those kinds of things. Yes.

Mr. Dearborn: — I'd appreciate that.

Mr. Walsh: — I can speak to the . . . There was an announcement as part of this year's budget that, during this

year, the department will develop a disability shelter supplement which will be available to not only people on social assistance but all low-income people with disabilities. And that program is being developed over the course of this year to be introduced at the beginning of next year. So that under that program the preliminary . . . The details aren't completely worked out yet but on a preliminary basis the . . . under that shelter allowance, under that shelter supplement a family with a disability could, for instance, receive up to maybe an extra \$100 per month to assist with shelter. And that would be whether you're on, already receiving a shelter allowance through social assistance or not.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, sir.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The other thing I'll comment on is that in social assistance, unlike some other department budgets, if there is need we have to respond. Like you don't cap the social assistance budget and say, well sorry we ran out; you'll just have to go somewhere else. If the need is there and if the person qualifies and if they meet the special needs or special provisions, they would get it.

This is Darrell Jones, who will speak about the disability renovation part of the programs.

Mr. Jones: — There's also some renovation programs that are available for people with disabilities. One of them falls under the residential rehabilitation assistance program which provides assistance in the form of forgivable loans up to a maximum of \$18,000 in the southern part of the province, and \$21,000 in the northern part of the province for renovations to facilitate their needs relative to their particular disability, their mobility disability.

There's also a program called the Home Adaptations for Seniors' Independence. And that provides assistance of \$2,500 per household for modifications for the homes — quite often grab bars and that sort of thing to create a safe environment for seniors.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Maybe, Darrell, can you explain what a forgivable loan means.

Mr. Jones: — Basically what happens there, as long as they're residing in the home for a period of time, the loan is forgiven over that period of time so that they don't actually have to make any repayment back to it.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you. I have a follow-up question following that information, just with regards to individuals receiving assistance. And families receiving assistance are often in rental properties. How do the loans apply in situations where there may be modifications required relative to the rental properties, however they're not in ownership of that? And you know, it can happen that a property that's being rented by a family could be sold and their contract terminated; they have to find a new place. Could you just elaborate on how a program would work under those circumstances?

Mr. Jones: — We also have a program under the renovation program, again under residential rehabilitation assistance program for rental properties. And renovations can be

undertaken with the landlord up to \$18,000 per unit in the South and \$21,000 in the North, which would allow for renovations in a very similar circumstance.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you. Madam Minister, will you be instructing the department in the years to come to be collecting the data on the requests surrounding the need for how much is spent in a year or how much is requested in a year to make buildings accessible for people on assistance, so that it can be budgeted in a regular basis because there have been clients which have met with a number of frustrations? Some of them not to their doing.

But we had a situation specifically where individuals did receive some help. A son had severe cerebral palsy and was degenerating — a young boy. And anyhow the rental property they were in provided all the services. It had wide doorways to accommodate the wheelchair, that sort of thing. The property was sold by the owners. They had to find in a relatively . . . not sparse housing market, but in a housing market that wasn't necessarily suited to meet their needs. This was in rural Saskatchewan, and there was problems around the accessibility.

Now that's not to say that the department was to blame because you can't always control these number of factors. But it would seem to me that the prudent thing to do would be to have the data on how often this is, so that there is a budget in place specifically, you know, for this sort of thing because also people come on and off of social assistance. And there's no way to predict who's going to come on with disabilities or who's going to become disabled under the program. But if it was tracked over time, it might eliminate some surprises in the department.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'm sure that we would have a figure that would let you know how many people had applied and received funding. We may not have it right with us, but I'm sure that we can get that.

Mr. Dearborn: — I guess my concern is not so much with the figure but just with the process in the years to come.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We have also . . . Under the centennial affordable housing program, we have allocated new money to meet the need for accessible housing for disabled people. So I think we'll actually see an increase in the supply of accessible housing in the province as well.

Mr. Dearborn: — I have . . . Thank you, Madam Minister. I have some questions surrounding budgets. There are community care homes for persons with differing abilities. Many are employed through SARCAN. And I have — if there is a ministerial official that could speak to this — I have grave concerns with the amount of support that the working staff that run the house are receiving; number one, in their pay; number two, in their food budgets. And I just want to know what is being done to address this situation.

The food budget for adults in the particular care home . . . and I apologize that the . . . I believe my information is dated by a year or so. But it got down to something miniscule; I believe it was \$7.25 a day was being budgeted per adult in the care home's care.

I could see the desperation and frustration on the workers. Those are exceedingly tight margins.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — As it turns out, it is actually less than what you are saying, Jason. It's \$4.60 per person, a day. And I'm just multiplying it here, so I guess that would be \$138 per person, in there.

Mr. Dearborn: — I mean just to be completely blunt, and not about policy, I don't believe that that's acceptable. And have any provisions been done to increase that funding? Or alternatively, to enable the groups providing that care to give them the tools to be able to do so for themselves?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — In this particular area, now, I guess I may have to ask Bonnie to give me some help here, because I'm not sure which exactly of these increases would have applied to those specific places that Jason's asking about.

Ms. Durnford: — Over the last numbers of years, increases have been provided to the community-based organizations broadly within the department. The majority of those funding increases have been targeted to salaries for the workers in the particular organizations. Those increases from '94-95 onward would total about \$27 million. This last . . . this budget round, an increase of 1 per cent was provided to community-based organizations across the department.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — One thing I would say is, in becoming newly responsible for a department, you're hit with quite a wealth of information, especially if it's a large department like this that has so many different arms and legs. And one of the things I think ministers do is listen to comments people are making and say, there's something we should work on.

And I think we're very aware that this whole area of these community-based organizations, especially the ones that provide residential services, are an area that we have to keep seeing . . . We have made as Bonnie was saying, since 1994 every year we've had some kind of increase — sometimes in the range of 2 per cent on salaries; sometimes 5 per cent on salary, 2 per cent on non-salary — and kept at it steadily. But there's always areas you can look at for improvement.

And certainly as we go back to look at what the department's doing over the next year, we could take a look again at whether these food rates are realistic. You know, we'd have to talk to people who are in the business of feeding large numbers of people and see how it works out for them on their . . . when they've got a bulk food arrangement.

But certainly I appreciate you bringing it to my attention, and we'll take a look into how they're making out with that.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Madam Minister. And I commend you for the increases that have come from '94-95 because my understanding in the meeting with workers in those facilities is that they have a great deal of care that they provide and they're under a great deal of pressure — \$4.60 a day to me just does not seem reasonable. And I recognize how budgets are tight and whatnot.

What I would ask the minister to provide then, are what pilot

projects or alternative means of funding these community homes have been put forward in the last year or will be put forward to address the solution — not just process, but results.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — One of the things I will comment on is we keep trying to make all of the programs as cost effective as they can be. And sometimes there's areas that are very expensive in the department that we have to look at changing how we do things.

And quite often what happens in government, because populations change, ages change, you sometimes end up with very expensive facilities that you're continuing to operate that you use a lot of resources. One such example of those would be Valley View where we've got a very old physical plant there. We have a very large institution that was built for three or four times the number of people who currently reside there. The cost effectiveness of that facility continues to decline even though we still have 300 residents who are, each one of them, very important.

So these are the very tough decisions you have to look at sometimes in how you're going to continue to put money where the people are, and slowly draw your resources to where people are from where people aren't. But that being said, once a service is established, people get very involved with it and you put a huge amount of resources into it. So it's always a balancing act with the department to figure out, in all of the many priorities, how we can use our money the best way we can, and we no doubt struggle with this every year.

But I do take your comment that . . . I was very aware of the wage issue because I've met with CBOs (community-based organization) many times on the wage issue. What I was not as familiar with was the issue that you raised today about the adequacy of the food supply.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Madam Minister. This would be my final question on this topic and it has to do just with finances in general. Could you give us a baseline for these type of community homes, how much is spent a year, and what is the total administration cost that is coming from the department in the way that they are organized, from who gets the total funding? Specifically, what is that administration component relative, in a percentile, to the monies going forth?

Because as far as I can see from the administration of . . . the operational administration of these facilities, \$4.60 a day is extremely tight. And I would suggest, not to be belittling any of our hard-working members of the public service, but if there are places to come from it would not be from the front line delivery service, it would be from an administrative level that's giving this out.

And just to say one more time, \$4.60 a day is . . . that's absolutely not reasonable for Canada, for Saskatchewan; that's not reasonable for Third World. And we, as legislators, I believe have a duty to correct this and I applaud that the minister will continue in her efforts to do so. And hopefully we will see some results on this by next year. Thank you.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thanks, Jason.

The Chair: — Mr. Borgerson.

Mr. Borgerson: — Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. Just as a follow-up to one of Mr. Dearborn's questions regarding the residential rehabilitation assistance program, and being very conscious of the fact that people are watching this right now. As a point of information, the forgivable loan for the North and South as well as the seniors' grant, are the two exclusive of each other or can they be combined? A senior person for example who is disabled, could he access both of those programs?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — That's a good question. And we'll turn it over to the person who should know the answer — Darrell.

Mr. Jones: — Yes, the programs are stackable so we can accommodate the senior sort of on both fronts.

Mr. Borgerson: — Okay. And the second question on the same topic. Just for the sake of those who are watching — definition of South and North. There are different maximums.

Mr. Jones: — The programming recognizes the increased costs of construction in the northern part of the province, so it's the northern administration line. Anything north of that has the increased values.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — And if I recall, that line is probably about, is it a third or two-thirds of the way between P.A. (Prince Albert) and La Ronge? I'm trying to remember where I used to stop at the marker and look at the valley. But at any rate it's about, it's midway between P.A. and La Ronge.

Mr. Borgerson: — And my final question, more of a general question. And that is, in terms of initiatives in housing for the North, could you speak to that — in this budget.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — In this budget — I'm going to get Darrell to give you the details — but in this budget we did place priority on housing in inner city, North, and for disabled. So we'll certainly see an increase in home ownership in the North in particular. And I don't know if you can provide more detail than that, Darrell?

Mr. Jones: — Yes, we have a number of programming initiatives in this budget and of course we've been very active in the North over the last number of years.

In terms of new investment over the past five years, we've invested almost \$30 million on improving the housing conditions, both in terms of renovation programming and new house construction. This has facilitated home ownership as well as rental properties, and has benefited in the neighbourhood of 1,000 households in northern Saskatchewan. This of course is on top of the 1,800 subsidized housing units that are also available for northern people in the northern part of the province.

Mr. Borgerson: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you.

Ms. Bakken: — Just further on that while we are discussing

housing, in the estimates there is some \$9.2 million less allocated to housing, and in specific to Saskatchewan Housing Corporation from last year to this year. Could you explain why that is so?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'm just taking a look because I think I'd . . . I think it was in here somewhere.

Ms. Bakken: — It was 32 million and is now 22.8 million.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Maybe I will let you explain that Bonnie, because between the restructuring and everything else it gets confusing, the different monies that have moved.

Ms. Durnford: — There is, as you've noted, Ms. Bakken, there is a reduction in the transfer this year for Sask Housing. The transfer is, the reduction in the transfer is part of a four-year plan relative . . . or five-year plan actually, relative to housing. The funding will be returned next year but will be returned to the department's budget for the purposes of doing a family housing supplement, which we anticipate will cost about \$10 million.

This year is a developmental year and it will be introduced next year on April 1. The overall operating budget for Sask Housing remains the same for this fiscal year, so it's a bit of a transition year.

Ms. Bakken: — Well as I recall and I . . . actually I don't believe I have the document with me, but in the budget that there was an emphasis put on housing and affordable housing. And so if there's an emphasis put on it, why do we have a reduction of \$9.2 million? It makes absolutely no sense.

Mr. Jones: — Within the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation we obtain our funds from a number of sources; from the transfer from the province, as well as from the federal government, and from the tenants that make up the portfolios. So Saskatchewan Housing Corporation has an approximate annual budget of 150 million for its operations. And we will maintain that budget to provide the programming in this forthcoming year through the various sources of funding that we have available to us.

This also provides us the opportunity to transition these dollars to the department for the delivery of the housing supplement beginning in 2005, so that in fact it introduces a new program that hasn't been in existence before for assisting households outside of social and affordable housing.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I think the question, Darrell, is really focusing on where does that nine come from? Is that accurate?

Ms. Bakken: — The question is, where did the nine go? I mean last year there was \$32 million spent, now there's 22.8 million. Most of that, other than half a million dollars, is out of housing operations. The rest is out of Sask Housing Corporation, which is my understanding is used directly to initiate new low-income housing projects. I'm trying to find it. I believe there was a release by the government that there was going to be an increased emphasis on low-income housing. And so the two do not jive.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Let me explain the program logic first,

and then you can explain the financial logic. We did a considerable amount of investigation into what people's biggest housing problems were. And what we determined was that housing supply was not the only issue, that affordability of housing was the issue.

So what's happened is a conscious decision to not put all of the housing money into housing supply, but to put some of the housing money into a housing supplement because the problem for people was not that there wasn't housing, it's that they couldn't afford it.

And then we're also combining that in the housing strategy, with quality assurance initiatives that will involve some of the renovation programs, the agreement with landlords on rents and what not. So that's the program that's under development this year. But there was a recognition that we are not going to be able to solve all the housing problem through construction, and that we needed some other ways of doing that.

And under this supplement, I think it'll include about 10,000 low-income working poor that are not actually on assistance that would then receive that supplement once this transition is complete. But aside from that — now I'll flip back to Darrell for the actual explanation of the movement of the money — but it is true that some money will be used to solve the housing affordability problem, not so much the supply problem.

Mr. Jones: — I'll try to articulate. The department has been delivering programs, such as the Saskatchewan employment supplement and the Saskatchewan Child Benefit supplements, through the department versus through Saskatchewan Housing Corporation. So for the delivery of the supplement, it's deemed that it will be more easily facilitated for delivery through the department. And so the funding will be transitioned next year within the department to deliver the supplement program.

This year will act as a year of development in terms of putting the design work together of what the supplement will look like and how it will be coordinated with local municipalities and community-based organizations to ensure that in fact the supplement is linked to quality.

And so the funding will be flowing through the department versus Saskatchewan Housing Corporation proper.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'm going to do this in a different way because I know what you're getting at, and I'm not quite hearing what I think it is you want to hear.

If we have a big housing program, then what are we doing more of and what are we doing less of when it comes to housing? So let me go at it that way.

Now where's the best place . . . Okay. A total of 2,000 units of new supply will be delivered under the centenary affordable housing program, so that's on top of the housing that we currently own. The housing renovation programs and the home modification for disabled programs are going to be enhanced with additional funding available through the Sask Housing Corporation. Lower income households will be assisted in making the transition to home ownership through \$10 million of funding for home ownership programs and one million for asset

accumulation programs that will assist people in building savings, so they can purchase a home.

So in fact, we are doing a number of additional things in the housing program and not reducing any of the housing that we now deliver.

Ms. Bakken: — Well, Madam Minister, I guess I still fail to understand where the \$9.2 million went. There's a reduction overall in the department of an expenditure of almost 5 million . . . or \$4.5 million. So if it's been cut out of Sask Housing, 9.2 million, where did the difference go?

And I guess, in light of the fact that one of the key indicators from the budget was that we are going to help low-income families and there is no indication here that that actually is the case as far as housing goes, I do not understand your answer because this \$9.2 million has seemed to have disappeared. I don't see where it's been added to other programs.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Maybe I'll just address it, first of all, from the policy point of view. There's no question that every department was asked to spend less, but even though we are spending less on that line, we have additional resources. Now I'm going to let Darrell explain that.

Mr. Jones: — Okay. Just stepping back for a moment again, Sask Housing Corporation has funds flowing into it from a number of sources, those sources being the federal government in transfers directly to Sask Housing Corporation and also rents that were received from our 30,000-plus tenants, as well as the provincial transfer.

So our actual expenditures for Sask Housing Corporation in 2003 will come in around 150 million, and our actual budget for Sask Housing expenditures in 2004 is set at approximately 170 million. And so the budget available within Sask Housing Corporation, for the programming that we've talked about, is there to deliver the programs as we have in the past and the new programs that we announced.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Because of all of the sources of funding, not just that one line.

Ms. Bakken: — So if I'm correct then, you're saying that there's three sources of funding: the federal government, the people that . . . the rent of the actual people that are living in the units pay, as well as provincial funding.

So if you're saying you're meeting your budget, but the provincial government is putting \$9.2 million in less, then does that mean that the federal government is picking up the difference? Or is there an increase to the amount of rent that the people that are in these housing units are paying? Where is the money coming from?

Mr. Jones: — Over the course of the last number of years, we have expended the transfers coming from the province, and we have been in a position to divert some of the dollars that we've received from the federal government under the Social Housing Agreement signed in 1997. So we will then be using some of those dollars that are available within Sask Housing Corporation to move this programming forward.

Ms. Bakken: — So there's an excess of funds in the Housing Corporation that you have been setting aside for this purpose or . . .

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — There wasn't enough projects to . . .

Mr. Jones: — The funding comes into Sask Housing Corporation under the Social Housing Agreement for the ongoing management of the existing housing stock that we have. Through efficiencies in operation and reduced interest rates as a result of the interest rates coming down over the past number of years, we've been able to achieve efficiencies so that our operating costs are actually less than what they have been historically.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I might just add that one of the other factors that has played is . . . although we've allocated substantial resources to the centennial housing program, because we chose a community delivery model, we have not had quite as much building as we might have anticipated because we've been wanting to work very closely with all the various community organizations that are involved in developing and delivering housing.

As we move into this year, we're going to be working more closely with the private sector because we believe they have a stronger capacity to get some of these units built. But we're still going to work with the community groups from the point of view of the relationship to the individuals in the community, their living circumstances, and their support in home ownership.

So it's a slightly new model of a little more involvement with the private sector, but still involving the community organizations more on the social side of the housing equation and people like the home builders more on the building side of the housing equation.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Well I certainly applaud that, and I think that the people of Saskatchewan and certainly those in the construction industry will think that's a good move.

Just so that we're crystal clear here, there is a surplus in Sask Housing and what is that surplus, as we speak today? What are the surplus dollars that are in the Sask Housing Corporation?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — You know what I think might be worthwhile is to . . . The situation that's developing in Sask Housing is there is, I think, a short-term surplus because of the reasons that Darrell mentioned. But it won't continue from the point of view that the federal government is withdrawing from housing support. And what we're trying to do in our redesign of our programs . . . is build a portfolio that's sustainable.

So if members would be interested in an actual presentation on the cash flow within the Housing Corporation, certainly we could provide that. It's fairly detailed. You have to actually see all the numbers year by year, the slow withdrawal of the federal money, the provincial portion. But it certainly would be possible to present that detailed information on a briefing session on the Housing portfolio.

Ms. Bakken: — That would be very much appreciated.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes, it's interesting.

Ms. Bakken: — Okay, I'd just like to move to another area and question a bit about child care spaces in Saskatchewan. And firstly I'd like to ask the minister, what is the cost of one child care space in the province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'm told by the deputy that it depends on the age of the child. The funding differs depending on what the age of the child is. Would you like to have the actual numbers by the age of child?

Ms. Bakken: — Please.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Okay, I have Phil looking those up here.

I guess we don't have those with us, but we can certainly get them and bring them.

Mr. Walsh: — I can tell you approximately the amount of . . . The funding model is actually three parts that pays for a particular space. There's a base operating grant that goes to a space in a centre. There's a subsidy that's based on the parent's income of the parent using that space, and then there's a portion at the top that the parent actually pays. The average base subsidy is . . . base operating grant is about \$100 per space. The average subsidy is around 230, \$240.

Ms. Bakken: — Just so I'm clear, the \$100, the average ballpark figure goes actually directly to the child care provider per space?

Mr. Walsh: — To the centre, yes.

Ms. Bakken: — Correct. And then the other subsidy goes to the parent, or does it also go direct?

Mr. Walsh: — It also goes to the centre on behalf of the parent based on the parent's income.

Ms. Bakken: — On behalf of the parent. And then the difference is paid by the parent.

Mr. Walsh: — Directly to the centre.

Ms. Bakken: — Okay.

Mr. Walsh: — That's correct.

Ms. Bakken: — What is the criteria for being eligible for the subsidy, for the parent?

Mr. Walsh: — You must be working or in school or have a special need child. And it's based on the amount of income the family has each month above . . . You get a maximum subsidy if your income is below . . . or pardon me, yes, below \$1,540 a month in gross income, and then beyond that it reduces based on the extra income you have.

Ms. Bakken: — So if you as an individual . . . or is this a

family unit or that . . .

Mr. Walsh: — It's a family unit, yes.

Ms. Bakken: — Family unit makes \$1,540 a month; they are eligible for a subsidy? Is that what you're telling me?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — A full subsidy.

Mr. Walsh: — For a full subsidy, yes.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Can you explain full subsidy, Phil?

Mr. Walsh: — So a full subsidy would be \$240 approximately depending on the age of the child and where the space is, so that if your income was below \$1,540 a month, you would be eligible for \$240 in subsidy per month.

Ms. Bakken: — Is this a common number used across Canada, or is Saskatchewan different in any way?

Mr. Walsh: — I'm sorry I don't know the details across Canada, but they . . . programs aren't identical by any means. There are certainly differences across Canada.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Let's maybe go at this a different way for . . . So what would that family actually end up paying out of their own pocket then for child care?

Mr. Walsh: — They would probably end up paying somewhere, if the total . . . Say the total fee for the space was say \$500. If the first \$100 came from the grant, then the next \$240 came from the subsidy. They would pay somewhere I think between 150 and \$250 a month perhaps, if they received full subsidy.

A Member: — Depending on the facility they're in.

Ms. Bakken: — And so what would be the total dollars that are paid by the Government of Saskatchewan on a yearly basis for the subsidy?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well 340 a month times 12 . . .

Ms. Bakken: — No, I mean in total.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Oh, in total.

Mr. Walsh: — For subsidy? Our subsidy budget is approximately 10 and a half million dollars.

Ms. Bakken: — And then the grant is in addition to that?

Mr. Walsh: — That's right. Grants are about another \$10 million.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you. Just further on that, there's been an announcement that has been made by the government about the 200 new child care spaces. And what portion of that is actually the federal government going to be providing and what percentage is the province providing?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — It's actually graduated. In the first year

of the program the federal portion was only 800,000 and we provided the rest. It changes over time. Just a second here. In '03-04 . . . this is federal funds here?

Mr. Walsh: — That is, yes.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Where's the provincial?

Mr. Walsh: — The total is 200 . . . 2.8 million so . . .

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Oh, so you want me to subtract that. That one's easy; I can do that one — 2003-04 the federal money was 800,000 and the province put in 2 million. That was for the 500 spaces last year.

In '04-05, the federal money improves to 4.7 million and the province would be putting in . . . we're just maintaining our 2 million in that pool.

In '05-06, the federal money is . . . rises. Like what they're doing is incrementally building on the base of 800,000 — will be 6.9 million and the province's level of funding moves to 4.5 million. So at that point it looks like we're getting close to that 60/40 split.

In '06-07, the federal funding will move to 9.2 million and the province will then be putting in 5.3 million.

And in '07-08, the federal funding moves to 10.6 million and we move to a 50/50 where the province would be putting in 5.4 million.

Ms. Bakken: — So, Madam Minister, is . . . Now I believe, if I'm correct, it was something like 31 . . . Is it \$31 million that the federal government . . . or is that the number? For some reason 31 . . .

Mr. Walsh: — That's the total over the five years is approximately 31 million; that's correct.

Ms. Bakken: — The 31 million. And is that the total for the whole project or is that what the federal government is actually putting in?

Mr. Walsh: — That is the total that the federal government would be putting in, yes.

Ms. Bakken: — Okay.

Mr. Walsh: — And just to be clear, in the first year the federal contribution was 800,000. The total spent was 2.8 million. So the province put in \$2 million.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes. It's our 2, plus their 800,000.

Mr. Walsh: — In the second year, and this is a little bit different because when we were constructing the budget we only understood that the federal amount was going to be 2.3 million. And in fact, almost just before the provincial budget was announced they announced an acceleration of their money. So in fact, the province will, instead of getting approximately 2.3 million, will get 4.7 million.

Included in our budget so far is 3.8 million. So what's happened is that when we were planning on receiving 2.3, we put 3.8 in the budget. So 1.5 would have been provincial money. Now we have the potential for additional federal dollars becoming available that haven't been identified as to where they're going to be spent yet.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I was just going to say, what we're doing over the next two months and we were planning to do it even before the new federal money showed up, which we're quite happy about, is just spending two months on a consultation with the community where we'll be talking to parents, child development specialists, early learning centres, child care centres, home child centres; and really talking about how we provide that continuum of services to the youngest citizens in the province between the ages of zero and six.

And certainly, there's people who have quite a different range of ideas out there about what's the best way to provide support to parents for child care; everything ranging from 100 per cent commitment to licensed child care spaces that are more tending to be in that kind of a building setting, to folks that see direct subsidy to parents as being the way to go.

So there's quite a range of discussion underway. And of course, back to your comment you made earlier, I think a growing recognition that those early years are very important for intellectual development and stimulation.

So all of these things will be considered over this next two-month period as we look at what . . . the best way to direct any new resources.

Ms. Bakken: — So, because this is a question that has been asked of me and I'd like clarification on it, the dollars that are allocated to this program over the five . . . it's five years I believe — are they all for actual child care spaces or is there, as you've just indicated, is there leeway as to how these dollars can be spent from the federal government?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — All the allocated money is for spaces. There's 1,200 new spaces that was announced last year. We had the first 500 under Mr. Hagel. And now we still have the balance of those to complete, the other 700. But it was 1,200 new spaces over four years. Now the additional resources gives us the ability to do something beyond that. But that commitment remains for the 1,200 spaces over four years.

Mr. Walsh: — Maybe I could clarify this. If I could clarify just . . . your question about the \$31 million over the five years. Approximately 19 or 20 of that is committed so far in terms of spending, and that is all committed to child care spaces. There's approximately 11 or 12 million that hasn't been committed yet, that decisions still have to be made on.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Some confusion that arises with people when they see, you know, a 10 million and then a 14 million, they forget that you can't quit funding the ones you've already established. So they keep thinking that's a whole new pool of money, and it isn't because you've got to keep up the level to keep funding those ones that are already there, and then you, you know, layer on the new bunch. So sometimes it looks like a lot of new money when it's basically going to sustain the

system and you can maybe add a bit more.

The Chair: — Mr. Hagel.

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much. Maybe just to pick up on two things, and just following Ms. Bakken's last question here. There is a portion of that, is there not, that is intended to be exploring not only child care, but early learning?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes.

Mr. Hagel: — And the funding that you're talking about is intended to be that collaborative approach which brings together both the Department of Community Resources and Employment and the Department of Learning if . . .

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — That's an excellent point. Yes, and there may even be some elements when Health is involved, if there is for example children with fetal alcohol syndrome or other things that are in a child care setting. But yes, there will be the involvement of the early learning community in this discussion.

Mr. Hagel: — Though you've got the commitment — the firm commitment — of the 1,200 spaces over five years, and then you've got that other pool of money that is intended to address some combination of child care and early learning. It might be all early learning, it might be all child care, or it might be some combination of mixture of those. Is that . . .

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes, that would be accurate, and a variety of different I guess kinds of locations where that might occur. And we also, in addition to those, had 60 spaces that aren't part of that pool, that were specifically designated for children with cognitive issues — yes, in the Kids First program.

Mr. Hagel: — And I think it's worthwhile to acknowledge that this is one of the things that can happen when you've got different levels of government working collaboratively — between the province and the federal government. I think that that was sort of the, part of the nature of the question being asked. And it's that pool that comes together when you get the two levels of government dedicating their funds not as separate streams being focused on differently but coming together, where their decisions are made then based on provincial need, pooling the two streams together. Is that . . .

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — That's a good point. We try to discourage the federal government from direct funding in the province to things that it's important that they're integrated at the provincial level, and certainly early learning would be one of those areas. And I think they've agreed certainly that we need to do this together. And we very much appreciate the way the monies have been delivered so that we do the integrated planning at the provincial level, to do this . . .

Mr. Hagel: — Now I'd just like to go back to a question flowing from previous questions related to housing, which is when I originally put my hand in. And unfortunately as things go here sometimes, you come in a fair ways down the path; you've got to jump back.

I just want to ask one question before one runs the risk here of

being too laudatory about the federal government. Going back to the questions related to the reduction in the housing budget as it shows up in the estimates that are before us here right now, which is essentially found in the reduction of transfers to individuals category. That's the essence of it.

And I am aware that it has been — referring to earlier — that in the world of housing, that the federal government has for some years now moved entirely out of social housing. And all of the, I think all of the federal monies in housing that are coming to the provinces are in the category of affordable housing, if I'm not mistaken.

And when I was listening to the explanations as to what's the shift in housing expenditures that shows up as we see it in the estimates before us — and I recognize some of that has to do with the impact of the flow to Sask Housing in order to accommodate that — but is that part of the explanation here, that what this is also is reflecting that the ability to sustainably support housing for low-income Saskatchewan people is shifting from a social housing model which was, has been in years gone by the more traditional, to the affordable housing model which the federal government laid out several years ago, was the only way they were going to collaborate with provinces. Is that part of what we're seeing here in this budget?

Mr. Jones: — Within this budget there is sort of, within Sask Housing Corporation's budget there is funding flowing from the federal government through essentially three agreements. One is the Social Housing Agreement which is in support of the existing housing stock that we have throughout the province right now that is in place.

In addition any new funding flowing through the affordable housing agreement, the federal-provincial affordable housing agreement, is focused on the development of new housing, either acquisition and renovation of housing stock that would be lost otherwise from the inventory, or the creation of new housing in terms of new construction.

And also then another stream under the renovation repair programming agreement where we cost share that with the federal government on a 75/25 basis. With respect to the affordable housing agreement it's on a 50/50 per cent basis.

So there's three streams of funding that come into Sask Housing Corporation from the federal government.

The funding relative to the existing social housing program is declining over time. As the amortizations associated with those housing units disappear, the federal funding disappears as well.

Mr. Hagel: — That signals as we look ahead then, not just at this year but at programs in the out years, based on the kind of federal support for provincial housing needs — which I think are being felt across the country in pretty significant kinds of ways — I think what that's saying then is it signals that as we look forward and try to strategize how we can maximize the federal flow of dollars into Saskatchewan to meet those needs, then we have to be thinking in the context of affordable housing, including the potential for ownership as an important part of that picture. Is that what we're seeing signalled in this budget?

Mr. Jones: — It's certainly one of the key signals in this budget. With respect to the new affordable housing that we will be developing over the course of the next five years, is a very strong emphasis on partnering with families in the form of home ownership initiatives.

We believe that achieving home ownership achieves independence and achieves self-reliance, and certainly aligns well with the direction under Building Independence initiative of the department. So that is a key focus and it shares the responsibility with the individuals and with the families.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I think it would be fair to say that there's been a recognition that, given the declining support, that government can't provide 100 per cent support to people. We can be supportive but we can't provide 100 per cent support. So moving to a new model of home ownership also helps to share the costs of that home ownership with a person who is supporting it through their own work and through their own income. But we still have a large part we play and a large financial part — but not 100 per cent part.

Mr. Hagel: — I'd like just to conclude, I just would express the view that I think it is that movement towards the maximum status of independence which I think in many families involves the ability to be able to assume ownership that is a very, very important part of the social objective, both in terms of just what makes social sense but also what makes practical sense in terms of tapping into resources that are available to us. So I just . . .

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I think I just would like to make one last comment on that because part of it is we all know what enables us to get a loan at the bank and that's having an asset. So this does assist people in asset accumulation. And we will actually have another program on asset accumulation where they are able to set aside money which can then be used to purchase that first house. So we've got a couple of different ways we're going to go at that, but really you can't move forward if you don't have assets, and we see this as a big part of building independence.

Ms. Bakken: — I know that we're almost out of time today and we certainly don't want to go past 5 o'clock. So I just have couple more questions on . . . I want to go back to child care just for a few moments and ask the minister, what is the budgeted cost for child care space? What amount when you're figuring out your budget and how many spots . . . I believe we have approaching 8,000 child care spots in Saskatchewan, so what is the amount that you use to . . . for a budget, for a space?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — There's 23 million, and I guess would you say that . . . how would you divide that to get a per child, per space, per . . .

Ms. Durnford: — Phil's just working on the number but that number is . . .

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes. He's got his handy calculator out there.

Ms. Durnford: — That number's combined of a number of things. The first one is about \$10 million in child care facilities which would be the grant portion that Phil spoke of earlier; 11.2

million is the child care parent subsidies, so that's the portion of the . . .

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes. You wouldn't have the facility part every year; you'd have that the first time a centre starts up.

Ms. Durnford: — No, that's an operating . . .

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Oh, that's their operating grant, not their capital.

Ms. Durnford: — Right. So about 11.2 million for parent subsidies, and then about \$2 million for child care administration which would be the folks that operate the program. So those would be the departmental employees that are responsible for licensing the facilities, and for ongoing sort of monitoring of the facilities and working with the centres and the family child care providers, the family homes, to actually provide services to the children and to their families.

Ms. Bakken: — So 21.2 million actually goes to the actual cost, the hard costs of . . . that is contributed by the government, and we have 8,000 is my understanding?

Mr. Walsh: — It works out to . . . is calculated here about \$2,800 per space.

A Member: — On average.

Ms. Bakken: — Another question is, how are the spaces allocated? I mean it's obvious that we have a limited number of spaces that are going to be subsidized because there's only X number of dollars in the budget. So how is it determined how these are going to be allocated across the province? Because I would think that there is more demand for subsidy than there is subsidy given. Or I could be wrong.

Ms. Durnford: — With regard to the space development, part of it is maintained by a waiting list as to where there may be potential spaces to be developed; part of it is going to be determined by where we would like to see spaces relative to some of the other goals of the department around getting people, in single families particularly, off of social assistance and into employment. We know child care is an important piece of making that transition into a job. So that would be part of the other criteria. Some of it is going to be determined by where there is a community need as well. So there's numbers of factors that we would take into account in the determination of how spaces would be allocated.

Ms. Bakken: — And who would actually make that decision?

Ms. Durnford: — At the end of the day, it's made by staff within the department who would say okay, well we've got these kinds of spaces, these kinds of needs in this community, we would determine to prioritize those spaces in accordance with . . . And then spaces would go in Regina, or they would go in Lumsden, or wherever.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — And that's for those particular types of spaces.

Ms. Durnford: — Yes.

Ms. Bakken: — Okay. It's my understanding that the child care branch is . . . now reports to the head of the income support branch. Is that correct?

Ms. Durnford: — That's correct.

Ms. Bakken: — And why was that change made? Like what is the relationship between the, you know . . .

Ms. Durnford: — It was an organizational change made in the department as a result of the department's strategic plan and strategic direction. Part of our goal in the department is to assist people into moving into the workforce, into the labour force. As we've done surveys with our clients, one of the very important things that they've identified as needing is child care.

It's a very important resource if you're a single parent, when we have many single parents on social assistance. So they've identified the need for child care to move into the labour force. And so we decided organizationally that it would make good sense to bring the child care program and our employment and income assistance program together to take advantage of the tools that the child care provides and the supports that it would provide to families.

Ms. Bakken: — And has it been a good move? Has it been successful or have you had enough time to evaluate it or . . .

Ms. Durnford: — The organizational change was made what, about two years ago, Phil? Is that . . . be fair?

Mr. Walsh: — Two years ago.

Ms. Durnford: — About two years ago. And I believe it's the right thing to do. There's always competing goals with regard to child care. Is it an early childhood program or is it a labour force support for working parents or working mothers, single parents?

And I mean that's a balance that always has to be achieved. But our sense was that we needed to bring the two together. And I think . . . and from my view, it's been the right thing to do.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — It's essentially quite often working with the same families.

Ms. Durnford: — Yes.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes.

The Chair: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Seeing no further questions, we'll have a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Hagel: — If you're looking for a motion to adjourn, I'm always happy to accommodate you.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Can I make a quick comment, Madam Chair?

The Chair: — Oh, the minister would like to make a comment.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'm just going to say, this being our first experience with this process and having been through the

other process, I find this to be more congenial and actually leading to better questioning and answering of the particular matters we're discussing. So I think I'm going to like this, Madam Chair. My assessment of the first session.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. So we will now adjourn, being as it is 5 o'clock.

The committee adjourned at 16:59.

