



STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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[The committee met at 14:00.]

The Chair: — Good afternoon, committee members. Welcome. It is one minute after 2, and we will start our afternoon session. Committee members, the House on April 3 has referred to this committee the consideration of estimates, and I will list them. They are the following: votes 37 and 169 for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour; vote 73, Corrections, Public Safety and Policing; vote 5, Education; vote 32, Health; and vote 36, Social Services.

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

Subvote (AE01)

The Chair: — Today on our agenda we have two votes scheduled for our consideration. The first will be vote 37 and 169 of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour. And then later this day we will consider estimates of vote 73, Corrections, Public Safety and Policing.

We have with us this afternoon the Minister of Advanced Education and Employment, the Hon. Rob Norris. I see he has officials with him. I'd like to welcome the minister and his officials. And, Minister, would you please introduce your officials to the committee.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Certainly. Mr. Chair, committee members, I'm pleased to be here today to participate in the discussion and debate on the 2008-09 budget. This is an important piece of parliamentary tradition, obviously.

Before opening, as the Chair has requested, I'd like to introduce the officials that are joining me today. Wynne Young is here, our deputy minister. Raman Visvanathan is also here. We have Trina Vicq Fallows here as well. And I'll just glance to the back. Brady Salloum is here, executive director of student finance assistance. Jan Morgan, I think is just off behind me; Kevin Veitenheimer, director for the universities branch; Jim Seiferling; Brent Brownlee. And I see a few others as well. Reg — there we are — Reg, Reg Urbanowski's here. And Mike Carr's also joined us.

The Chair: — I'd thank the minister for those introductions. Minister, do you have an opening statement before we open the committee for questions and answers?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I do, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

The Chair: — Okay. Proceed then.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I'm happy to report that with the 2008-09 budget, Saskatchewan is ready for growth and ready to play a more creative, constructive, and purposeful role in Confederation. We're rolling up our sleeves to ensure that we're fulfilling the promise of Saskatchewan. Our new government is taking important steps toward sustaining our economic momentum and securing Saskatchewan's economic future as an economic leader across Canada and indeed in the world. Last fall we made a promise to begin that work. With this budget

we're keeping our word.

Within the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour we're focusing on setting specific goals and measuring real success. Our focus is first to increase the number of people in Saskatchewan, thereby building more dynamic communities and paving the way for future economic growth and more cosmopolitan communities. We also aim to increase the number of people with the required literacy and basic skills training, sector-specific skills, and advanced education, thereby helping to ensure that as individuals meet their full potential, so too will our province.

As well we're here to foster a more fair, balanced, safe, and competitive labour environment, thereby ensuring that the public sector essential services are available for families during labour disputes and that Saskatchewan workplaces are more democratic.

First we'll work to support and train our people, ensuring that the people of this province have the opportunities they need to develop their talents to participate in the new economy and build more vibrant communities. Saskatchewan's post-secondary education, training, and employment services must meet the needs of everyone, including especially First Nation and Métis community members, immigrants, and other newcomers, rural and urban residents, and to ensure that our province has the skilled labour it needs to support and nurture economic growth and, as I've said, more vibrant communities. And as our workforce grows — and there are indeed new pressures to make sure that this happens — the Government of Saskatchewan is committed to creating a fair and balanced labour environment, as I've said.

As well we plan to partner and build. Our government will work to foster partnerships between the private sector, community-based organizations and, as applicable, our post-secondary educational training, career services, and immigration systems. A key aim here is to come together to develop a skilled workforce and to attract educated and skilled workers from outside this province and around the world. Put simply, together with our partners we'll identify and address vital areas of need in Saskatchewan's labour market. We're going to support and train our people, and the best way to carry this forward is to partner and build.

Finally we will utilize that work to take the next step, which is to innovate and grow. We know that the innovation generated by Saskatchewan's advanced education institutions and other centres of excellence is instrumental and integral to the fuelling of our provincial economy. The 2008-09 budget provides significant investments that help us to prepare the province for growth. The budget is fundamental to fulfilling the mandate Premier Wall gave to me when he entrusted me with this portfolio — a mandate to foster the development of an educated, skilled, productive, and representative workforce to fuel our growing economy. With a close eye on fiscal prudence, the government is working to fulfill that mandate while creating a fair and balanced labour environment.

Advanced Education, Employment and Labour's total budget for the '08-09 year is \$761 million, an increase of 11 per cent

over last year. New investments in relation to advanced education and employment specifically include \$12 million for the new graduate retention program, which will provide tuition rebates up to \$20,000 for post-secondary graduates who stay in the province for seven years after graduation. This investment is platform plus. As well, 10.5 million to fund 120-seat expansion for nursing education, 3.2 million to train more doctors by expanding medical student training to 100 seats and residency training to 120 — that's by 2010-11; nearly \$1 million to SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] for 12 medical diagnostic technician seats and 42 new training seats.

4.1 million for regional colleges, including support for a 200-seat expansion or increase for on-reserve adult basic education; \$33 million to enhance affordability for post-secondary learners, including supporting the tuition freeze for university students for a final year and to provide additional funding to SIAST; \$5 million for community-based organizations to bolster new skills training initiatives and offer models of empowerment; 1 million to the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology for on-reserve adult basic education and additional skills training; 45.8 million for post-secondary institution capital — capital that is so, so dramatically needed, including 6.8 million for health professional training capital; and 2.2 million for the International Vaccine Centre at the University of Saskatchewan, as it gets under way.

I'd like to take a moment to elaborate on some of the key priorities in this year's budget. Training capacity. We're committed to helping students and other stakeholders meet their education and training goals, so that they can take advantage of our province's remarkable job growth.

And that job growth is remarkable. Year over year, March to March, what we've seen is 14,000 new full-time jobs created in Saskatchewan. This year's budget provides an overall increase of over 5,500 new training and workforce development opportunities — that's seats and spots — which break down into 1,138 new institution-based training seats; 2,950 individuals will receive training services and spots related to workforce development; 1,500 opportunities that will roll out over the next four years through the recently signed Aboriginal skills and employment partnership. That's a public-private partnership agreement that links the federal government, the provincial government with private sector initiatives as well as key members of the First Nation and Métis communities in the North.

We're investing in 120-seat nursing expansion. 2008-09 marks the single largest increase in health training seats in Saskatchewan history. That reinforces the fact that we are ready for growth. In addition, expanded adult basic education programming will provide more learners with the critical first steps they need to engage and succeed in our new economy.

While this government will keep our promise regarding tuition, we're also committed to working with our institutions and student stakeholders to develop a longer-term policy on tuition management in the coming months.

Getting people ready for growth, thereby allowing us to sustain our growth and share its benefits, is not just about training

seats; it's also about providing those in need with the basic and essential skills they require to draw upon the educational and career opportunities available to them in Saskatchewan. To be effective, government must establish a diverse array of programs — if you will, a full menu — and initiatives to meet the needs of all learners and job seekers within a wide spectrum regardless of the barriers that exist, in fact to overcome the barriers that exist, thereby ensuring that their successful transition will be complete into the labour market.

New investments are made in several areas, including developing individual foundational skills to meet the labour market requirements today and in the future. This includes providing adult basic education to assist adult learners. It also includes increasing access to skills training through partnerships with business, industry associations, individuals, and public training institutions, and this budget ensures that.

Skills training spots and solutions will be available to targeted client groups and, to respond to labour market needs, we will be increasing the attachment to the labour market, reducing the barriers to employment, and easing transitions into the workforce. This will include work-based language training for recent immigrants. It will improve employers' retention of employees, and we've seen this most recently . . . I don't know if everyone had a chance to read the piece about Vecima but it's really one of the models that we see as we move forward.

Also a new employment service model will assess clients' needs who are not employment ready and refer them to third party service providers to address their barriers to employment. Community-based organizations will receive the resources needed to work with First Nation and Métis peoples, recent immigrants and newcomers, and others to prepare them for employment, licensing, and transition into the labour market in Saskatchewan.

Obviously the graduate retention program is a key element of our budget. Once learners meet their education and training goals, we are committed to keeping them right here at home. That's in stark contrast to what happened between 2001 and 2006 in this province where 35,000 people left the province. We already see dramatic improvements in the recent year.

To that end, our new graduate retention program is the most aggressive youth retention program in Canada, providing up to 20,000 in tuition rebates over seven years for graduates who remain in Saskatchewan. Under the program, the provincial government will rebate the tuition of certificate, diploma, three-year and four-year undergraduate post-secondary graduates as well as journey-persons who graduated from a Saskatchewan post-secondary institution from 2006 onward.

Graduates from those out-of-province programs where Saskatchewan purchased seats are also to be covered, and we will utilize this public policy instrument to also encourage others in specific strategic sectors to come back, or to come to — for the first time — Saskatchewan as well.

The program also creates a tremendous value-added proposition for our post-secondary institutions as they work to recruit students from outside the province. This is increasingly important. Even though our population is on the rise, what

we've seen as a legacy of the previous government is that there are going to be likely around 1,000 fewer high school graduates this year.

That means our post-secondary institutions need to have more instruments and new initiatives to ensure that we're recruiting more students into our post-secondary stream. Because of the uneven track record of the previous government, we need to secure the future by doing more to keep our young people in Saskatchewan and this initiative aims to do just that. As our recent population statistics show, we've turned a corner regarding our population and now it's time to capitalize on the momentum. The graduate retention program is an important step in that direction.

I want to speak specifically about support for First Nation and Métis learners. We're committed to ensuring that First Nation and Métis peoples participate more fully in our social and economic future. Their youth, perspectives, and energy provide Saskatchewan with a competitive advantage. This is the envy of other jurisdictions, and we will work with First Nation and Métis communities, institutions, organizations, and other partners to determine how best to achieve mutual growth and development. We'll also do this to help ensure that again those communities and individuals are better placed to reach their full potential and contribute culturally and economically to Saskatchewan.

This year's investment in education and training for First Nation and Métis peoples is another promise kept. New investments include but obviously extend well beyond 1.5 million for on-reserve adult basic education delivered through regional colleges and SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies], 500,000 for skills training delivered by SIIT, 1 million to be targeted to Aboriginal learners as part of the Aboriginal skills employment partnership, and 235,000 will go to the Dumont Technical Institute for enhanced student services.

Finally I'd like to talk about Saskatchewan's universities. Our universities, respected around the world, are a fountain of knowledge, innovation, and excellence for our students and scholars as recognized in Saskatchewan and well beyond. As we look at our universities we can think of four key criteria, or a fourfold framework. That is, we want them to continue to focus on excellence or, as some would say, pre-eminence. We want them to take a leadership role and continue that role regarding innovation.

We want them to be attentive to issues of inclusion that reaches beyond traditional elements of affordability and accessibility and extends into elements of equity. And we also want them to be effective. This is an increasingly competitive market and they need to demonstrate their competencies. To continue this important work, universities require adequate and predictable funding that will assist them to sustain today's momentum and build tomorrow's success. And in this budget we're helping to ensure that our universities are ready for growth. Our government is committed to working with universities on a new funding framework that will ensure appropriate public sector investment while respecting the autonomy of these institutions.

This said, we also expect that our universities will continue to

work diligently to establish new funding partnerships that will foster excellence and meet the dynamic needs of our increasingly and rapidly evolving knowledge economy. They do this by ensuring affordable learning, innovative discovery, and value-added education and services.

Finally, Mr. Chair, I wish to thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today — and the committee members — on an element of our budget that I believe reflects the government's core promise to the people of Saskatchewan — and that is, we are truly preparing and ready for growth. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister, for those opening comments. I'm certain that members of the Human Services Committee will have some questions for you. And at this time I would open the floor to committee members for questions. And I recognize Mr. Broten.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to the minister for joining us today. And thank you to all the officials from the ministry as well for accompanying him.

To start off I would like to ask a fairly broad question as the first one. In general terms or in the area of Advanced Education and Employment that we're looking at this afternoon has been an area of great interest for this province for some time and a lot of different programs have evolved over time and been in place.

Would you be able to identify what in your view are the three or four key areas that are presented in your plan for the ministry that are in stark contrast or in a different approach than what has been going on in years past?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well I appreciate the nature of the question. The question obviously is premised on the excellence of education — post-secondary education and advanced education — that's been established in Saskatchewan over the better part of a century. And there are elements of both continuity and change, as is to be expected when we're dealing with a sector or community as our learners and teachers.

So I think what one of the key elements obviously to start with is the graduate retention initiative. This is significant, especially as we look at what's been done in the past. And it links the, if you want, the incentive base to people staying in Saskatchewan. And it's certainly a departure from what's been offered in the past, although what . . . The last initiative came relatively quickly, I would say almost a knee-jerk response to the out-migration. And this is much more strategic in focus, and so that's . . . The first element relates to keeping our young people, our graduates here in Saskatchewan.

The next element I would say — and we can talk about again elements of continuity and change — it's really to begin to focus, and this will be an ongoing process, in building, if you want, a post-secondary system in Saskatchewan — that we need to have a much more holistic frame as far as ensuring that our institutions, as I have said, are at once focused on excellence, also focusing on inclusion. We see some certain successes. One of the members sitting here has certainly laid some of the groundwork for Saskatchewan being attentive to issues of accessibility and affordability. But excellence, innovation. And we've seen some past successes again. I think an element there

is obviously improved relations with the federal government, and that is a stark and marked contrast to what was happening previously.

Then we get into issues of equity, and finally effectiveness. And I think what you'll see from our government is we're simply not talking about funding. We're talking about investments. And when we talk about investments, we want to make sure we're also using the frame, return on investments. And that way we can begin to challenge our institutions and that broader learning community regarding results.

So that's a frame that I think probably is a welcome change certainly from the feedback that I'm receiving.

The next element is the whole notion of training. Now what we've done is we envision training as being a comprehensive continuum. And I think again, while there are elements of continuity in this, this is a much more holistic view than has been offered previously. That is, we know within our First Nation and Métis communities especially, but across the broader community as well, issues of literacy are at the forefront. It's one of the key indicators as far as people moving forward in their personal lives and in their professional lives. So what we've done is, we've set up, again building on very strong co-operative relations with the federal government where in the last 45 days or so we've seen \$105 million flowing in directly from Ottawa to Saskatchewan on skills training and education. And that's to build a much broader continuum. And we can talk more about that.

The last point I think really relates to helping to ensure that we keep what Charles Taylor would call our eye on our horizon of significance. That is, we're much more mindful of global competition as well as local realities. What that means for Saskatchewan is that whether we're speaking about elements of student recruitment for our universities, whether we're speaking about working more closely with First Nations, and I think importantly in this instance, being much more collaborative with our neighbouring provinces, thereby helping to redefine what Canada's West can look like.

I think these are some elements — I've named four — that I think offer a distinct and I would say progressive view to moving forward in this sector.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you very much. Thank you. So we can get into the budget document. I had a chance to go through the summary document that your ministry prepared. Is that unique to your ministry, having a separate document for things that are being done?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — You know, certainly this is an element of continuity. What we've seen in past years is certain ministries taking the opportunity to highlight some of their own initiatives. We actually thought again that it was probably a good idea, so what we were able to do is move forward on this. We see a real value-added element here. And so it's certainly a unique feature for the ministry, but it builds on past successes, so it's an element of continuity as it is as much change.

Mr. Broten: — Was AEL [Advanced Education, Employment and Labour] the only ministry that did it for this budget?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — You know, what we can see is part of a broader continuum, and if not the only one, it would be one of the few that did it. But it was part of a broader communications plan that was produced for the budget.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you very much.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — We want to make sure, by the way, what we're doing is, we want to make sure that jurisdictions all over the world — and we're going to do this through the Canadian embassy network — receive these documents. It's a way of actually helping to market the province. You can see an element to that relating to SaskJobs, and we're certainly setting some records as of late on the pickup through SaskJobs.

Mr. Broten: — Last question on the brochure. How many copies were prepared, and were they distributed within the ministry, outside to stakeholders? Who were they sent to?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, there are two tranches. What we see here is, the first tranche was 400. Those were distributed with a focus on Saskatchewan stakeholders. Mostly focused on budget day. We're now moving forward, I think, with a run of what will be 10,000, and those will be distributed around the world and across Canada.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. Moving into some remarks that you commented on. One area that you identified, which was a change, was the tuition rebate program. When I was going through the document I see, my understanding was that during the initial discussions about this program, during the campaign and so on, the language was for in Saskatchewan only. But I see in the description here that on the bottom of 41 of the budget summary document, it says:

Eligibility will also be extended to selective programs at post-secondary institutions outside Saskatchewan. These programs will be determined by the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Could you shed some light on what was the impetus for moving from an in-province only to a program that might have some out-of-province focus?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I think there were two or three key factors here. The first one, as was raised in the House, and I appreciated the question before Christmas when you did raise it, related to Saskatchewan seats that are purchased outside the province. So that's, in effect there are efficiencies that we recognize and realize there, and so we said it makes sense. Special emphasis there obviously on health care and health-related seats.

The second fundamental element is that we've got a powerful instrument here, especially for helping to address our labour market needs. Those are two of the key drivers as far as expanding this, but at the same time with an eye of fiscal prudence, and that is to make sure that we're taking a very, very focused look on specific sectors within the economy.

Mr. Broten: — Okay, so just to understand correctly, the areas where individuals from out of province might be eligible to receive this would be if they're in a seat that is purchased by the

Saskatchewan government out of province, studying in a field, and in specific areas as determined by the needs of the labour market. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — That's right. There's also a third element, and that is those students in programs funded by Saskatchewan but they may not be sitting in Saskatchewan seats.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. Could you please give an example of some of the, just for the record, some of the types of health care disciplines that the province is funding out of province? Examples of the types of people that might access this.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, by all means. We've got optometry, and those seats are at the University of Waterloo, obviously a very well-known program there. Occupational therapy at the University of Alberta. We see a program at BCIT [British Columbia Institute of Technology] — prosthesis — and you can see elements of that. Denturists at NAIT [Northern Alberta Institute of Technology]; nuclear medicine at SAIT [Southern Alberta Institute of Technology]; respiratory therapists, SAIT again; and sonography, SAIT again; and MRI [magnetic resonance imaging] at NAIT. So those are some of the key programs.

Mr. Broten: — So any student out of province in a health care discipline that's funded by the Saskatchewan government out of province will be eligible for this program?

Ms. Young: — The funding is for those programs that which we purchase seats plus those programs if they're in it, but not in a purchased seat. So there are a few individuals who are in one of those programs that maybe aren't in one of our seats, but they're theirs too. So we certainly would recognize them.

Mr. Broten: — So in a situation, let's say, I don't know . . . OTs, occupational therapists that you identified, say, random number, Saskatchewan funds five of those seats, but there are more than five seats in that discipline. So Saskatchewan born and raised people, perhaps five of them are filled by, the five Saskatchewan seats are coming from people here. But another Saskatchewan person has a very competitive application and receives one of the sixth or seventh or eighth seats. Would the sixth and seventh and eighth student also be eligible?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. Could you please describe how . . . You said the health care seats that we purchased, that's one area. The other area you mentioned are areas where there's a need in the labour market. Could you please explain which programs will be eligible as determined by the labour market?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Certainly as we move forward with some legislative alignment that needs to take place in order to put this in motion, we'll be finalizing those specific sectors. I anticipate that over the next 30 to 60 days we'll have that finalized. That's an ongoing process that'll be done in consultation with stakeholders across the province.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. So over the next 30 days you're going to identify which.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thirty to sixty.

Mr. Broten: — Thirty to sixty. Okay. And does the final decision rest with the ministry?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, it would.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. You mentioned you would be consulting stakeholders to determine what are the high-need, high-priority areas. What is the format for engaging those stakeholders? Is there a committee established? Will one be established? Is it ad hoc? How does that work?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — No. Our initial focus is likely to be by drawing on the expertise of the stakeholders of Enterprise Saskatchewan.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. So as Enterprise Saskatchewan meets and makes these decisions, do they provide a . . .

Hon. Mr. Norris: — No, they wouldn't make decisions. They would be offering recommendations. Just for clarification.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. Thank you. So Enterprise Saskatchewan will be discussing . . . This issue will be presented to them as a stand-alone discussion where they'll put in their comments as to what they see fit and then provide you with a recommendation.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, among other stakeholders. Obviously we're going to also include some of the leading post-secondary institutions. We're going to be speaking with the apprenticeship council and some others. Now the actual process, we'll roll that out, as I say, in the coming weeks.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. You identified Enterprise Saskatchewan as one group, and you identified the University of Saskatchewan possibly . . .

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Actually, I said universities.

Mr. Broten: — Universities, excuse me. University of Saskatchewan, University of Regina, and other stakeholders. So do each of these, does Enterprise Saskatchewan, U of S [University of Saskatchewan], U of R [University of Regina], FNUC [First Nations University of Canada], other stakeholders as well, do they each provide a recommendation to you? Or is everything at some point meshed together until one proposal that you look at?

Ms. Young: — We're still putting the process together in terms of how we're going to go out. But we do want to get to both the providers — the education institutes — plus business who actually have their finger on the labour market, the Labour Market Commission, and some of the other business associations. And then from there we would come back and put together a recommendation that we would put into place.

I suspect we will also be talking to health institutes. Because even though we're already doing some external health ones, we know that there may be more. So we'll put that list together, and then we have to look at it against of course the budget available and decide where we will proceed.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. So of the groups that have been identified so far for identifying the possible people that would be included and eligible for the program, health care sector has been identified as one . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes? Well people in the health care sector. Would that be through SAHO [Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations], through health regions?

Ms. Young: — The organizations, the health regions have a couple of organizations where they come together. One is the organization that is their human resource, tends to be vice-presidents, and that's a very good forum for us to get some good feedback.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. So VPs [vice-president] of health regions, universities, stakeholders of other types, private sector, saying what needs they require, and Enterprise Saskatchewan. So it is good to see that you're contacting a good number of people and a wide spectrum. And so given that this is occurring over the next 30 to 60 days, that's a fairly short time frame and those are a lot of people to meet with and receive feedback. Do you have meeting times already established with these groups or appointments with them to get that information?

Ms. Young: — We don't. We're still finalizing the process and so, no we haven't rolled it out yet.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. So is it possible the four groups that are identified here, is it possible that that list is not exhaustive at this time, that there could be others as well?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I would say it's reflective, by no means would I call it exhaustive.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. Thank you very much. Another area that, Minister Norris, that you had addressed in your opening remarks was the issue of a tuition freeze and the maintenance of tuition freeze and accessibility for students. It's good to see that it was extended for this year. Are there any . . . There's been some hinting perhaps that it might not be offered in the coming years. Do you have any insight or any expectations about how a tuition freeze might exist or not exist in the years to come?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — No, I think we've been pretty clear on this. We've said as far as keeping our campaign promise, we said that it would be in place for this year. I think the tuition freeze model is probably, as we look across Canada, it probably is challenged on issues of sustainability. We've seen jurisdictions that have either forced their institutions to work within that structure and their institutions have suffered as a result, or not taken an incrementalist approach as far as moving beyond that into a broader management category and so have as a result offered unfortunate and steep increases. And certainly one of our colleagues from Lloydminster actually was in BC [British Columbia] when BC went through that unfortunate process and it put a lot of stress and strain on students.

So somewhere between those two models, we think there's a middle ground to be had, and that is through engagement of our post-secondary institutions and with our student stakeholders and others, to come up with a more appropriate, fair, balanced, and I think progressive tuition management policy.

Mr. Broten: — So is it your expectation that next year tuition would be going up or going down?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — You know the key here — and this is something that's in stark contrast to the last government — and that is that tuition is actually an element that universities decide. They're autonomous institutions. Our task is to make sure that we're offering an investment and to ensure that that investment — this year we see it as 10 per cent, quite a significant increase in funding — and so to work collaboratively in partnership with the institutions but also in consultation and through co-operation with student groups and others to ensure that there's a tuition management policy.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. Thank you for that reply. I'm curious. What's your personal take? Do you think university tuition in the province is at a good level — too high, too low?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well, you know, a minister rarely reflects on personal matters.

Mr. Broten: — Good answer. Let's move on to the area of training seat numbers. In the news release following the budget, the one that I read identified the number, the increase of training seats as 1,138?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Institution-based training seats, that's right.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. So of the institution-based training seats of 138, could you please outline how . . . Sorry. Of the institutional-based training seats that you, of the 1,138, of that amount, could you please identify how they will be distributed across the different post-secondary institutions?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well I can do it categorically. And it's foundational skills, 360 seats; skills training, 612; and health education, 166. In addition to that and I think this is where there is a significant change, and Wynne will get into more detail here in a bit, I think the significant change is that we envision the skills training education continuum as a horizontal piece. And what we see is, as I've said — and this does not take into consideration the \$5 million investment to community-based organizations — so the 5,500 seats that are being funded in training, we see as a broader continuum. That is the institution-based seats would just represent one element of that.

What's an easy example? An easy example is literacy. How can you have someone apply let's say to a SIAS-based program if they've got literacy issues especially below that level 3 competency. So what we're working to do — and this applies right across Saskatchewan — what we're working to ensure is that some of the basic foundational skills are put in place. That way individuals can move all along that continuum or in and out of that continuum as to meet their full potential and to align with a job.

I think the key challenge here for Saskatchewan right now, it's an area that I think we need to do a much better job at especially when we look at global competition, is we need to tighten the nexus between education, the experience piece, and employment. We've got to tighten those three factors up, and I see the elements coming together. It's not perfect. There's a lot

more work to be done here. But we've got a significant investment in skills training and education.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. So you identified three themes of training or three general types of training. Can you give any sort of breakdown according to the institutions?

Ms. Young: — I get to read the list. ABE [adult basic education] on-reserve — and that will be through regional colleges and SIIT — there are 300 spots there. ABE through the ASEP [Aboriginal skills and employment partnership] program, the new northern program, are 60 spots. So that's for foundational skills or adult basic education.

In skills training we have the Regina and Saskatoon trades and skills centres with 170 seats; SIIT skill training expansion with 150 seats; the Apprenticeship and Trade Commission, 250; SIAST industrial mechanics and carpentry, 42. So that totals 612 around skills training.

And then in health education we have, we have others in terms of new training opportunities or seats. We've got the College of Medicine undergrad for 16; the College of Medicine for postgrads, for the placements, 24; the nursing program, the NEPS [nursing education program of Saskatchewan] program, we have 84 coming on in the fall. And we also have the re-establishment of the psychiatric nursing program at 30 spots and finally, medical diagnosis at SIAST for 12. And so that's 166 for health. And that should total 1,138.

Mr. Broten: — The College of Medicine seats that you identified — the 16 and then the 24 postgraduate seats — those are probably some of the more expensive seats out of the whole list that you made there. For the funding of residency positions I know there's been, with ramping up the number of undergrad seats, you have to at the same time build the capacity in the residency system because a lot of the upper-year residents do the undergraduate instruction.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — They'll be going to 120 is what the ultimate goal is. I think the key on this . . . You're exactly right. Based on dialogue with the College of Medicine, somewhere in the neighbourhood of 80 per cent of physicians stay where they do their residency. So it's absolutely imperative for the province of Saskatchewan to help ensure that there are more residency opportunities here within the province. And it's consistent with our campaign platform and certainly allows us to build on our basis. Wynne, do you have some specifics as far as the timeline?

Ms. Young: — I think we're reaching that in a couple of years. Let me just . . .

Hon. Mr. Norris: — So what we see here is funding commitments made by the previous government. So we're building again; there's elements of continuity here. So the '08 budget accelerates the expansion that would already have taken place and takes it to levels that we committed to in our platform. So again elements of continuity and change: '08-09 — 84 undergraduate seats, 84 postgraduate residency options; '09-10 — 96 undergraduate seats, 108 postgrad residency positions; '10-11 — 100 undergraduate seats, 120 postgraduate residency positions.

So we see a rollout over the course of two or three years.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. So what's the traditional ratio of funding of the undergraduate seats to the residency seats?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Okay, so you're asking the dollar ratio between . . .

Mr. Broten: — The actual number of seats.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Or seats themselves. Okay, sorry.

Mr. Broten: — The total undergrad to total postgrad, yes.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — If I understand correctly, it's been a 1:1 ratio and we're expanding that, so we're going 100:120.

Mr. Broten: — Okay, thank you. Another area that you addressed in your opening remarks, Minister Norris, was the area of regional colleges and how that fits into the learning continuum that you've been discussing. Well I in some ways perhaps just answered part of your question, but could you please describe how you see regional colleges fitting into the mix of post-secondary training across the province, please?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, you bet. I think one of the elements here is what I would call . . . [inaudible] . . . and we're going to work to overcome this structurally, but I think what has been reflected in the ministry and is going to be changing. What we've seen are two different streams, if you will. We've seen a university-based stream, that is, with universities, affiliated and federated and, I think, one associate collage. Then we've seen, on the other side we've seen SIAST and the regional colleges. And so one of the key questions I've asked is, why are we doing this?

For example in NEPS, in nursing education program we see that actually there's co-operation between the universities and SIAST. So why don't we begin to envision a much more comprehensive and inclusive and, if we do this correctly, mutually reinforcing system that will allow students more flexibility, will allow more focus in specific programming, will encourage our regional colleges to focus on some of the strengths in their regional economies and communities and also to partner more effectively with the private sector and thereby helping to meet some of those most immediate and growing economic demands as well as providing the broader services of post-secondary and advanced education within those communities?

So I see us moving towards a much more comprehensive, mutually reinforcing, and complementary system. And I think that this is a key area of change, as I've highlighted. I think that this has traditionally been . . . the systems have been delinked. And I think as a result we've missed synergies and not maximized programming options.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. Could you please identify the funding that has been given to regional colleges in this budget, please?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, the overview . . . and Wynne will be able to speak in more detail to it. But what we can look at . . .

And again this speaks to changing the system. We see that there's an 8.4 per cent increase for SIAST and the regional colleges. And the breakdown there — Raman's got it — we can see a 1.4 million increase for negotiated in-scope and out-of-scope salary increases. We can see 2.7 million in funding under the federal-provincial labour market agreement.

That LMA [labour market agreement] — again we signed that 40, 45 days ago — that's a six-year agreement, \$90 million. And Saskatchewan was third province out of the gate to actually have that signed. And certainly at the recent CMEC [Council of Ministers of Education, Canada] conference in Toronto where my colleague, the Deputy Premier, joined myself and our delegation, it was certainly seen as a success for Saskatchewan to be the third province out.

So within that we see 1.5 million for enhanced learner supports at regional colleges which will support the equivalent of 16 staff to provide learner assessments, career counselling, and job coaching; one million to allow the regional colleges to expand existing adult basic education capacity with a focus on on-reserve. And we see that there will be an additional 200 seats. And we see about point two four million at the Dumont Technical Institute to allow that institute to hire additional program coordination and student counselling.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — And that's net increase, 4.15 million and actually the number specific to this is 20.1 per cent.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. Have you received any feedback from the regional colleges as to how they, if they feel that's an appropriate level of funding?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, you know, we've received feedback from right across our stakeholders, and the obvious answer is, you know, stakeholders would always appreciate more funding. What I can say is we're looking at helping to foster and facilitate some new partnerships. Those dialogues are underway with the goal of helping to enhance revenue streams.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. What kind of partnerships to enhance revenue streams?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well I think here what we can turn to is with a focus on public-private partnerships, and so we see increased opportunities within local and increasingly vibrant economies where we may be able to find some additional support for some of our regional institutions.

Mr. Broten: — In your opening remarks in speaking of partnerships, you mentioned the Vecima feature in the paper, the announcement that you had. Are there are other discussions going on right now with different companies interested in P3s [public-private partnership]?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, there are a number of discussions going on. I would call them energized discussions as organizations look to meet labour force needs, and so, yes, the answer. Another obvious example is ASEP, where we had Cameco playing a leadership role but certainly not acting in isolation. We've got some very significant industry leadership

focusing on ASEP. ASEP is a \$33 million initiative that focuses just over \$15 million from the federal government, over \$6 million on our side and the balance coming in from the private sector. And that's with a focus on Saskatchewan's North, with an emphasis on First Nation and Métis learners. So the answer is, yes there are a number of discussions underway.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. Do the discussions occur within a structured framework, or are they more sort of one-off . . . not one-off discussions but as someone has an interest that generates the conversation? Or is there a venue that this takes place?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — No, I would call it continuum. Some, for example the ASEP announcement that recently came forward, you know, this is part of a very structured dialogue. Others come in through the post-secondary or advanced educational institutions themselves. Others are being demand driven out of the private sector. So we see a full spectrum of what that looks like.

Mr. Broten: — In recent weeks, we've seen the discussions and the possible merger of two regional colleges, great plains regional college. Is that the new name?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well it's the proposed name.

Mr. Broten: — What is your position on mergers? Is this something we might see more of, or are you in favour? Opposed? Any thoughts?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, I do have some thoughts on this. What we've done, we were approached by the two colleges, and they've gone through some processes. Those processes are still under way. It was reported in the media that we had already given approval of that.

That is in fact not the case. It's under consideration. And so the element here is consistent with building a much more dynamic, mutually reinforcing, if you want, system, post-secondary system. That post-secondary system, with all due respect for everyone here in this building and the work that's under way in our ministry, doesn't always have to be shaped by people in the capital. And so one of the things that we turned and said is, you know, let's have a look at what local communities and local needs and local economic factors as well as community-based factors actually would like to do within a system. And so I would say this is an example of a rather organic approach to system building.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. If I could just back up in our conversation a bit, about 40 minutes. When we were discussing — not to re-do the whole session but just to go back to a topic we touched on. To go back to the tuition rebate program, does your ministry expect any administrative costs with distinguishing between the in-province and the out-of-province individuals that would be eligible or not eligible? Have you done any forecasting on some of the administrative burden that may be?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Just I guess through the use of technology, and there will be some administrative support required, but we figure and feel that we can do that with the

existing admin support that already is in place.

Mr. Broten: — On the tuition rebate program, you made the decision to expand it from Saskatchewan only to out-of-province. In that . . .

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Strategic focus.

Mr. Broten: — Strategic focus. In that decision likely you looked at a number of options perhaps, from keeping it totally shut to blowing it wide open and inviting everyone. Do you have any idea if you were to make it eligible to anyone wanting to come to the province, how much that would cost?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes. There was some modelling done. The costs . . . well actually what I'll do is I'll ask Raman to speak to it because we can anticipate what the costs are going to be both in the ramp-up and then as it comes online more fully and then what that difference would be.

Mr. Visvanathan: — The benefits of the program accrue to the individual over a seven-year time period: 10 per cent for each of the first four years, 20 per cent for years 5, 6, and 7. So as more students are entitled, the cost increases. So in the first year it would be just 10 per cent. The next year it's sort of the second year for the first student, 10 per cent for the second year. So our estimate of about 1,000 out-of-province students in year 7 is about 11 to \$12 million would be the full cost once we got fully ramped-up for that level of out-of-province students.

Mr. Broten: — And so that's for the 1,000 that you'll likely be accepting from out of province.

Mr. Visvanathan: — Well if there were to be that number of out-of-province students, that would be our estimate of what the cost would be.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. Thank you. Well that is the end of a few questions that I have. Mr. McCall, would . . . go back to the Chair of course.

The Chair: — I understand Mr. McCall has some questions. The Chair recognizes Mr. McCall.

Mr. McCall: — Indeed I do, Mr. Chair, and thank you for recognizing me. And I've certainly got an abiding interest in the subject matter presented to the committee today. I'd like to re-welcome the minister and the officials, changed and continuing.

I guess the first question I'd have as pertains to . . . I'm curious around the consideration of the minister in terms of the tuition policy beyond the freeze. Certainly other jurisdictions have had different tuition management policies. What we had proposed was a rebalancing of tuition to put it in the lower end of what was being charged for tuition and then pegging it to CPI [consumer price index] or some kind of a measure so that there was room to manoeuvre on that. And certainly this approach and the different components of this approach have been in practice in neighbouring jurisdictions such as British Columbia and Alberta.

I guess the first question I'd have is, in the case of the

jurisdictions that have pegged tuition to some kind of external indicator, do you see that with interfering with the autonomy of the universities?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — You know, I think at this stage obviously it's . . . what we've said is we'd meet our campaign promise, and that we'd be engaged in dialogue with stakeholders, key stakeholders in Saskatchewan — the institutions and especially the students.

And I think from there, what you're speaking about is a specific mechanism. And you know, as we move forward, I welcome the dialogue but I really don't have a comment. As we go forward I want to hear from the institutions, and I know our folks are doing some work, and I look forward to seeing what they're working on and also what the stakeholders have.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. Well I guess in that regards, certainly it's been stated the freeze is on for the year to come and beyond that is the subject of these consultations. I guess, can you provide the committee with any detail as to how those consultations will take place?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — No, mostly what we've been doing since the November election is obviously a Speech from the Throne rolled out; then we went into the work of preparing for a budget. As we've come out with a budget we've focused on this year, especially as it relates to this subject matter. And I look forward in the coming months to dedicating more attention to that subject.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. At the outset of your remarks you talked about the importance of measurables, benchmarks. I guess in the interest of that approach to management of public policy, do you have a specific date in mind? Do you have a specific, sort of, process in mind in terms of the number of stakeholders that you want to contact, the means by which you set about engaging the public on this topic, I guess? And do you have an end date in mind for the announcement of the new policy?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — What we've been focusing on to date is on this budget. Your question pertains to future budgets.

Certainly there are a number of frameworks and instruments that can be utilized for quality assurance, and those we're mindful of. And we'll, as I say, the officials are, they'll be turning their attention to those broader issues in the coming weeks.

Mr. McCall: — If you could refresh my memory, in this budget, were there any specific measures that impact directly in terms of the matter of student housing, be it through capital expenditure or dedicated funds?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — No, I don't think that's the case.

Mr. McCall: — I'm sorry?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes. No, not to . . . I'll just confer for . . . No, the capital requests have not been focused on student housing.

Mr. McCall: — I'll get to a broader question on capital in a

moment. But as specifically regards . . .

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Sorry. What I will say is there has been some adjustment relating to student loan shelter rates. So as it pertains to funding available for students, we see an increase of 13 per cent.

Mr. McCall: — Could you take us through that, chapter and verse? I realize you've got some people that could take us through . . .

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I'm sure Raman could do a chapter and verse.

Mr. McCall: — Infinite chapters and verses on this. But if you could just describe how that came about and what the measure is.

Mr. Visvanathan: — Okay. I'll do a comparison for four different categories, a comparison between '07-08 and '08-09. As you will be aware, the rates are effective August 1 for the next academic year.

For a single living away from home, the rate in '07-08 was 335; it'll increase to 377. For single parents, 538 in '07-08 to 638, an increase of 19 per cent. For married students, 670 in '07-08, increasing to 753 in '08-09. And for each dependent child, an additional amount from 110 in '07-08 to 115 in '08-09.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. And was that decision taken as part of the budget deliberations, or was it part of any previous considerations?

Mr. Visvanathan: — It's part of an annual process where we'd consider the rates and adjust them as would be considered appropriate given the current cost of living and whatever inflationary increases may have accrued.

Mr. McCall: — I think the reference point, if I may, is CMHC [Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation]?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, the reference point on that is CMHC.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. As regard to specific housing capital projects out of the various post-secondary institutions, I realize SIAST Woodlands and folks in Prince Albert have done a fair amount of work in terms of housing capital there. Saskatoon between SIIT, SIAST, the U of S, there's some fairly significant both needs and ongoing plans. If you could give us a bit of the state of play as you see it in terms of the needs with regards to those two specific locales and what the department's done in this budget with regards to capital allocation and what you see as go-forward pressures.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I think the go-forward pressures . . . I'll speak broadly to them. Obviously this is a key question. It's a question that I posed to both university officials and specifically to the U of S, to the USSU [University of Saskatchewan Students' Union], and I think the university officials certainly have both an immediate and longer term plan for student housing.

And we're having a look at that now, that I think certainly the

USSU is still trying to understand the scope and scale. It's the type of question that I framed: what is the scope and scale of the student need? That's how I framed the question to the USSU. And I think they're still working to comprehend what the scope and scale is for their student stakeholders. But for the university obviously, as I say, there are both immediate plans and longer term plans.

Mr. Visvanathan: — We have been working with SIAST over the last couple of years or so with respect to the P.A. [Prince Albert] housing project. They're proposing 36 two-bedroom units to be just north of the Woodland Campus, a project worth about 5.7 million. Sask Housing Corporation have committed about 3.4 million. SIAST is actively pursuing private sector equity sponsorship. They have some of that secured, still waiting to secure some additional funds, and would propose to take a mortgage to finance the balance of that project. I've been in regular contact with the president of SIAST, Dr. Bob McCulloch, and he's in final stages of trying to secure that equity financing which is kind of the final piece to put all the financing together.

Mr. McCall: — I guess shifting gears a bit, but on the capital front as a whole, what allowances have been made for capital for the regional colleges in the budget?

Mr. Visvanathan: — It's about \$860,000 and that would provide each college with an allocation of 25,000 each to provide for minor renovations, and then we will look at the list of additional projects to spend the other \$650,000.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — If I could, on this matter, it's . . . Actually I was surprised, I'll be frank, when I received the initial briefings and certainly, Reg, you and I have talked about this. What we inherited was a system without a system. That is, there's no capital allocation mechanism within the advanced education system in our province. And so this led to, what I would term, a system of ad hocery. And so what I've requested is that a framework be put in place. Initial dialogue has begun. My understanding, Reg, is that at least one, maybe a couple of meetings have now taken place regarding a capital priority system. And that way we can begin to better prioritize, anticipate, and therefore plan out in what I hope would be a multiple year basis some of the capital requirements across the system.

And so again an element of, I think, change and in this instance improvement. The reason I would categorize it as an improvement is that certainly what we're trying to do is make sure that the system is depoliticized, that the system allows for a matrix that is transparent, and that all stakeholders can better understand to move forward. So that system is being put in place. I'm pleased with the progress to date, again not bad for the first few months in office. It's something that Saskatchewan must move towards.

Mr. McCall: — Well I guess I'd state my agreement with certain of the sentiments expressed by the minister, Mr. Chair, but I'd beg to differ in that I think he's inherited a system where work was being undertaken to construct that very framework. But I guess the question . . .

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I didn't see any evidence of that.

Mr. McCall: — If I could . . . Well that's a matter of debate of course. The question I would have in terms of the allocation then in the allocation of capital, why the . . . you know, of the \$50-plus million, or what was the exact total allocated to capital in the budget? If you could just refresh my memory.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — 45 million.

Mr. McCall: — Of the 45 million, and again how much of that was allocated to capital in the regional college sector?

Mr. Visvanathan: — 850,000.

Mr. McCall: — I guess it's an interesting contrast certainly in terms of the allocation of the capital. I guess I would ask the minister and the officials where they see the, you know, work on . . . the general framework notwithstanding, I guess I'd ask a specific question around where they see the immediate pressures in terms of capital requirements on the regional college front?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well I don't think you can put the broader systemic questions aside. In fact it's because of the inadequacies of whatever system was in place, and I think those inadequacies . . . What we're doing is we're seeing that for example capital requirements and investments range from investments in centres of excellence at some of our universities, and obviously we see some new capital going on in around InterVac. So that's in the same category as upgrade and facility upgrades as regional colleges.

And so what we have here is without a capacity to actually stream and then identify key priorities and to categorize them differently. This is one of the legacies that we've inherited.

So what we see for this year is moving forward on the existing framework and establishing a new framework that will allow us to have different categories and different priorities for whether we're speaking about centres of excellence that will obviously not only have local significance but global significance, not to mention socio-economic significance, and more based targeted funding for capital initiatives on a go-forward basis on the regional college front.

I think what we do see is, with increasing capital costs — and this will be, again, it will focus a change — is that we will put increased emphasis on public-private partnerships and other innovations to ensure that the private sector plays a much greater role in helping to offset some of the capital costs on major initiatives.

So we are, we're moving forward. We're building a new system. And we're introducing a framework that frankly, I think, probably was overlooked by the last government; and that is we can be much more innovative on the partnerships that we have, and therefore and thereby ensuring that there's a greater role for private and community-based capital within some of our advanced educational institutions.

Mr. McCall: — Does the minister see any limits to the possibilities with P3s?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — You know, are there limits? I certainly

see new initiatives. We see out of the federal government some institutions, some new initiatives that will help to strengthen P3s. I think P3s obviously offer a very broad range of initiatives. And I would say that some of the areas of collaboration that we're exploring extend well beyond traditional notions of P3s.

What I can say is that certainly in some of the dialogue that I've been engaged in, actors and institutions and entities who previously have not been in Saskatchewan are now interested in Saskatchewan. And they not only are interested in coming and doing business in Saskatchewan; they're interested in helping to set up new training initiatives and making investments into specific communities.

Mr. McCall: — Specifically how? You've talked about discussions you've had. You've talked about going beyond the traditional conception. Specifically how?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well I think, as I've said, a couple of examples are obvious. The ASEP initiative has been very, very useful. The Vecima announcement I think is indicative of ongoing dialogue. And it extends well beyond there.

Mr. McCall: — How does the ASEP initiative extend beyond the traditional conception of P3s?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well what it does is it establishes a framework that allows us to see new collaborative models, especially as it relates to resource development and communities that are affected by such resource development.

Mr. McCall: — I guess, specifically how? Perhaps . . . I'm not just trying to be intentionally dense here, but I'd appreciate some specifics.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I'll be very specific. We have an industry-driven board on ASEP that is world-class. And so when you bring individuals from industry, from communities, from First Nation and Métis organizations to a table, my experience has been that the conversation focuses much more succinctly and clearly on results. And the recent announcement proved that. Certainly some of the dialogue that I'm having has been very, very, very promising in this area.

Mr. McCall: — But again I fail to see how this is breaking from previous traditions in terms of the way that the private sector has partnered in things such as Northlands College or specific training initiatives throughout the resource sector, particularly in the North, so perhaps if you could enlighten me on that.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, you bet. There are organizations — I'll be frank — that weren't interested in doing business in Saskatchewan under the previous government that are much more interested in coming to Saskatchewan now. They have experience, expertise, and resources that they're contemplating investing in Saskatchewan because of the change of government and because of some of the public policy changes that are under way.

Mr. McCall: — Cool.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I'll get back to you on the days we have the announcements.

Mr. McCall: — Very interesting. Okay. I guess how does the minister see something like Northlands College in the sort of hub of a distributed post-secondary educational model in the North? What developments does the minister see coming online there?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I appreciate the question. I've recently had a discussion with a former parliamentarian who's playing an increased role in Northlands. And it's that kind of insight and vision about what distributed learning can be within some of the distinctive features of those communities. I think I would approach that with an open mind but also being informed that the opportunities of that region are changing quite dramatically.

Mr. Visvanathan: — Yes. One further example of public-private partnerships, a recent announcement a couple of months ago at Moose Jaw. Palliser Campus received a contribution of, I think it was close to \$200,000 from Alliance Pipeline to help equip one of the laboratories there.

So I think that's a good partnership between the private sector and SIAST and helping to make students have access to the current technology, and obviously a benefit for Alliance in terms of having students trained on that new technology.

Mr. McCall: — And we're glad to see the donation. But I guess there's been something of an assertion made that there's been a break with previous practice, you know. And I'm curious still as to what's new in terms of the current contemplation around P3's and how that's conceived. And I guess, you know, in response to Mr. Visvanathan's mention of the Alliance donation, no industry partners made donations previously? Would that be the case?

Mr. Visvanathan: — I think they've made more modest contributions, so this was a more significant contribution that was made and profiled as such.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. So back to the North. In terms of the capital needs and the program needs in the North, what's the minister's understanding of the pressures there and beyond ASEP? How is the ministry responding to those, both with this current budget and beyond?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I think the question rests actually on a legacy of one of the most successful branding initiatives that has been undertaken in the last hundred years. And that is, more than a century ago the federal government branded Saskatchewan with a focus on a wheat-growing province and the southern portion of Saskatchewan. And so, whether in mindset within and beyond the province, the North has often been overlooked. I think significantly along the way it was a prime minister from Saskatchewan; and obviously Prime Minister Diefenbaker paid particular attention to the North.

I think what we're seeing under Brad Wall's leadership is increased attention to our North as well as other communities, communities that perhaps were overlooked by the last government in rural areas. So we see that obviously there are two or three key questions to ask. First question is, do we

appreciate what we have in the North? And I think the answer is that for too long it's been overlooked. Next, is there a gap between what we have — and we can talk about human resources, we can talk about natural resources, we can talk about opportunities for tourism — and the alignment of our educational activities in the North? And again I think we've been lacking.

So what we need to do with focus on not simply instrumentalism, that is not simply on economic development, but in no way shying away from it, but in allowing individuals and communities to meet their full potential and sustainable potential.

We see that we need to better align again the educational opportunities that are available in the North as well as to northerners. And the distinction is often individuals from the North have come down and continue to come down to other parts of Saskatchewan and other parts of the country to ensure that the education, the experience equals employment opportunities and opportunities for empowerment. Those are some specific questions that we're working to address.

As far as the general question, you know, I think we can and should be doing a better job. I think we're uniquely positioned. I think one of the initiatives, and I want to give credit to the last government as well as to individuals and institutions in Saskatchewan in initiatives like the University of the Arctic, where Saskatchewan post-secondary collaboration occurred. And I want to see a lot more of that. And the post-secondary institutions know that. Again I think we've seen some missed opportunities as far as encouraging increased collaboration between institutions in Saskatchewan.

But in this instance there was a framework of co-operation through the University of the Arctic. That would be one instrument that we could point to and turn and say, obviously this is a way for not just simply for northerners, but for northerners especially to have increased access to university-based programming. Obviously the college-based programming is also important, as is the again, the alignment or coordination with industry.

And I'll ask Raman to elaborate if there are some specifics on that. But I think the easy answer is it's too often been overlooked but I want to applaud the previous government. I think initiatives like the University of the Arctic provide some important first steps.

Mr. Visvanathan: — Yes. Some of the additional investments in this year's budget are intended to allow everybody in the province an opportunity to participate in skills training and take advantage of the growing economy. Some of the additional investments through the regional colleges this year is approximately 1.5 million to the colleges, about 200,000 to DTI [Dumont Technical Institute] to allow them to increase their student support services, to increase their counselling capacity, to do student assessment and placement, help students through achievement through their programs, and then add job coaches so that they can make that necessary connection into the labour market; following models similar to the construction careers projects through SIIT which have been very successful.

When we talked to the regional colleges around their priorities, those are the kinds of things that they talked about in terms of the current cohort of students that are struggling a little bit and need the extra resources. We wanted to make sure we got everybody through the program and into the workplace, so we made targeted investments into those areas. And we're optimistic that those will help to give everybody an opportunity to participate in the system and to get into the labour market just as quickly as possible.

We're looking at innovations through workplace essential skills, investments through the Regina, Saskatoon trades and skills centres to get those that may not have completed high school or at risk of not completing, getting them back into some training, other interventions, allow them to get into the labour market. You may be familiar with some of the early successes in Regina. So I think those are some of the new innovations that we have to try and reach that cohort of students.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — If I could, there is a new federal-provincial initiative — and again demonstrating the fruits of co-operation with Ottawa. It's a social initiative. It is in the ballpark of 35 or \$36 million. And the terms of reference of that initiative — so it would be building on the LMA, it would be building on ASEP. And some of the core elements of that will be focused on the North. So as far as specific resources, we'll be seeing some new specific resources challenged into the North shortly.

Mr. McCall: — What is the title of that program?

Ms. Young: — Community development trust initiative.

Mr. McCall: — And that was part of the current federal budget, or how is that rolled out?

Ms. Young: — That was announced . . .

Mr. Visvanathan: — Yes, it was the announcement I think in January; \$1 billion across the country, \$10 million allocation to each jurisdiction. The rest is split up on a pro rata population basis. So 36.4 million is Saskatchewan's allocation.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — The Prime Minister came to Prince Albert for that.

Mr. McCall: — Yes, okay. There we go. Adult basic education — I was pleased to see the increases in the budget, but I can't help but wonder what that leaves for possible wait-lists throughout the sector. Does the department have a — or the ministry, pardon me — have a handle on what the wait-lists might be for adult basic education?

Mr. Visvanathan: — Sure. The current estimate is about 1,200 to 1,300, which is down about 20 or 30 per cent from previous years, where it was around a 2,000 mark. So we're expecting that lots of people are into the labour market, which is a good thing; and as you've noted, increasing investments in basic education to allow greater participation rates.

Mr. McCall: — I have a number of other questions under the specific heading of First Nations and Métis initiatives, but I guess at this point I'll cede the floor to the Chair, of course, and

then perhaps to my colleague from Eastview.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. McCall. Ms. Junor.

Ms. Junor: — Yes. I have a few questions. And welcome to the minister and his officials, many of who I recognize. How many actual nursing education program seats, the NEPS program, are being added new to this budget that were not promised by the previous government?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, I appreciate the question. On this budget, again elements of continuity and change, we see continuity. We're moving forward on seats that have been promised on a go-forward basis. The key element here is simply institutional capacity. In fact some of my early discussions that I was engaged in related to where we could actually house some of the new nursing training seats. And we've made some progress on that front obviously, so the new seats will be added in next year's budget. But what we are doing is funding. And I think that brings it up to 478 and we'll be moving to 520 for next year.

Ms. Junor: — For next year or for 2010?

Mr. Visvanathan: — By 2009-2010, there will be 520 in the NEPS and 30 in the psych nursing.

Ms. Junor: — And so none of this includes the LPNs [licensed practical nurse] either.

Mr. Visvanathan: — No. There's an additional 200 or so LPN seats. So seats vary from year to year, especially the ones that are brokered through the regional colleges.

Ms. Junor: — So then back to the initial question. How many of these actual seats, the increase, are new to the Sask Party promise, and how many were promised under the previous government?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes. What we're doing is we're moving forward on with elements of continuity for this year. The key barrier there related to just simply space, and then from here we'll be moving forward.

Ms. Junor: — You haven't got an answer for me. I'm asking a number. I'm not asking about the space, although I do have a question about that coming up. So you don't have a number?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, we just gave you a number.

Ms. Junor: — That was for '09-10. I'm asking, in this budget how many new seats were promised that were not new, actually because they were already promised by the previous government?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Actually we're funding to fulfill that commitment, then we have a go-forward basis. The stagger this year was focused on twofold, primarily on space but also on staffing.

Ms. Junor: — So basically the answer then, what I'm getting from you is that there are no new seats this year that you can attribute to your own party, that these are just fulfillments of the

promises that have been made previously.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — As we adjust and ramp up in order to account for more training seats that will be coming forward, and that's mostly premised on space and staffing.

Ms. Junor: — I think I heard that my question was yes, I'm right.

So now the physical space that you brought up, that has always been the problem about, it's not only that you add a seat and fund it, you also have to add the teachers or the professors, you have to add the clinical placements as well as the actual classroom space and lab space. So where is the new space going to be? At the U of S? At any of the SIAST campuses? Can you tell us where?

Mr. Visvanathan: — There'll be a combination of increases in both Regina and Saskatoon. In Regina the increase starting in September '08, 49 seats; and in Saskatoon, 25 additional seats. In May '08, 10 additional seats at the U of S through the second degree entry option.

Ms. Junor: — My question was actually about physical space. Have you put some money into the system to actually do anything to increase the physical space at any of these institutions?

Mr. Visvanathan: — Yes, \$6.4 million in incremental funding this year to add capacity in Regina and Saskatoon. That number includes \$1.6 million for a health simulation lab comparable to the one that was established here in Regina.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — And that's at the SIAST location in . . .

Mr. Visvanathan: — It'll be in Kelsey.

Ms. Junor: — So is there any contemplation of expanding physical space in any of the other programs? I think there's a program in P.A., some seats in P.A. Is there any capacity to do that or any anticipation that you will?

Mr. Visvanathan: — At this point, it's not part of the plan.

Ms. Junor: — Okay. Then my next question is again to space — because this is a huge piece of the space puzzle — is a target date for the completion of the academic health sciences centre.

The Chair: — Minister, could you identify your official that is taking the seat beside you for Hansard, please.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Certainly. This is Reg Urbanowski.

Mr. Urbanowski: — The completion date for the academic health sciences centre is still targeted for 2012-13.

Ms. Junor: — That's the target date for completion. I noticed there was no new money put in this budget. What is the progress in this year's budget anticipated?

Mr. Urbanowski: — There was no new budget scheduled as per the cash flow that was identified last year. They are going to what's called a D wing, and that's gone out to tender. And so

it's progressing as was originally planned. It is two or three months later, but it's progressing pretty much as planned.

Ms. Junor: — What do you anticipate that will have to be added to the budget next year and— so that's '09 — in the next three years?

Mr. Urbanowski: — Yes, there's a cash flow if I can just . . . The cash flow that was originally planned for last year called for an additional source of funding coming in '08-09 of 100 million, and then adding on from there to reach to the 251 million, was the original projected cost.

Ms. Junor: — Okay. I'd like to move on to the graduate retention program. And I know you have added some out-of-province programs targeted by what specialty they are. But I'm interested in how this would apply to someone, because you say live and work in Saskatchewan. Say you take a person who is living and working here and taking a master's program somewhere else and graduates from that program.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes. The easy answer is graduate retention piece focuses on undergraduate studies. And certainly one of the pieces that we'll be moving forward on in conjunction and complementing the tuition management piece is the Saskatchewan scholarship piece, and that's a more appropriate and better placed instrument to address graduate student needs.

Ms. Junor: — So is there any . . . I'm not sure exactly how it works, but I know it rolls out over many years, the program. And so is there . . . That's the incentive for people to stay. There's not a return for service. It's just plain because you can't get it if you don't stay here and work, right?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes. I think with 16,000 people having moved back to Saskatchewan . . . Obviously today we see land sales out of natural resources that are obviously record breaking. We see that it's not just a matter of people staying here. We think they're going to be thriving here and certainly the feedback we've received back from students is that this is a welcome initiative.

Ms. Junor: — The feedback I've received, and I don't talk to as many students as you do, I don't anticipate, but that it is complicated and it's a complicated process. And so I've even been asked to ask. But this is the feedback I've got, that it is not an easy process to get into.

But that's not the next question. I mean our time is moving along and my colleagues do have other questions. So in the budget summary book there was a mention about money set aside to fund ongoing activity to maintain the College of Medicine's accreditation status. And I'd like to know what exactly still has to be funded and how much money is being spent on it.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I was pleased with the last government that they finally undertook action on this. It was a very troubling phenomenon where we had on one campus Canada's largest science project with a focus on at least significant medical research, complemented by an ongoing work — I mean that's the CLS of course, Canadian Light Source synchrotron —

complemented of course with the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization, the broadest life science programming available to any Canadian university. And it was a very troubling phenomenon to have for a long time a College of Medicine that was put on probation.

So I want to applaud the last government for finally acting to close that gap. What we see is \$1.4 million being invested, for a total of just over 16 million. This relates to top-ups relating to staffing. Obviously there were also some outstanding issues relating to library and resources, research resources, and headships, and some of the administrative and leadership pieces within the college. So I believe this final tranche completes that funding. So as I say I was pleased that the previous government finally took steps, steps that I regret and everyone regrets took so long because we should have never, in my opinion, allowed that college to be put on probation.

Ms. Junor: — When is the next accreditation being done for the college?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, we'll be entertaining that, fall 2008.

Ms. Junor: — And we anticipate that they will get it? They will be accredited. All their issues have been addressed?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Our anticipation is that we'll move forward with accreditation.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you. I have one final question for today. And before I turn it back to my colleagues, I noticed in the budget book under the Status of Women office that there has been a decrease in funding. Can you explain why and where it has been taken from?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — While the question specifically relates to an element that under the previous government has focused mostly on Labour, it is relevant because the allocation — what's actually seen as a decrease — it was for a one-time initiative in the North. That initiative we just recently completed, successfully completed in . . . Was it in Prince Albert, I believe? Yes.

And I'll be having a ministerial statement shortly to highlight some of the successes of that. So what I have done is I've proposed a six-point plan to help reinvigorate some of the work of that office to extend well beyond the Labour portfolio and to help enrich our policy work stretching right across our ministry.

Ms. Junor: — As the previous minister responsible for the Status of Women, twice, I can't say I ever heard it referred to as basically focused on Labour, so I'm not sure where that notion has arisen. The work done by the Status of Women was very broad-based, and never once did we focus on Labour.

It has moved its focus into many departments so that there would be gender lensing and gender mainstreaming, which is a whole other topic that I could speak on. But it never was focused on only Labour, so I think that it's a discredit to the women and men who've worked in that department to categorize it as narrowly such.

I'm done my questions. Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Ms. Junor. Minister, would you care to respond?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, sir. The organizational piece and some of the stakeholder feedback was that there was certainly room for expanded work out of that office, and the comments in no way reflect any disrespect. In fact I have great appreciation for the work that that office has undertaken, but to borrow from your term, I think it was time to put some fresh lenses on that office.

The Chair: — Mr. McCall.

Mr. McCall: — Just a quick follow-up to the member from Eastview. Could you table the six-point plan with us at the committee?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — It's under development. It's a framework right now and we'll be putting that forward as we finalize it.

Mr. McCall: — Do you have projected finalization date?

Ms. Young: — Again no. I think that this is the kind of approach that we need to take our time and consult quite thoroughly on it, so it isn't on really on a fast course, but I think that certainly by the fall we'll have it established.

Mr. McCall: — But you're certain as to there being six points.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, I'm very certain.

Mr. McCall: — And it's not possible to share those points with the committee at this time?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well as we're speaking to Advanced Education, I didn't bring that material, but . . . Wynne, I'll . . . We can highlight what those six points are. Sure.

Mr. McCall: — I guess, moving back to advanced education, more particularly First Nations University of Canada, it's an opportunity to communicate to the minister our pleasure at the accreditation issue being sorted out.

I guess the question I have for the minister and the officials is, in terms of this budget, what is set aside for a funding allocation for the First Nations University of Canada? And does the minister foresee the First Nations University of Canada coming forward with additional budget request in light of the accreditation matter being resolved?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I certainly appreciate the question and I certainly share with my legislative colleague and I think all of us a great sense of, part one, relief, and also a sense of celebration. It was welcome news I think for us all.

The budget allocation is in the neighbourhood of about 4 million. It comes in two specific directions. That is, there's 1.5 million focusing on nurses, and then about a 2.5 piece that focuses more broadly on the institution itself.

I think this is another element. What I have done recently is dispatched a letter to the Hon. Chuck Strahl and asked that there be a full dialogue about ensuring that First Nations University is

given due consideration in Ottawa. So that was one of our top priorities.

I've attended a board — I wouldn't want to call it just a dinner; it was a very nice ceremony and celebration. Reg, you were there, and as were my colleagues June Draude and Dan D'Autremont. As well we've met with executive members and the meeting was chaired by the Premier. And so it certainly has the full attention and support of our government — as I say, a \$4 million investment.

But we also want to make sure that . . . again this is one of the institutions that will play an increasingly important role, not just simply on labour force issues which are very significant, but especially for allowing individuals to meet their full potential. And so I share with the member, and in fact I appreciated his handshake and comments the day that the announcement was made.

Mr. McCall: — I guess the question I have though is above and beyond the budget allocation. Certainly there is reason to believe that there are financial pressures for the First Nations University of Canada going forward, and I guess above and beyond what the government has committed right now in this budget.

Has the provincial government or yourself as minister undertaken to come to the table with financial support? And is that something that you've committed to in a general sense and details are being worked out? Or can you add any information on that score?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, obviously the time frame here, we've only recently been informed, the decision itself I believe was taken on March 15. It was communicated from AUCC [Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada] in early April. And so the budgetary support is quite significant at \$4 million, just over \$4 million. The approach that we've taken is . . . and it's still in its initial stages, and additional dialogue is going to be needed because of the timing of the announcement. But certainly we'd like to put in place a framework, and that framework obviously has an element of programmatic elements to it.

We've also turned and said that we'd like to help facilitate the interface between First Nations University and some specific industry players, and to help increase some private sector investment potentially in that institution as well as other institutions. And based on feedback that I've received that's a very welcome step — so \$4 million from the Province of Saskatchewan and a willingness to certainly continue this dialogue. As you can appreciate given the time frame that we've been dealing with, I think it's significant that the Premier, Minister Draude, and myself have been involved in direct dialogue with the leadership.

Mr. McCall: — I guess, would the minister be able to table the letter that he had referenced to Minister Strahl with this committee?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Sure, we can. I don't know if it's on hand, but we can get that. Yes.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you. Is there a time line in terms of the way you see these discussions taking place in terms of additional budgetary allocation? Do you see it as something taking place over the matter of the next two months, three months, four months?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I would put it in the time frame of months, and it extends well beyond, you know, notions of resource allocation obviously. Again the resource allocation's in place in the budget, and that's why we were very pleased with the AUCC piece. So it's part of a broader dialogue, and I would categorize it rolling forward over months.

Mr. McCall: — I guess one last question on this topic for now and I'll relinquish the floor to my colleague. The matter of the Canadian Association of University Teachers and their relationship to the First Nations University of Canada, does the minister have any information to share with the committee in terms of the status of that relationship, and does he see that impacting the province's relationship to the First Nations University?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I appreciate the question. I'll just . . . I'll get an update. My understanding — Reg, I appreciate your timely update — there are some dialogue sessions planned for the coming days, and this is a largely internal matter for the institution to address. What I can say is that one would hope that that dialogue is fruitful and constructive and allows the institution and most especially the students to benefit from the opportunities that the recent ruling from AUCC affords.

Mr. McCall: — I appreciate what the minister says with regards to internal matters. But surely the minister and officials would agree that the matter of the pay for staff, questions of parity with the broader University of Regina, collective agreements as relates to instructors — these are all things that are of course related to the questions I had for the minister previously in terms of additional budgetary allocation and what's the go forward, and then in turn how that affects I am sure the approach of the CAUT [Canadian Association of University Teachers] to the First Nations University.

So I guess we'll leave it at that, but I thank the minister and his officials for their time today and return the floor back over to my colleague.

The Chair: — Mr. Broten.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you very much. Just to close off today, I have a few questions about staffing within the ministry. Could you please tell us how many employees have been terminated since November 21, 2007.

Ms. Young: — I believe the number is seven.

Mr. Broten: — Seven.

Ms. Young: — Seven.

Mr. Broten: — Of the seven, how many were in-scope and how many were out-of-scope?

Ms. Young: — Sorry, my apologies. It's nine and they are all

out of scope.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. How many vacancies have been filled since November 21, 2007?

Ms. Young: — I would have to actually go back and check on the exact number. I think that, you know, sort of when there is a transition time, there is a bit of a slowdown in staffing. So I'm thinking it's not high. But if you want a precise number, I'll have to get it to you.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. That would be nice. Of that number, do you know how many were filled internally, and how many were filled externally?

Ms. Young: — Again once I see the competitions that have been completed in that time, I can answer that question.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. Do you have an idea of how many severance packages have been offered?

Ms. Young: — I can speak to the ones that are under my direction, and there have been seven offered.

Mr. Broten: — Of the seven that have been offered, how many have been signed?

Ms. Young: — I don't know the exact number. I know that there is some movement on it. There's certainly one that I know of. But I don't know. There might be more. I can certainly check on that. It's sort of moving right now.

Mr. Broten: — Is it closer to one or closer to seven, or you don't know?

Ms. Young: — I can't answer that.

Mr. Broten: — The packages haven't been signed, all of them, as we've identified. Do you have a ballpark figure of how much has been offered — the total for the seven?

Ms. Young: — The number I can tell you is that we have allocated in our budget for the seven, 1.2 million. I cannot be precise because these packages are a matter of a bit of discussion. And so I can't tell you for certain what has been offered or accepted.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. I apologize. I didn't quite hear the number. Could you repeat it please?

Ms. Young: — 1.2 million that has been booked for that.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you very much. Have any claims been filed in a court of law as a result of severance packages, terminations related to your ministry?

Ms. Young: — I can only tell you what I am aware of, and I am not aware of any.

Mr. Broten: — So there were nine dismissals that you identified in the first question, but seven packages offered. Could you explain why that there weren't packages for the two, please?

Ms. Young: — I can explain. The seven that I indicated were under my ability to manage, and those were the ones within the ministry itself. The other two were two former deputy ministers who I do not have management for and that's done elsewhere.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you very much. The positions that are being filled externally, are those being done through the Public Service Commission?

Ms. Young: — Well any of the ones, I guess I would go back and check, but our standard practice is to go through the Public Service Commission, yes.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. That nears the end of my questions at this time, so without going into a new topic, Mr. Chair, I'll give the floor to you. Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Broten. Mr. LeClerc, I believe you have a short comment you would like to put forward at this time.

Mr. LeClerc: — I don't often compliment the opposition. In fact I can't think of one single time that I have, but I would like to compliment them today on the constructive and insightful questions that they asked during this committee time. Thank you very much.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. LeClerc. Minister, on behalf of the committee members, I would like to thank you for the work that was done here this afternoon, to your officials for their answers and the support that they gave you, and we certainly look forward to having you before the committee again.

Committee members in order to facilitate the change of ministers and officials, we will be moving to Corrections and Public Safety. We will take a 10-minute break, but before . . . recess I should say, but before we do that, I believe the minister has a final comment that he would like to make.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I would just like to reiterate to you, Mr. Chair, and to all my legislative colleagues, I appreciated the opportunity to participate in this session and would just like to echo the thanks most especially for the work, not just today, but of all the officials serving within Advanced Education, Employment and Labour. This is a remarkable team, and the province of Saskatchewan as you've seen today is served very well by these citizens and by these public servants. So I'd just like to offer a round of applause, if we could, to our officials.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Chair: — Okay it being 4:02 this committee stands recessed till 4:12.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

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

Subvote (CP01)

The Chair: — Committee members, it being 4:12, we will

resume our session. And we now move to the second item on our agenda. That is vote 73, Corrections, Public Safety and Policing found in the Estimates book, I believe on page 47. We have with us this afternoon, Minister Hickie, minister responsible for the ministry, and he has I see a number of officials. So, Minister, would you please introduce your officials.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Well thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to be here today with my officials from Corrections, Public Safety and Policing to provide highlights of my ministry's 2008-2009 financial plan and to answer your questions.

Before I begin though, I'll tell you who's here with me from the ministry. I have Maureen Lloyd to my left, acting deputy minister today; Mae Boa to my right, executive director, corporate services. In the back there's Carol Fiedelleck, director of community corrections; Tom Young, executive director of protection and emergency services; Duane McKay, fire commissioner, office of the fire commission; Murray Sawatzky, executive director of police services; Terry Hawkes, director of finance and programs for policing services; Brian Krasium, executive director of licensing and inspections; Bob Kary, executive director of young offender programs; Marlys Tafelmeyer, director of human resources; and Sandy Tufts, executive assistant to the deputy minister.

First of all I'm pleased that my Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing has been well represented in this 2008-2009 provincial budget. The budget items that you have reviewed and that I will speak to this afternoon underscore this government's commitment to keeping Saskatchewan citizens safe and free from the fear of crime under its securing-the-future-agenda. We will do this with an additional \$30.042 million for Corrections, Public Safety and Policing programs and services, and 98 additional FTEs [full-time equivalent], which I will come back to in a moment.

The increases to CPSP's [Corrections, Public Safety and Policing] budget enables us to work toward fulfilling our violence reduction strategy in Saskatchewan communities, providing 120 new police officers over four years, developing a long-term provincial policing strategy, and increasing funding for combatting organized crime and gangs in Saskatchewan.

The violence reduction related to corrections is also a key priority. This budget will help the ministry advance our violence reduction strategy inside the province's correctional centres as well as helping to achieve similar objectives for offenders released into the community.

By reducing offending in facilities, we can work to reduce the same behaviours that cause reoffending in the community. And I'm also pleased to note that an additional 30 police officers have been added to this budget, making this government's commitment of 120 new police officers over four years closer to being accomplished.

I'd like now to speak in some detail to a number of budget items that will illustrate how our ministry intends to achieve its goals and how these actions will tie to government's commitments towards safer communities and stronger families.

Corrections. First I'll provide a snapshot of the programs and services we'll be funding with our budget allocation for work in Corrections. Supportive employment initiative, CPSP received \$200,000 in the provincial budget for corrections supportive employment initiative. As some of you here already know, Saskatchewan's correction system operates under the principle that rehabilitation reduces reoffending behaviour. Rehabilitation must remain an important part of the role of Saskatchewan's correction system.

We have evidence to prove that attachments to jobs, community, and culture have a greater effect on reducing an offender's risk of reoffending than punitive measures alone. The supportive employment program also takes into account that establishing a productive lifestyle for offenders, helping them acquire job skills, and helping them learn to find their own jobs leads to decreasing their risk of reoffending when they're released.

The initiative works two ways. It provides offenders with the job skills necessary for productive reintegration into the community, and it provides employers with a ready source of labour in a booming economy that's influencing the availability of all types of skilled and unskilled labour. This program has already seen success with employment opportunities for offenders made available in the trades and as construction labourers for a number of different employers.

Addition of 80 FTEs for adult corrections. Next I'd like to note we have a budget allocation of 6.3 million that will increase the number of FTEs in adult correction centres by 80. Overall within this budget, 98 new FTEs were added to adult correctional centres to improve health and safety for both staff and inmates here. Over the past several years, staffing in adult corrections has not kept up with the increase in the number of inmates. This situation required that increased needs be managed through the use of permanent part-time staff.

This budget increase provides permanent staffing for long-term units operating in provincial custody facilities. Most of these positions had been filled by part-time staff. In addition, staff for some specialized positions will be hired. These include nurses and institutional security officers whose primary role is related to gang activity and its suppression inside our correctional facilities.

In-facility substance abuse treatment for offenders. My ministry welcomes the allocation of 225,000 that will see establishment of in-facility treatment units to deal with substance abuse among inmates. This funding helps to advance one of my ministry's mandates: to increase support for addictions treatment for offenders.

Addictions treatment is part of the programming made available through the correctional system to help offenders successfully reintegrate back into their communities. At the same time, this kind of treatment made available in correctional centres also contributes to the work of the ministry under our violence reduction strategy.

Policing. The next several items related to the provincial budget allocation for programs and services under CPSP's policing services division. You'll recall that this area was moved to my

ministry from the Ministry of Justice just after this government took office. It is a natural fit for CPSP to take on this operation because of the continuum of services between policing in the correctional system and the prevention of crime.

Saskatchewan Police College. Related to my ministry's responsibilities for policing is an additional \$290,000 allocated to Saskatchewan Police College. It will be used to provide resources to the police college for curriculum development, and it will also go towards enhancing the capacity for professional learning and in-service learning for municipal police officers. College funding will also increase capacity for funding both basic training to meet the demands of hiring additional officers and to ensure ongoing developmental learning needs are met in the future. This will help keep Saskatchewan's municipal police current on contemporary policing practices.

Increased municipal policing. Allocation of \$270,000 will increase the number of municipal police officers by six during this fiscal year. This funding will help the province advance our commitment of adding 120 new police officers over the next four years. Increased RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] capacity. Another \$400,000 will increase RCMP capacity under the Provincial Police Service Agreement by four officers and again will count towards the government's commitment of an additional 120 new officers over four years. Provincial Police Service Agreement. Seven million dollars goes towards funding Saskatchewan's Provincial Police Service Agreement with the RCMP. The funding will be used to cover the increased costs of salaries, pensions, and benefits, and other per officer costs associated with contracting the RCMP as our provincial police service.

Officers for street gang investigations. CPSP will see 920,000 directed to funding an additional nine police officers to conduct street gang investigations. This funding delivers two ways: to advance the commitment again of 120 police officers over four years and to address another important promise calling for increased funding to combat organized crime in gangs in Saskatchewan so we can reduce violence in this province.

The initiative enhances the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit by providing one province-wide surveillance team of six RCMP officers and the associated operating resources for that team. As well one additional municipal police investigator will be provided to each of the three units to increase their capacity.

Internet Child Exploitation (ICE) Unit. Under this final budget item for policing, I'll repeat details of the announcement I made in Prince Albert on Friday, March 28. The provincial budget provides for an allocation of 1.12 million to CPSP to fund the establishment of an 11-police officer Internet Child Exploitation Unit. Once again it advances our four-year goal of 120 additional police officers. Just as critically, it delivers on the government's commitment outlined in the ministry's mandate to protect children from sexual exploitation over the Internet. These resources will establish an ICE presence in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert, so all parts of the province are served.

Protection and emergency services. Now I'll spend a few minutes on budget allocations for protection and emergency

services. Fishing Lake and Waldsea Lake flood protection funding, we welcome the \$4.7 million allocation out of the provincial budget to provide additional funding to the residents of Fishing Lake and Waldsea Lake for grants to cover part of the cost for protecting their properties from future high water levels. This funding is in addition to the 4.2 million for flood protection planning announced a few weeks ago. Funding to these areas is for grants to offset the costs of developing flood protection plans. Overall funding now totals 8.9 million.

I should point out that despite the significant amount provided to residents of Fishing Lake and Waldsea Lake for flood protection, residents must still pay at least half of their own costs for their flood protection solutions. Portions of the total amount will be allocated as grants to each local authority who will then determine how the funding will best be spent to reduce the impact of future high water levels.

Search and rescue. A budget amount of \$181,000 will assist the province with participation in a federal initiative to increase search and rescue capacity in Saskatchewan. The federal government is providing funding to support training and to enhance the sustainability and capacity of Saskatchewan search and rescue volunteer community over three years. We know volunteers make an important contribution to search and rescue efforts in Saskatchewan. These circumstances are usually dramatic and traumatic for effected families and we are encouraged by those community members who volunteer for these kinds of operations.

Capital funding, Corrections, Public Safety and Policing also receive capital funding in this year's provincial budget. I'll speak to these items briefly as well.

Public safety radio telecommunications project. An allocation of 11.3 million will provide funding for the public safety radio telecommunications project. This is year 2 of the capital project working with the RCMP and SaskPower on a consolidated telecommunications system for the province. Funding for the '08-09 will be used to advance the due diligence work commenced on assuring the seamless transfer and operation of Saskatchewan's emergency telecommunications to the RCMP-SaskPower communication system. This consolidated system will enable all emergency responders to come together onto a single system so that service can remain efficient and seamless.

Regina Provincial Correctional Centre replacement project. 6.4 million has been allocated to CPSP out of the provincial budget for completing the construction of the replacement of the oldest part of the Regina Provincial Correctional Centre. In this final year of the project, construction continues on schedule and on budget. We expect inmates and services to be transferred to the new facility by September of this year.

Saskatoon Provincial Correctional Centre 90-bed dormitory capital funding. 2.1 million has been allocated to provide funding to complete construction of a 90-bed dormitory for the Saskatoon Provincial Correctional Centre. This dormitory will help free up programming space that had been used for housing inmates. At the same time, the new dormitory will help alleviate the overcrowding at the Saskatoon Correctional Centre that poses security and occupational health and safety risks. The

new bed spaces are anticipated to be operational in late 2008.

One-time capital funding, computer-based shift scheduling and Regina Correctional Centre kitchen capacity. CPSP has also received one-time capital funding totalling 1.8 million for two projects: introducing a computerized shift scheduling system and incorporating new kitchen equipment into the Regina Provincial Correctional Centre. The computer-based shift scheduling system will be introduced in both young offender and adult corrections facilities. When operational, the system will be more efficient and effective in tracking hours of work for staff in the ministry's 24-7 operations. The budget allocation here is 600,000.

CBO [community-based organization] funding. CPSP will be providing \$137,000 to existing community-based organizations for the increasing costs of program delivery on behalf of our ministry. At the same time, however, to meet the ministry's 2008-09 financial target, CPSP has a reduction of CBO contracts in our young offenders programs. I must emphasize that CPSP maintains excellent working relationships with our CBOs and looks to them as an important mechanism for delivering services in the community.

Revenue increase, licensing and inspections. My final note is on the revenue increases for licensing and inspections that will come into effect September 1, 2008. The increased revenue of \$491,150 for 2008-09 is related to fee increases that will recover the additional costs for inspections and licensing. I should point out that although these fee increases average around 31 per cent, they continue to reflect competitive rates when compared with other Canadian jurisdictions. As an example, average fee increases in Alberta were 30 per cent.

Those are the highlights from the CPSP's '08-09 financial plan, and now I will be pleased to take your questions.

The Chair: — The Chair recognizes Mr. Yates.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm going to try to coordinate all my questions so that as I finish an area, people don't have to stay. And so I'm going to start in the administration area and move to what are the some of the basic administration questions.

My first question has to do with central management and services (CP01). We see an increase from 709,000 to \$1.618 million in executive management. Could I have an explanation as to what that increase?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — One moment please. Thank you for that question. In regards to executive management, the total amount is additional to, for realigning of communications and strategic policy unit, general staff salaries increases, funding for policy position, transfer from AC [adult corrections] for policy position, and additional funding for minister's office — a total of \$909,000.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. What would the additional funding for the minister's office be?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — I'll take that question. One second please. Thank you once again for the question. We have a salary

increase of \$29,000 and operating costs of \$24,000.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. Could you break that out a little further for me? The salary increases and the costs, associated costs of \$24,000.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you again for that question. The officials have told me that we haven't got the total breakdown for you for salary or operating costs. The operating costs, more specifically, are for the general operating of the actual office. If you wish to have those breakdown costs, we can provide those to you later.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you. I'm more interested in, is there a specific reason for the increase, i.e., additional staff or additional equipment for that large amount?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — In regards to the operating costs, it's an estimate — the 24,000 — for costs for the year. That's what the official's telling me. In regards to salary costs, it's just for the five staff, that salaries were increased just to bring them in alignment with the operating practice of the ministry.

Mr. Yates: — Okay thank you very much. My next question is under the same category, accommodation services. There's an increase of about \$2.7 million. Could we get some explanation as to what the increase is for?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you very much for that question. Mr. Chair, the official will answer that question on my behalf.

Ms. Boa: — Yes thank you. My name is Mae Boa. And the increase in the accommodation services of \$2.762 million is related to two items of change, and it actually is a net number.

The first item is the \$3.2 million. That is the estimate from Government Services for the increase in the accommodation lease cost as a result of bringing two capital projects on stream in 2008-2009 — the Regina Provincial Correctional Centre and also the Saskatoon Provincial Correctional Centre. Both those capital projects require more lease cost money.

And then there was a reduction of \$438,000, and that was one-time funding we received in 2007-2008. And that had to do with the amalgamation of the adult corrections and young offender offices in Saskatoon. That was an efficiency measure for the ministry.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. I would now like to ask a number of questions that we're going to ask in every department. And they have to do with the transition from the previous government to this government. My first question is, how many employees were terminated within the department since November 21, 2007?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Mr. Chair, thank you. We've had no actual staff terminations due to the transition of government. We have had some grievance issues that have had some staff terminations.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. How many vacancies have we filled since November 7, 2007?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you. That number can be provided to you at a later date by the officials. Right now we don't have an actual exact number from that date, from line officers up to the departmental staff.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. My next area of questioning then is going to deal with CBOs and the more financial questions. You had indicated that you had provided \$137,000 increase overall to CBOs, but there were some reductions as well. Could you indicate for me the percentage increase that the \$137,000 would indicate, or was it equal across the board, or was it . . .

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Increasing 2.3 per cent.

Mr. Yates: — May I ask how that number was derived.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you. The 2.3 per cent actually was a corporate decision across all ministries by this government.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. Does that 2.3 per cent include increases for both operating costs and wage increases?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Yes it does.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you. You had indicated that there were a number, there were reductions in CBO programming. Could you indicate in what areas and what criteria were used to determine what should not be funded?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Absolutely. I'll call upon my executive director of young offenders programs to come to the table and provide the answer.

Mr. Yates: — These were all young offender programs.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — All young offender program, yes they were.

Mr. Kary: — Thank you, Mr. Yates. My name is Bob Kary. I'm executive director of young offenders programs. The reductions to agencies that were delivering programs were in two primary areas. The one area was in the alternative measures program, and the reduction there was related to reductions in numbers of cases that have been managed by those agencies in the last two years. So there has been a shift in the volume of work that those agencies carried. Those agencies weren't reduced entirely. They were just reduced a certain amount that was linked to the reduction in the amount of workload.

Another agency was reduced that was providing educational services in the Prince Albert area. That agency was providing a good program. In Corrections and Public Safety, in the corrections area, we specifically fund programs that reduce offending behaviours because they are targeted to the causes of offending, and secondly because they are shown by research to work in reducing offending. This particular program, as I said, was a good program, but wasn't meeting those two criteria. And so the money for that programming was actually realigned to programs that did in fact meet those criteria.

We also had a small amount of money to an agency, was reduced in anticipation — it was just an employment agency —

reduced in anticipation of reduction of federal funding. We were anticipating that federal funding would be withdrawn and that money wouldn't be required for the year.

Mr. Yates: — Okay. Thank you very much. I'd like to ask a specific question. The P.A. agency that had its funding cut was the West Flat Citizens Group Inc. Is that correct?

Mr. Kary: — That's correct.

Mr. Yates: — Now if it didn't meet the criteria originally or it has the criteria changed, why were we funding the program?

Mr. Kary: — Over the years we have learned more about the kinds of programming that impacts on offending behaviour. So having done so, we've become more targeted in the kinds of programming that we will direct our funding to. Certainly, like I said, there are many, many kinds of programming that are provided across the province that are certainly important for people in communities. And there are other options that this agency may in fact be looking at to pick up that funding.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. Is this the only program that total funding was discontinued from the department?

Mr. Kary: — Yes.

Mr. Yates: — And there are no other programs that deliver the same services as this program that are being funded?

Mr. Kary: — I'm not sure I follow the question.

Mr. Yates: — Is the department funding any other programs that deliver these same services?

Mr. Kary: — The program in Prince Albert that was discontinued, there isn't a program that is the same as that. We certainly do provide supports in the educational area, but not classroom services as this one was providing.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. My next questions are broader departmental questions, but they do have some impact I think specifically in the young offenders and corrections areas. So I'll ask them now and when we move to talk to the young offenders and corrections specifically, then they can be answered then, for those officials. I just want to get the questions done to allow those officials that don't need to be here, so they have the opportunity to go home early if they like. If you so choose, Mr. Minister, it's your choice.

We're moving into an area of essential services, and as you well know, even in the last round of bargaining with the Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union, they had agreed to provisions for essential services. Have you spent any time looking at what designations within the department, what should be designated as essential services within the department? And what criteria are you using to make those designations? And we can deal with young offenders and corrections separately, but there are other areas of the department first, protection services and others that . . .

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you. I'll take one second, please. Thank you very much for that question. It's actually going to be

a process where it's being reviewed within the ministry now. Negotiations will be taking place. And of course in accordance to the Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour and that legislation, we have certain processes after the last strike, job action with the arbitration, that we're working through right now within the ministry and the union.

Mr. Yates: — Okay. Thank you very much. Do you any ballpark — and now I'm talking outside corrections, young offenders, in other essential management services and those types of areas — is there any anticipation that there'll be essential services in those areas?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you. I would anticipate, based on the sense of public safety that our ministry will be overseeing, that those kind of negotiations will also be looked at and encompassing within that time frame established from the legislation.

Mr. Yates: — Okay. Thank you. In the area of essential services then, which do you see having the overriding authority, the new legislation or the agreement that was reached through the collective bargaining process?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you. The legislation, in our opinion, will actually be the overriding rule that we'll often follow. Mr. Ready's recommendations will be adhered to and followed along, the principle, until legislation is in fact passed . . . if so passed, which I believe, that'll be overriding the rule.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you. Well thank you very much. I now would like to ask a few questions regarding licensing and inspections and fees. Thank you very much, Mr. Minister.

Could we get just a sense of which fees are going up and how they fit in comparison to other jurisdictions that are performing similar inspections and functions? As well as, I'd like to get some sense of where we are in our ability to hire and perform some of these functions. A couple of years ago we were having some difficulty maintaining and hiring people based on market demand.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you. I'll defer that answer to my official, please.

Mr. Krasium: — Thank you. Brian Krasium, executive director of licensing and inspections.

Where we're at with the fees is we've applied a general calculation formula to determine what our associated increased costs are for specific safety program areas within the legislation. Typical examples would be the power engineering and fireman certificates and examinations are going up 105 per cent. Pressure welders' licences and test fees will be going up 105 per cent. Quality control and shop inspection fees will be going up 105 per cent. Design survey and registration fees associated with boilers and pressure vessels will be going up 82 per cent. Pressure equipment installation permits and licensing fees are scheduled to go up 8 per cent. Anhydrous ammonia storage and distribution licences and permits are scheduled to go up 8 per cent. And demand services, which are mostly labour costs, are scheduled to go up 105 per cent.

Now amusement rides, in regards to licences, registrations, reinspections and hourly rates for those devices are scheduled to go up 68 per cent. With respect to elevators and passenger ropeway devices, licences, registrations, inspections, reinspections, and hourly rates are scheduled to go up 68 per cent. These fees were calculated based upon the cost associated with each individual inspection program area.

So we took into account the number of full-time equivalents responsible for providing the safety, invigilating the safety program in those specific areas and we calculated that out based upon . . . as well as a certain percentage of our non-labour costs that were allocated based upon again a breakdown of the FTE percentages per program area and calculated what the net cost for the programs would be. Those in fact ended up being comparable with what some of the rates in other jurisdictions are.

For example, when it comes to amusement rides, we are looking at an overall increase of only roughly \$3,500 for the 2008-2009 year. So we understand that there are certain program areas, safety program areas that we don't want to impact too dramatically. However you have to appreciate that some of our fees have not been increased in these areas for quite some time.

A typical example would be our elevator and amusement ride area which, where the fees associated with the regulations have not been increased since 1988. As well for the boilers, pressure vessels, and elevators area, those fees have not been increased since 2003.

Now there's a lot of reasons why the fees have gone up. Most of all one of the key areas would be travel-related costs. You have to appreciate that a lot of our equipment isn't able to come to our doorstep. We have to send people out to inspect these boilers and pressure vessels that are located throughout the province. So part of those travel-related expense increases are related to hotel and vehicle costs that have gone up significantly over the years, as well as other issues such as the meals that our inspectors are entitled through the PS/GE [public service/government employees] collective agreement, one being on the road. And in fact those costs have gone up over the years.

As well we have introduced changes to our administrative procedures. Those changes have been introduced somewhat based on stakeholders' demands or stakeholders' requests. As well we've incorporated some new ones within our new boiler and pressure vessel Act and regulations which we brought out as of January 1, 2007.

Some of the administrative procedures, additional ones that we're dealing with that take up more time, would include some financial handling as well as report generation and entering of inspection reports. And this of course was not all in part of the new Act and regulations, but it has been ongoing for a significant number of years, so we're just trying to do a catch-up phase.

As well there are additional costs associated with skilled labour, trying to retain and recruit our technical inspectors in both the elevator area and the boiler and pressure vessel. Over the past

three years we've had to apply . . . excuse me, over the last eight years we've had to apply three separate market supplements in order to retain our existing inspectors and recruit new ones, and this has come at a significant additional cost to our program area.

As well there's also a continuous labour drain for our technical inspectors that has been happening. They have been attracted not only by other jurisdictions who on occasion do pay more than we do, but also they've been attracted to the private sector in other jurisdictions as well as our own, working for end-users or licence holders of equipment in preparation for quality management systems that are anticipated to be quite a norm in the province in the upcoming years.

And as well of course, one of the other factors would be new equipment. We have introduced approximately 141 new boilers in the last fiscal year alone as well as over 1,235 pressure vessels, and coupling that with a significant number of additional elevating devices in the province has again caused a significant demand on additional resources that we have to provide to these services, all of which require additional funding.

Now I think you will probably recall an example that I gave at the last committee of estimates, where I gave some values or costs associated with the operation of the inspection of our antique boilers, where we spent — you have to forgive me; I don't remember the exact values; I thought it was in the \$4,000 range — to inspect approximately 30 antique boilers and we generated \$600 in revenue. Now we're not going to these extremes for individual cost recovery, but we're trying to get a balance for each of the program areas, whether it be an administrative program, an actual hands-on inspection program, for the particular safety areas in total.

Back to your other question. In regards to the hiring of new inspectors, we are actively engaged in recruiting new inspectors. Within the past two months I am happy to say we have hired three new inspectors, and as of yesterday we do have another follow-up ad within the career section with some aggressive advertising across Western Canada, starting this weekend. So we're hoping to fill the remaining FTEs in the inspection area hopefully by this summer.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much for that very thorough answer. I have just one quick more question in this area. Were there consultations with the various stakeholders and companies in which you do business with about these fee increases ahead of time?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — No, not specific consultations. However when the ministry officials attend to oil and gas seminars and discuss the fee increases and let them be known, there was never any unexpected rises upon . . . or comments made after.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. That ends my questions with licensing and inspections.

The next area of questions that I'd like to move to is dealing with PDAP [provincial disaster assistance program] and Fishing Lake and the new \$4.7 million. And Mr. Harper will start out with a few questions here. He has about 10 more minutes with

us, so . . .

The Chair: — The Chair recognizes Mr. Harper.

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Specifically to Fishing Lake and the recent flood that occurred there, how many cottages or cabins were affected by the flood?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Are you asking for total cabins affected by the flood?

Mr. Harper: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — The estimate is 417.

Mr. Harper: — Of the 417 that were affected by the flood, how many of these cabins would have to be destroyed because of the extensive damage done to the cabin?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you for that one. I believe we've provided that answer from the supplementary estimates, but my officials says it's 122.

Mr. Harper: — One hundred and twenty-two. Then I would assume that the balance of the owners would be taking steps to flood proof their cabins. Is this correct?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — That's correct with the new funding, yes.

Mr. Harper: — Of those that are taking steps to flood proof their cabins, how many have received funding to cover their costs for flood proofing?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you for that question. At this particular time no funding has flowed to the local authorities or cabin owners as of yet.

Mr. Harper: — So we have cabin owners who have incurred costs that I would have to assume in some cases some substantial costs, but there's been no financial relief to address those costs as of today?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Correct. However the total of the 8.9 million I announced is going to be grants that go to these cabin owners once they provide their flood protection plans and they submit their receipts after. And the flow-through money will be coming after the local authorities and my officials meet.

Mr. Harper: — Now I'm assuming that the compensation would be the equivalent of 50 per cent of the cost of flood proofing.

Mr. Young: — Tom Young, executive director of protection and emergency services. The program that was announced had a value with the 4.2 million plus the 4.7 million of 8.9 million. And so each local authority was allocated a budget in accordance with that amount, and the total amount, if you break it down . . . or pardon me, if you used the total amount, it will be at 50 per cent of the cost up to that level of budget.

So what you'll end up in breaking it down on an individual basis, it may not cover totally 50 per cent of a specific works. The works could involve some additional costs that would not

be covered.

Mr. Harper: — So that those active cabin owners out there who are flood proofing their cabins as we speak, so to say, won't necessarily get compensated to 50 per cent of their costs. Is this what you're saying?

Mr. Young: — That's correct. It'll get covered to the extent that the local authorities determine in terms of how they're going to disburse the funding locally. We'll provide a budgeted amount. They will then determine what percentage of that budgeted amount they will use for community-wide initiatives and then determine which parts of the budget they will use for individual cottage, cabin, individual property owner initiatives. And as a result of that breakdown of the budget and the costs, it may not end up as being 50 per cent of a specific individual property's costs.

Mr. Harper: — Now the 122 cabins that have to be removed or destroyed or cleaned up as a result of the damage done, were the owners of that property, will they qualify for the 50 per cent, approximately 50 per cent funding program to flood proof that property even though the cabin has been removed?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you for that question. If they choose to in fact rebuild and they require to flood proof or flood protect their property by providing fill, that same similar kind of funding will flow to them if they so choose to in fact replace their cabin there on that lot.

Mr. Harper: — Is that based on the replacement of the cabin, or would that necessarily be based on the fact that the lot, the particular area, does require flood proofing and in order to make it usable at some point in time to establish a cabin on, would require flood proofing? So does the owner have to replace the cabin in order to qualify for the flood proofing program, or could they just simply flood proof their lot at this time and consider replacing the cabin at some time in the future?

Mr. Young: — Thank you. Some of the decisions that you're asking about will be determined locally. What happens is, as I mentioned a few moments ago, a budget will be allocated to the local authority. The local authority then will . . . They're in the process now of finalizing their overall flood protection plans and determining . . . Pardon me. Depending upon the decisions that they make in accordance with those plans, they'll determine exactly how the funding will be disbursed locally.

So in fact one local authority could determine that the filling in of the lots could occur in some situations, and then have the cabin replaced a little bit later. The key here is that the funding is not used to restore damages as a result of the flood per se, in terms of specific cabins. That's the owners' responsibility. This is to protect the end product after they've restored the cabin to ensure that it is protected against future risks of flooding.

Mr. Harper: — Yes. No, I understand that. And in the case of a cabin that has been rendered to a point where it has to be destroyed and cleaned up because of the significant damage done to it, the property then sits there subject to flooding, unless it's flood . . . the steps are taken to flood proof it.

So my question here is, if that decision is going to be left up

solely to the local officials, then you could have different policies on different beaches in regards to flood proofing a lot that has been rendered now vacant because of the damage done to the cabin?

Mr. Young: — There are different situations at both Waldsea and at Fishing Lake. In Waldsea Lake you have a situation where you have a regional park authority. They own the land, they lease the individual properties. Leslie Beach, it's a somewhat similar situation. In some of the other communities around the lake, the properties are individually owned. And so there will have to be some differences to accommodate those kinds of differences in those situations.

In Waldsea Lake at one of the meetings recently it was indicated by the board of the regional park authority there that they would like to be able to implement the program in a way that best suits their needs, and where the park authority would take it upon themselves to fill all the lots in. And that would be a community-wide initiative then that would be eligible under the program.

The actual moving of cabins off and on the lots and hooking up of services and other kinds of things would be still left up to the individual property owner. So you will get a difference in terms of depending on the situation. The program's meant to be flexible to accommodate those needs.

Mr. Harper: — Getting back to my very first question about the funds flowing through to those who are incurring the expenses of raising their cabins and flood proofing their lots and re-establishing their cabins, how soon would you think that funds could flow through to these individuals?

Mr. Young: — We're anticipating that the funding will be able to flow fairly soon. Again, it's dependent upon each local authority going through the process of completing their plans and then going through a public information session in order to ultimately adopt those plans. And then as a result of that, they will submit to us an application or a request for funding for certain kinds of works within those plans. Assuming that the kinds of works in the plans are primarily related to — and this is what we've been advised to this point in time — primarily related to filling in lots and that sort of an approach to flood protection, it should be able to, we should be able to accommodate that shortly after those plans have been adopted and approved.

Mr. Harper: — Great. Thank you very much.

The Chair: — Mr. Yates.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you. My next question has to do with the provincial disaster assistance program. And have we made any progress in negotiations and working with the federal government to move towards the program funding preventive measures?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you for that question. I have received documentation from Mr. Stockwell Day that at his level he's moving forward with our plans established in our consultation that took place in January in Halifax to set up a different mechanism to actually allocate funds to a mitigative

process. However, that is ongoing. And that continuous conversation will take place with the deputy minister's level as well as mine.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you. Do we have any time frame for completion of those discussions and implementation?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Just one second, please. Could I have the question again, please?

Mr. Yates: — Do you have any time frame for completion of those discussions and implementation of the new program?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — No, we don't.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, and thank you very much for continuing those efforts. My next question's going to do with a new \$181,000 for search and rescue. I'd like just a brief explanation how those funds will be utilized and where the training will be provided.

Mr. Young: — There are three areas where that funding is going to be used to improve search and rescue part of the programming. One is going to be focused on improving search and rescue in the North. And the next one is for water search and rescue. And the third will be for a coordinator.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. When do we see this program actually being up and running? And when would we see some actual results?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you. Once the federal government gives their approvals to the funding . . . [inaudible] . . . program, the program will be starting this year in '08 and run through the three years.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. My final questions in protection and emergency services have to do with the telecommunication system replacing the FleetNet. Could you just give us an update where we are in that process, and where we're, when we can anticipate completion, if possible. More or less a status report of where we're at, where we're going.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — My official will answer that question, thank you.

Mr. McKay: — My name is Duane McKay. I'm the fire commissioner. Just a brief overview in terms of where we're at with the telecommunications. As you know, we're building a public safety network in co-operation with the RCMP and SaskPower. And the current build is under way.

I think from the last report, the southern part of the province up to about Saskatoon has been completed or is under way, and we expect the RCMP to start the transition into those areas. The Corrections, Public Safety and Policing is now working with the design of the northern section of that, which is basically north of La Ronge. And there's a design team put together to oversee that and start to buy the equipment that'll be deployed in those areas. We anticipate that the system will be completed in 2009 with the transition or migration of public safety users on before the end of 2010. That's the dates that we're using in terms of planning for the public safety users across the

province.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. Just one quick question. Could you just identify for me which agencies will have access to the new system and whether or not there are other potential uses for the system moving forward?

Mr. McKay: — The design of the system is to address the needs of public safety and certainly will not be open for commercial use. The definition of public safety is still, I guess, to be determined as we look at the scope, but certainly all of the departments or ministries within the government that have need of that type of radio system would be included in that — so we don't anticipate having ministries build their own systems — as well as municipal police, fire, EMS [emergency medical services] and other agencies that fall within that public safety realm; so Department of Highways, the transport compliance unit, as well as perhaps the construction and maintenance branches, if they determine that they need to be on the system as well. So it goes right across all of the ministries as well as all of the municipal and other public safety agencies.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. Mr. Chair, I'd now like to move into a few questions on young offenders.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'd like to start if I could with just an overview of a current situation in facilities, where pressures are, where we may have potential changes, and where there may have been program changes in the last couple of years, and things I may not be aware of.

Mr. Kary: — Okay. Thank you. With respect to numbers of offenders in facilities, we currently have adequate spaces to house young people. We also have contingency spaces available, should those numbers change from time to time, to be able to manage young people sentenced or brought into by the court.

With respect to program changes, we certainly have a, you know, a plan with respect to what we would like to see in facilities with respect to programming. It pretty much looks at treatment of young people as well as housing them because they are either on a remand order or on sentence. In the treatment of young people we have an assessment system where we look at and determine the needs of, criminogenic needs of young people that cause them to commit crimes, so we certainly identify those things.

We have community safety planning that we do that essentially looks at each of the areas that young people need treatment, need services, and the case plans then target services to those needs. We certainly have partners in the delivery of those services. Some of the services that have come up recently in the last year or so is augmentation of addiction services. We've certainly had services over the years. There's been increase in services in partnership with the health authorities in the areas where the facilities exist to pick up where some of the gaps of services are. And those services are . . . We've been working on those services over the past two years, and some of them are still coming up, but they're coming in place now.

We certainly have a concern for violent offenders in facilities — violent offenders, period. To that end we have been looking

at what kinds of things, what kinds of needs those offenders have. Currently we have a representative working group looking at the research again with respect to working with violent offenders in facilities, looking at the safety concerns for staff and residents that need to be considered, looking at what other jurisdictions are doing. And we expect that that committee will report out in a month or two, and we will then look at what we will do with respect to those recommendations.

We have programming in facilities that are training what we've provided to all of our youth workers who work with young people in facilities that we call core corrections practices. And that is providing additional tools to workers so that they are able to use opportunities to help young people understand the things in their life and their behaviour that are leading to the crimes, the kinds of cycles of behaviour that would put them in a position where they're likely to reoffend and as well as, you know, just helping them to and identifying the issues they have to develop as young people so they can become better citizens.

Certainly as you know, education employment programming is extremely important for young people. We have been working with the Department of Education over time to deliver programs in facilities but also to ensure that they're connected with community schools when they leave those facilities. And we certainly continue to work in that area. That's a very difficult thing to keep these young people in school . . . and so providing the supports in the community so that they, the young people, can stay in those classrooms and can have some of their needs — that would likely mean that they would drop out of school — have some of those addressed so that we have a better likelihood of success there.

Certainly when we talk about violent behaviour, we are currently also looking at what we call something of on-unit programming. We're looking at additional tools to help our youth workers be able to better engage and better treat some of the behavioural issues with young people.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. You made some comments about additional addiction services. Could you give me a little more detail? And I'm also interested in the little bit around . . . some more detail on the services and connections made on community reintegration for young people. I know you mentioned schooling, but do we still continue to have programs that assist those who either don't want to go to school to enter employment in the community after leaving facilities and those types of supports? I'd just like to be clear on that.

Mr. Kary: — Let's start with the addictions services. In the addictions services area, the programming has been, you know, two years in the making. So it's not something that started overnight. The additional finances available were in the neighbourhood of initial \$225,000 in the young offenders facilities and went to, you know, work with the health authorities. So much of this funding is going to the health authorities so that they can continue and add to their services and facilities.

The reason for that is health authorities have expertise in the addictions area. They provide a continuum of services already in communities as well as in facilities. And this provides some

additional resources for them to do that.

Would you repeat the second question?

Mr. Yates: — The other question was dealing with reintegration. And we had programs in place that were dealing with those children or young people who weren't . . . either at the point they no longer were interested in continuing in school or wouldn't continue in school. We had employment reintegration programs and follow-up. I'm just wondering if those programs are still in existence and if they're continuing.

Mr. Kary: — I'll start in the broader area with respect to reintegration programming which encompasses, you know, many programs as well as the work that the community youth workers themselves do. Community youth workers are the workers employed by the department that do assessments and reports for courts, but also have overarching case planning and follow-up responsibility for all young people coming into facilities, while they're in facilities, and when they're leaving facilities.

The legislation requires, and we certainly ensure, that there are reintegration plans for every young person that comes into a facility so that the first issue is appropriate assessment and reintegration planning. And the youth workers then have a responsibility to pull together other departments, other ministries, as well as community-based organizations that can provide services to help those young people address each one of their needs that are leading to offending behaviour. The addictions services is part of that. So if a young person is getting addictions services in a facility, the job is to connect them with continuing addictions services as they move to community so that their relapse prevention issues can be addressed.

With respect to education employment area, young people who have not had an easy time at school and are identifying that they will be wanting to pursue the employment area rather than continuing in school become connected to vocational agencies during the time that they are leaving facilities. We also have youth workers or workers in facilities who help them prepare for the kinds of things that they would need to know to be able to get into jobs. We also do some connecting directly with jobs for young people who are ready. But more importantly, we certainly work with other government departments who are in the business of providing programming for readiness — employment readiness — for our young people and connecting them to the kinds of programming that they need to be able to be job ready and to take on jobs. And currently some of the newer things we're doing there are that we have regional committees that are looking at streamlining processes so that we can better get young people into the training programs, as well as better connecting them to jobs that exist that would be suitable for themselves.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Do we have any indication what percentage of the young people that we deal with in our facilities have addictions-related problems? Substance abuse?

Mr. Kary: — The young people, it's a very high percentage. And we, in trying to determine that of course, we need to think

about, you know, which young people experiment with drugs and alcohol periodically and which young people actually use drugs and alcohol to the extent that it affects their life on an everyday basis, which we would then consider it a concern. In our facilities, probably about 85 per cent of young people have issues in the latter category meaning that they have a really substantial addictions issues that affect them every day of their lives.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. Is that an increase over the last number of years, the percentage wise, or is it has been fairly steady for a period of time?

Mr. Kary: — The high rate is reasonably consistent.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. My final questions in the young offenders area is it have to do with . . . well pardon me, second and final questions. Are there any anticipated or upcoming program changes, anything that's in this budget, anything that's going to change substantially in this budget year?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you for that question. Actually the on-unit programs are new this year with an initiative of this budget along with the actual identification of . . . [inaudible] . . . reduction strategy that's also part of this budget, as we move forward within the young offender facilities for staff.

Mr. Yates: — Okay thank you very much. My final question is one I asked earlier probably about essential services. Has there been any work done in the areas of the young offenders programs to . . .

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — The answer given before applies to young offenders, as the adult correctional facilities as well.

Mr. Yates: — Across the entire department?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Yes.

Mr. Yates: — All right, thank you. With that I'd like to move into dealing with adult corrections and start with questions around the capital.

All right, we're nearing completion, as I understand it, of the Regina Correctional Centre. I heard the minister indicate that we're anticipating a September move or completion. I understand that this year there is going to be an additional funding for renovation or expansion of the kitchen. Could you give me some — knowing that I know the physical layouts — just whereabouts this is going to be . . . is as much of interest as anything.

Ms. Lloyd: — Thank you. Maureen Lloyd. In terms of the expansion of the kitchen, because we've gone to an increased capacity in the new part of the Regina Correctional Centre, so in order to deal with our high counts, we have gone to the potential to double bunk that part and add additional inmates essentially into the new part of the facility. The kitchen capacity is simply not enough to manage. Originally this project was a replacement project. It wasn't intended to add any more inmates into that facility, but as time has gone on and pressure has continued — and in fact has increased — then the kitchen

hasn't got the capacity. So the kitchen will stay at this time where it is, but what we'll be doing is upgrading it. We'll have to upgrade the equipment and the other systems within the kitchen in order to provide a higher output of food.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you. Will that require any greater square footage, or is it going to remain the same structural area?

Ms. Lloyd: — My understanding is that it will remain essentially the same structural area, but it will upgrade within that area.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. You indicated that you will be moving to double bunking. Could you give me some indication as to what you're looking at in regards to double bunking, given my . . . again, as you know I'm familiar with the basic structure.

Ms. Lloyd: — What we are contemplating with double bunking, some we're already doing. We've had to double bunk in areas, particularly in Regina Correctional Centre that has more capacity. Cells that were big enough to have two bunks in them, many of those cells do have two bunks in them. Units that could accommodate additional offenders do have additional offenders in there. In some cases additional staff have been provided in order to support the additional offenders in the units.

When we came to constructing the new part of the Regina Correctional Centre, we were aware that by the time we got into the major construction we had considerable pressure on our numbers. Our other correctional centres in the province are filled to overflowing. Regina Correctional Centre has always had the capacity to absorb more inmates from across the province simply because — well how could I describe it? — it had many nooks and crannies and places where offenders could be accommodated. It simply had those kind of elastic walls.

But we are in a situation where we're using program space. We have lots of inmates living in areas that are not suitable for them to be living in. Our conclusion was it was safer and healthier to house inmates two in a cell in cells that are big enough and are constructed in a way that can accommodate two inmates rather than accommodating them in classrooms, boardrooms, you know, wherever, gymnasiums, wherever that might be.

So the capacity in the Regina Correctional Centre, we have built double bunking into almost all of the cells with the exception of some of the secure custody area and some of the high-security area and some of the medical area. But within the remand — just an average remand unit — then all of the cells have two bunks. And in order to build those in, if we had left it and waited to see where the numbers went, it would have been much more costly to build them in after the fact. So as we were constructing the building, we knew that we additionally did increase our numbers for very little cost.

Just for people's information — those of you who haven't seen the correctional centre — each of the cells was already designed with a two-window concept, so each bunk will have a narrow window that's part of the area between the one bunk to the other.

So the building itself was designed as per some British Columbia design to accommodate the length of time it takes to build another facility and the pressure for numbers.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. Some of my colleagues were laughing about my seeming knowledge about the jail. I want to assure them that it wasn't because I was on the wrong side of the bars.

My next question has to do . . . There have been concerns raised about the common area and the fact that the staff desk could be out in the common area. Have those plans changed at all from the initial design?

Ms. Lloyd: — No, those plans haven't changed. We've based our design for the staff area in the new part of the correctional centre on a direct supervision model. It's a model that's been endorsed across Canada and in fact across the United States by the national association of corrections in the States. And when we talked with the individuals in British Columbia who operate it based on that model, you have a work station; that station's open to the inmates. There's interaction between the staff and the inmates. What they told us was that their actual violent incidents went down because there was more interaction with inmates, more relationship formed, and more ability also to sense the nature of the unit and what's going on.

And that is what we get when we look at the research across Canada and the United States. The direct supervision model actually enhances your ability to reduce violent incidents because of the way that direct supervision model works.

So we would rely in all of our correctional centres on a combination of dynamic and static security. So we certainly have static security in that building. We have an ability to have certain high-risk offenders in an area where they're essentially in their cells for 23 hours a day if that's what is needed. We also have other areas where if inmates are out and about all day long, the direction supervision model applies.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. Have there been any changes in design or application of the building in the last couple of years, since its original design?

Ms. Lloyd: — Nothing substantial in the changes to the original design. We were very careful to try to . . . When we originally designed that facility, we consulted a lot with staff. We consulted with people that were specialists in their areas, for example, nurses working in health care. Significant development in the health care unit at the Regina centre, and health care will be delivered out of the new building. The areas that we have it in right now are not good. But overall, other than with the addition of the double bunking, essentially the design has stayed the same.

Now I will look at my colleague, Ms. Boa, also, who is with my partner, along with Nick Surtees, who some of you would know here, in the development of this project.

Ms. Boa: — That's right. I just might add that one of the reasons that we're able to continue to say that the project is on schedule and it is on budget is in fact because we have not made scope changes to this project except as outlined by Maureen.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. I have a couple of other questions around capacity and structures. The 90-bed dormitory structure in Saskatoon is scheduled to be on line in 2009. Could you just give me a quick overview of that facility and where things are going with that facility?

Ms. Lloyd: — Yes, we're anticipating that that facility will come on stream in late 2008. We had some delay with tenders because of the election, and so we're working on a bit of a hurry-up schedule now. We were able to do some work ahead of time but not as much as we'd planned to get done.

What we have in Saskatoon is a 90-bed dormitory-style unit. Within that building will be three units, and each of those units will house 30 inmates. That building is part of a long-term capital plan that the ministry has been working on. And that long-term capital plan is looking toward the future in terms of what kind of development is needed in Saskatoon.

So as an interim step, while we brought Regina online to see the impact it would have, then we received approval for moving ahead with a 90-bed dorm unit. That will allow us in Saskatoon to move some inmates out of areas that they're . . . You know, they're using a classroom right now. They have been in the gymnasium. They're in the program space. We have very little program being delivered in actual program classrooms because they're having to be used to house inmates right now.

There'll be a challenge with this dorm situation because although our system has had dorms — you would know that, Mr. Yates — for a long time, we have very few what we would consider to be low-risk offenders in our correctional centres because those low-risk offenders are in community training residences. They may be in our camps. They may be at Buffalo Narrows or North Battleford, or they may be on supervision in the community.

So we will be looking at developing, continuing to develop an assessment process where we're identifying the most suitable candidates for that 90-bed unit because, as I say, we have many high-need offenders in our centres. Many of them are on remand. So it certainly will pose a challenge there, but at the same time it will help that correctional centre that has been feeling huge pressure from overcrowding.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. Are there any plans to move to a Regina-style facility attached to the P.A. facility or as part of the P.A. facility to add extra capacity in the central region where the most pressure is?

Ms. Lloyd: — There are no plans to add a Regina-style facility to the P.A. facility.

Mr. Yates: — Did I say P.A.? I meant Saskatoon. Okay. Sorry.

Ms. Lloyd: — It's a model that we . . . As part of our long-term capital plan and as we monitor the numbers, then we have considered that that type of development, given that we have an existing model, an existing blueprint, we want to see it work first. But part of a long-term capital plan could include that type of an initiative. It's not something that today we can say that we have a plan for though.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. My next question's capital. And it's not identified in the capital projects, but Pine Grove had significant physical structure needs, space needs. I'm wondering whether any solutions to those problems have changed or have the numbers changed in some way that we wouldn't need . . .

Ms. Lloyd: — In terms of the numbers of women at Pine Grove, we did see a peak in numbers about two summers ago, I believe it was now. And we haven't had the same high numbers since then. In saying that, we certainly have more women than that facility was ever constructed to accommodate. But we are not having to use some of the valuable programs space to house women.

We did open and take over a young offender open custody unit that wasn't being used, that young offender had some capacity to absorb their young people. We took that over. So we do have potentially 20 women living in that unit, which is removed from the main Pine Grove building, which is an on-unit programming type of unit where women receive programming in that area, where it's designed to be a reintegration, a kind of phased unit for women as they move out of Pine Grove, out of the main building and into the community.

But at this point we don't have any more plans for Pine Grove.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. Could I just now get an overview of what the current numbers are at the various correctional centres? I'm just trying for myself to get a sense of where the system's at compared to where it's traditionally been.

Ms. Lloyd: — I can give you two different numbers. What I can say is that on April 7, there were 1,408 inmates in the combination of secure custody and low security facilities. So that would be our total in-custody count, including community training residences.

Over the past year, the count stabilized to some extent. The year before that, we looked at 6 per cent growth. We looked at four per cent growth. But we were certainly on a steady incline. We saw a bit of a stabilization of the numbers this year which left us then at the end of the year with the total average — and that's an average — daily count of 1,365. But in April, starting in later March, and it is spring, in April we see the numbers climbing considerably.

And I have no reason to think that numbers won't continue to climb. It's a trend across the country. It's been a trend in federal corrections. Last year they saw 400 additional inmates. This year they saw eight. So it just seems that everyone's been impacted by a bit of a, a bit of a change for whatever reason on the short term. But nationally it's, you know, it's certainly going up. Our average is around 4 per cent a year.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. On the community correction side, are we seeing similar increases in case sizes?

Ms. Lloyd: — Buried in here somewhere is . . . What we're seeing on the community correction side is a steady, a slower but steady, increase in numbers. We have a caseload of over 6,000 — a combination of probation, bail, conditional supervision, conditional sentences — but what we see within

that caseload is a change. So although the numbers haven't increased dramatically, the demands within that number of 6,000 have changed — additional bail reports, specialized courts, domestic violence, high-risk offenders and the need for their supervision. So again it's a very, it's a very demanding caseload in the community probation side.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. In the increased incarceration rates, it seems to be that there's been an increase over the last few years, quite a significant increase. Where is the greatest pressure? Is it still in the central region, Saskatoon central? Is it north or is it moved south?

Ms. Lloyd: — My assessment would be that it's a fairly consistent pressure across the province, and a fair bit of pressure on Prince Albert coming out of the North. Centrally in Saskatoon we see a high level of the use of remand, but Regina as well, serving a good part of the South. The counts simply have stayed high all across the system.

Mr. Yates: — Do you happen to have a breakdown by institution — Regina, Saskatoon, P.A., Pine Grove — the major ones anyway?

Ms. Lloyd: — I do have a breakdown. Let's take April 7. For total numbers, April 7 in Regina was 484, Prince Albert at 322, Saskatoon at 366, and Pine Grove at 104. So that's the four secure custody facilities.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. That gives me a sense of what's happening in the system. I'd like now to turn to program areas. And one of the things that has been mentioned is an increase to addictions services. Does that apply within the adult corrections system as well?

Ms. Lloyd: — Yes it does. We received funding in the past year for addictions services. We received \$275,000. And that funding was intended for adult corrections secure custody facilities to enter into a partnership with addictions services to provide targeted addictions services within the facilities and then to build the bridges into the community.

Now we have an additional 225,000 this year. So the plan with the partnership with addictions services, we just opened an addiction treatment centre in Regina centre. We opened that unit last week . . . significant work that's gone on between, in the partnership with addictions services and the health authority and our staff at Regina Correctional Centre.

In Saskatoon the partnership right now is looking at the whole area of methadone, the distribution and treatment with methadone, how it's managed with doctors. It's a huge area that we have to examine. In P.A. what we're looking at more is an assessment. So they felt what they needed . . . Each area in fact decided, really, what they wanted to work on, what they thought their need was, what their specialization might be.

So addictions services then has assigned a staff member, a worker to each of the four secure custody facilities to carry out these programs. So it's a partnership, true partnership, between ourselves and addictions services where our staff will benefit. We'll get better addictions programming, and then we'll bridge into the community because we have community addictions

staff that are working with our correctional centres.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. Now this is as much out of curiosity and interest. Where in Regina is the addictions facility located?

Ms. Lloyd: — Off the top of my head I'm going to say unit 7.

Mr. Yates: — All right. Thank you.

Ms. Lloyd: — I think that's what I was told but . . .

Mr. Yates: — And is it the entire unit or half the unit? Is it 20-bed, 40-bed?

Ms. Lloyd: — It's half the unit.

Mr. Yates: — Twenty-bed. And how long a treatment program is it? Can you give me some background on the style of the treatment program?

Ms. Lloyd: — Sure. I can give you a little bit of information. I don't promise to be able to go into a lot of detail. But the program is 28 days in length. It is a program that . . . Now I want to describe the program. I mean, one component of the program is the whole issue of addictions. People are assessed of course through our addictions worker. They're screened into the unit but then in addition to having a . . . And I don't want really want to describe the program because what they really did was they developed a program for this unit. They developed what they felt was the right kind of program to deliver in the correctional centre, and there was research done between, with addictions services folks and our people. So really this is kind of a trial run here, but we're also doing on-unit programming in this unit as well.

So as part of the every day activity for the inmates in the unit, our staff will be trained in core correctional practice. So this group of staff who were chosen because they came forward and put their names forward, let their names stand to work in the unit. They'll get specialized training. They're going to work with the inmates; so yes, addictions is a major issue, but there are other . . . We want every part of their day to be a program, so teachable moments, learning for the offenders, always capitalizing on that time when staff and their interaction can actually have an impact on that particular inmate. So it's a fully integrated, total-day program unit.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. Have they built additional supports into the system so when an individual leaves that program unit then moves back out into general population, that there's continuing ongoing supports?

Ms. Lloyd: — Yes, that is part of the model, and so the program people in the correctional centre write, overall communicating with all the other units. And I don't think we've completely decided yet how some of the placements will happen. But historically I think what's happened with good program is that inmates went away to a program for two hours or something during the day. They went back to their unit, didn't necessarily get to practise what they'd learned in that program. So the individuals who've been through this program then will have a case plan, right, and have a worker assigned,

and that worker's job is going to be to follow through with what they learned and the accomplishments that they had in that unit. And also then it's really their reintegration plan so what's their transition to community going to look like now and the linkage with addictions services.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. Is there going to be an assessment of this program after, say, six months to see whether or not the length is adequate, whether the program meets needs, you know, full assessment of the program to look whether or not it can be modified to be even more effective?

Ms. Lloyd: — Yes there will be. In fact they're just developing an evaluation process now, so I can't speak to it, but there will be a component.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. So outside the units or the particular program that each centre chose to move forward with, is there plans to add additional addictions treatment in the various facilities?

Ms. Lloyd: — Yes, and in fact the budget, 225,000 that we received this year, is going to allow us to move across the province with a specialized addictions unit. So we would say that absolutely for sure there'll be one more unit this year. We may come on stream with two more if we can do that, so in addition to the identified programming that these centres are already working on. So Regina took their original funding. Their decision was to have a unit. Now the other centres, we'll be able to give a little more funding for them to enhance what they've already decided to do.

Mr. Yates: — Okay. Thank you very much. Continuing along these lines of questioning — Pine Grove, is there any additional programming going into Pine Grove for addictions?

Ms. Lloyd: — Yes, there is. There's specialized programming for Pine Grove. We've adopted a couple of specialized programs. We've developed . . . It's a specialized program. It's called emotions management for women. It's a program that's been utilized elsewhere, and we brought in people from BC in fact to do some training with our staff. So we've introduced that program.

Plus we're also working on addictions counselling at this point for women, the assessment first of all and then counselling for them. And then we'll be targeting for sure . . . Whether we use the Sharber unit, right, which is our already kind of a transition unit, to run addiction programming, I'm not sure. But we want to move there for the women that are there.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. You had indicated Saskatoon had put a methadone program in place. Is that a program you're looking at having in all the facilities eventually? That problem I don't think would be isolated only to Saskatoon.

Ms. Lloyd: — Yes. In fact all the facilities do have methadone programs now, but each program is managed somewhat differently because it does depend on the methadone program in the area where they live. So really in Regina, inmates coming into Regina centre who are on methadone, where methadone has been prescribed by a prescribing physician in the clinic in

Regina, then that's the clinic that oversees their methadone treatment and then supported by the physician that works in the correctional centre.

So the different centres, because addictions has been fairly, each city is a bit different. Saskatoon has more individuals on methadone, has been much more interested as a city, as an overall program. Regina wouldn't have as many. So each centre has something different. But yes, there's methadone in each of our correctional centres, including Pine Grove.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. My next question has to do with smaller facilities and some of the communities' facilities. We have of course Buffalo Narrows and the North Battleford community correctional centre. Are they going to see funds for enhanced addictions treatment in those facilities as well?

Ms. Lloyd: — Yes. We want to expand our programming now. One of our intentions and one of the things that we already do with a smaller facility is utilize community-based programs. So first of all our job is to find out and make sure that we're utilizing those programs fully.

So an inmate at a community training residence, for example, goes to AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] in the community, can go to addictions services for addictions counselling, can go to addictions for group work. So we saw our primary project as the secure custody facilities where we have them. They are in our facilities. We have a sort of window of opportunity, right, to be able to provide a more full program. Our other facilities, we want to ensure that all the facilities are utilizing the community agencies, but that's really where they need to go.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. I'm going to just ask my final questions here because I have to be up at another committee asking questions at 6 p.m. But we now have a Legislative Secretary that's attached to the department. Can I just have a summary of what responsibilities the Legislative Secretary has and what his role is in operations and in the running of the department?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Absolutely. That's a good question. Thank you for that. The role of the Legislative Secretary will be to, first of all, do a comprehensive review of all the correctional operations and programming in regards to addictions, addictions treatment — not just inside the institutions but in the community for follow-up as well.

That person, Mr. LeClerc, is also going to be looking at the gang situation, the resources that have been put in place at this date and what could be required, as well in regards to programming and community interventions after in support. As part of this role, with my authority, he'll be travelling. He's already gone down to Ontario. He'll be travelling to Manitoba and Alberta as well to look at their programs. We believe that there are some models out there that we can look at and possibly adopt in Saskatchewan. Understanding Manitoba's had a long-standing gang problem, more so than Saskatchewan has, and from the policing background I'm very aware of that. So we're going to look at that issue.

His role will be very much to do a broad survey of what we

have compared to the other provinces and see if we're doing the right thing. If we are, he'll make a report indicating that. If he indicates that there's some needs to be looked at, his report will come to myself and the ministry officials will review it with him, as we move forward in the out years of our planning for budgets.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. So legislative secretaries would work through the minister and under the minister's authority?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Absolutely, yes.

Mr. Yates: — Okay, thank you. I have just two other questions. We had spoke one time about you going out and seeing the facility in British Columbia. Have you had that opportunity?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Good question. No, I have not. It's a little bit . . . My time schedule's been pretty tight. I'll take it under advisement. That's a very good point. I'm relying on my ministry officials to advise me as we move forward with the Regina Correctional Centre and if the time does allow, possibly more so after the session, to keep touring the facilities not just in Saskatchewan, but also maybe go to British Columbia and look at their model.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much. My colleague, Ms. Junor, has a question.

The Chair: — Certainly. Ms. Junor.

Ms. Junor: — Just made me think when you were explaining how Mr. LeClerc's duties would go, addictions has traditionally been under the Minister of Health. Is that still the case or is this just something that Mr. LeClerc will be doing specifically on some topic for you? Has addictions stayed under Health or is it now under Corrections and Public Safety?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — No, the addictions portfolio is under Health for sure — exactly — because we have people in the community who need that programming, that treatment. His role will be specifically targeting into the addictions that happens inside when a prisoner comes into the facility, how to best address those needs inside the correctional facilities and transition back to the community.

A lot of his work in the community will transition with the Legislative Secretary from Health as well, to ensure there are adequate programs, treatment beds available for those individuals that have to resource, get resources to those people.

So it's going to be kind of a dual. I mean your question's very valid. For the general public addictions is under Health, but when they come into the prison system they have to be dealt with within the correctional facilities. His role will be to see if we're doing the right thing inside or can be, or more programs out there that we could look at utilizing and implementing.

Ms. Junor: — You also mentioned gaming, so that also was under Health as well. So the problem gaming, the gambling under the additions part, so I thought I heard you say something about him reporting on gaming.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — No, gangs.

Ms. Junor: — Gangs, oh.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Gangs. Gangs, not gaming.

Ms. Junor: — All right, clean out my ears. Thank you.

The Chair: — Mr. Yates.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. That's going to conclude my questions. I'd just like to thank the minister and his officials for coming this evening and answering the questions. As always it's been a very delightful evening. And thank you very much for your co-operation and your hard work.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Yates. I believe Mr. Allchurch has a few questions for the minister.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Welcome here and a welcome to your officials here this evening, or this afternoon I should say, late this afternoon.

I just have follow-up questions. I know you answered a lot during your preamble that you talked about. But in regards to the secretariat position that my colleague, Serge, is also doing, what funding is going toward the organized crime in regards to crime and gangs?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — You want to talk about in the institutions or in the community? Because there's two different perspectives in there.

Mr. Allchurch: — Actually I was going to do both. You can do one, and we'll actually do both.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Okay. Well in the communities, from the policing perspective, we'll be looking at increasing the officer strength to the combined forces special enforcement units. We're going to have one officer assigned to the current units in Saskatoon, Regina, and Prince Albert. We're also going to implement a six-person RCMP surveillance team to assist in the organized crime and gang initiative, understanding that local gangs in communities are organized crime, and that's our focus.

In the institution, we do have at this time institutional preventive security officers that are the intelligence gatherers, liaison to the police community in the bigger centres of Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert. Those officers in that program, Mr. LeClerc will be looking at them and asking questions — if they're resourced adequately, if they need additional resources, additional supports, whether or not we want to look at another basic concept.

I understand in Manitoba they have a very healthy relationship with their local combined forces units in the Manitoba model, which means that they have officers who actually work alongside in the community with the police agencies, and they do intelligence gathering as well. That's also a very big component we can look at. Having said that, it's going to be based on Mr. LeClerc's recommendations and review of

resources and out years of funding, as we allocate those.

I see a need in the institutions as well to break the gang cycle, and Mr. LeClerc will be looking at the adequate programming in place right now. Augmenting that programming, additional resources might have to be acquired as well to bring in CBOs or utilize a CBO group in the community as well.

Mr. Allchurch: — Well thank you for the answer, Mr. Minister. In regards to the gangs over the past few years, have you noticed that in the institutions, has gang activity in the institutions been on an increase, or have they decreased some?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thanks for the question. Actually it's a very valid question. What you see in the communities doesn't always start in the communities. There's links inside. When people get imprisoned for possibly a crime that has nothing to do with gang involvement, there's recruitment activities inside the prisons because when these individuals get back out, they augment their numbers in the community.

Gang activity inside the institutions is equal to the community inasmuch as how the behaviour inside, the hierarchy, the structure, roles, and responsibilities of different individuals in the gangs is very much the shadow of what happens in the community. Therefore I see Mr. LeClerc's role as being critical as we move forward in the anti-gang strategy, not just in the policing aspect but in the institutions because they're identified in the institutions.

Right now the institution preventive security officers liaison with the gang coordinators inside the major centres of Saskatoon, Regina, and Prince Albert to identify those risks upon release, as well as new gang members who become recruited inside the institutions — not so much by the wearing of gang paraphernalia, just by associations. I realized in my federal correctional time that was very evident, and how the gang structure has moved from a new person arriving through intake and into the actual units. It's very same in the provincial correctional centre.

And I think there's a lot of work to be done that the previous administration didn't go far enough in implementing resources for that. Because we have a definite gang problem, not just in our major centres, but all throughout the province as people get released in the smaller communities and go back to their First Nations and go up north.

Mr. Allchurch: — Okay. I'm glad you brought up the bit about First Nations. That was my next question, is regards to gangs and also the amount of drug usage on First Nations reserves. Is there something that you are looking at within this budget that will draw to curbing some of these problems?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — As already mentioned, the additional resources to the combined forces, special enforcement units, those officers are integrated — municipal and RCMP. And those officials use intelligence gathering and other surveillance methods that I'm not going to talk about here — that I'm aware of — that they can use to actually go after grow operations in the First Nations community, tie in source information from covert operations and confidential informant basis inside the institutions and in the community to develop action plans and

strategies to tackle the problem in the community after the inmates get released.

It's very much a fluid model insomuch as that the sources of information provide information to the police agencies on a regular basis as they tackle especially the bigger grow ops. Also they have to liaison with SaskPower Corporation and other Crowns to monitor such things such as power usage and grid alignment.

Mr. Allchurch: — I also noticed in regards to your answer regarding gangs and drug-related incidents, you're doing a lot of work in the major cities, the three major cities — Saskatoon, Regina, and Prince Albert. Has the city of North Battleford been brought into your ministry as far as looking at possibly doing something further down the road in that regards?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Yes. Thank you for that question. In fact at the SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] convention I was approached by the administrators of the North Battleford council. And we talked about that initiative as well, and that we do have a need because we have a correctional facility there. And Mr. LeClerc will be addressing this in his review as well.

There were some issues addressed in the community as well in the past, and additional resources may in fact have to be required in that area.

The First Nations communities have a very aggressive stance on their involvement on this issue — providing services to their communities. And they recognize that. One of the town council members, in fact, was from the First Nation community out there. And he recognized that more has to be done from their side as well.

So again it's a very encompassing program. Mr. LeClerc will be — is — very tasked with . . . It's a very demanding role, I believe, he's going to have to look at. It's not just the major centres. We have to also consider the communities outlying those centres that have facilities, plus the First Nations communities and smaller communities that do not have any correctional facilities in them as well. This is very much a spider's web once you start from the middle of correctional facilities working out. In his role, he'll have to advise us — and myself specifically — how we should address the needs in communities.

Community-based organizations will have a paramount role to play in a lot of our breaking-the-gang cycle and following through with our addictions treatment and follow-up in the communities.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you for the answer there, Mr. Minister. In regards to First Nation reserves, police offices on the First Nation reserves — and I'm speaking more to the line of a First Nation in my constituency, Muskeg Lake — I was at the grand opening where they opened up the office for a police officer, and at that time there was some talk of having officers stationed right on the First Nation reserve.

Is that going to be followed up? And is there going to be more First Nation reserves that will have police offices opening up on

the reserves?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Actually I'm going to ask my official, Murray Sawatsky, director of police services, to advise me on this one.

Thank you. I'll take you through a bit of an explanation. The Aboriginal policing program, the minister's agreements related to 34 community tripartite agreements, CTAs, and one self-administered police service. These agreements provide police service to 52 First Nations communities and cover 78 per cent of the on-reserve population. The program is also involved in developing and implementing a First Nations recruiting strategy for police officers.

To follow up more specific to your home First Nation in your constituency, those concerns come forward to my ministry officials based on the consultation taking place within the FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] model and the RCMP that we have regular meetings with to ensure that we have adequate resources.

Those resources are in fact usually paid within the CTAs at a 48/52 per cent: 48 per cent our cost, 52 per cent federal funding. If First Nations communities need the presence of RCMP officers, they will bring that to their leadership in their band, and that comes forward through to my officials and those kind of agreements are struck.

Mr. Allchurch: — Okay. These are tripartite agreements between the federal government and the province to assist in putting police or officers on the First Nation reserves; are they not?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Yes. You also forgot that a major component of this is the First Nations community themselves. They have to address that concern through their band membership, through the federal government, RCMP local detachment commanders who then, as a group, they will come forward to my ministry officials, and they'll discuss the needs there as well.

Mr. Allchurch: — I know just in talking to a lot of the First Nations in my constituency, they always welcome the fact that if we could have RCMP right on the First Nation reserve, it brings not only the expertise to the reserve, but it shows the people that we have law officials right on the reserve, and therefore the crime rate goes down. I know I'm just speaking from my First Nations in my constituency, but I'm sure this is probably the same issue that's all across the province of Saskatchewan; is it not?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — I would have to definitely agree. It's a great question. My policing experience has been in working with Mr. Sawatsky, talking about these issues with the RCMP. That presence of the officers in the community alone builds bridges. First Nations police officers typically are from First Nations ancestry. This year in the budget, we're providing two more that have been requested. As we move forward in the out years, we will be looking to the RCMP F Division commander and his officers to consult with the ministry officials, along with the chiefs of police of the municipal police forces, how we're going to best address our police resources moving out.

If they require more resources on those First Nations communities to address crime trends, I'll rely on those experts in the field, some that were colleagues of mine just a few short months ago, and they'll bring that forward to my ministry officials' attention. And we're going to keep addressing that, recognizing that if we release offenders back to First Nations communities and there's a crime trend cycle there, we may have to also look at communicating and consulting with First Nations communities, which Minister LeClerc will be addressing as well through some of his initiatives that may in fact be tied to addictions and federal funding allocations that we'll have to look for to continue on with those programs in the communities.

First Nations people and leadership wish to take a lot more control in how they manage their offenders once they're released. They want them back in the communities, but they want transition. And I respect that, having talked to the First Nations leaders, that we have to look at that. Part of it's policing. Part of it's community programming as well.

Mr. Allchurch: — Okay. Thank you for that answer. In regards to First Nation policing, is there something that the government is looking at as far as recruitment of more First Nation people coming into the police force and looking at spreading that over the First Nation reserves in the province?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Yes, good question. We have an Aboriginal recruiting strategy actually in place at this time involving an Aboriginal police officer who goes out to community functions, community events, and is informing the young people in our communities about a career in policing. The RCMP right now, as everyone knows, are actively recruiting as well, and those individuals in First Nations communities that wish to take on policing . . . There's a lot of initiatives in municipal policing and the RCMP to bridge them into the career if they so choose. They have to have a lot of open discussions with these people and with the youth in general.

A policing career is not as attractive as it once was. It's a very demanding profession. It no longer has the allure like you see on TV. It's a very demanding profession requiring people to be committed to the job, which I'm very aware. And this person that does the Aboriginal recruiting strategy is very committed to that goal as well, to increase those numbers.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, for your answers and thank you to your officials tonight. That's all the questions I have. I'll turn it over to my colleague.

The Chair: — Mr. LeClerc.

Mr. LeClerc: — If I could ask the minister and possibly the executive director of youth facilities a couple of questions. Approximately 15, 16 years ago, somewhere in that time span, the previous government closed Whitespruce. It was a dedicated youth facility, dedicated to addictions, in Yorkton. And I'm wondering at this moment if . . . Around the nature of addictions, I know that we're doing experimentation and programming in the adult facilities. What do we have now? Have we begun to address the, I guess, the closure of dedicated addictions programming for young people? And where are we going with that in a direction?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you for that question. A lot of the programming needs for the youth are addressed in the Ministry of Health, and I would defer a lot of those answers to them if you wish to ask those questions of the committee members at the time for specific initiatives.

We understand that the youth that come into the facilities we have, we usually see them who are, like Mr. Kary said before, they're highly addicted to substances already. It's the initiative that we have to follow up afterwards, that we have to make sure CBOs and those who have the expertise can be utilized.

The closure of the Whitespruce was no doubt a hit to the facilities, the young offenders in our province. Health has recognized that, and Health is going to — with the Legislative Secretary, I understand — address that as we go forward now.

Like you said it before though, our people in our institutions, our program staff, recognize that, and Mr. Kary's brought that very clearly to our attention, that with the short sentence that some of these individuals have, it's very critical to provide supports in the communities after.

Mr. LeClerc: — And one final question if I can. We've talked a lot about the growing numbers and the lack of bed space for corrections and the systemic neglect in terms of building more beds to handle capacity. How are we in terms of the youth facilities right now in the province in terms of capacity and bed space?

Mr. Kary: — Thank you. The peak counts in young offenders facilities occurred about 1998-99. At that time there was a specific strategy in Saskatchewan and also a lot of work done nationally with respect to the new legislation, the Youth Criminal Justice Act. Through programming and legislation, there was a significant reduction of the number of young offenders housed in facilities in the province. Maureen spoke before of taking over a young offender open custody facility. The reason that was possible is because that facility wasn't always utilized. It was only partially utilized. We also were able to close several facilities as a result of those reductions.

Since that time of course, we have seen a slight creep up of numbers, but that creep up of numbers is still well within our capacity to house. And as I mentioned earlier, we do have a contingency unit at North Battleford Youth Centre that we open up when counts peak. And they do. Counts are never uniform. They're never the same all the time. Sometimes, especially remand can throw them up, and so from time to time we need to open additional facilities.

Counts also change between open and secure custody. There's the two levels of custody, and some of our facilities are what we call duly designated so that they can sometimes house open custody offenders and sometimes house secure custody offenders. So we're flexible enough to be able to manage within the allocated beds.

Mr. LeClerc: — Thank you very much.

The Chair: — Members, I believe we have filled the time allotted to us today. I would like to first thank the minister and his officials for appearing before us and answering committee

members' questions and providing the information that was requested.

Also committee members, I'd like to thank all members of this committee for your co-operation that the Chair received this afternoon, and I'm sure we are looking forward to having the minister and his officials appear before this committee again in the near future. And with that, committee members, I now adjourn this committee.

[The committee adjourned at 18:13.]