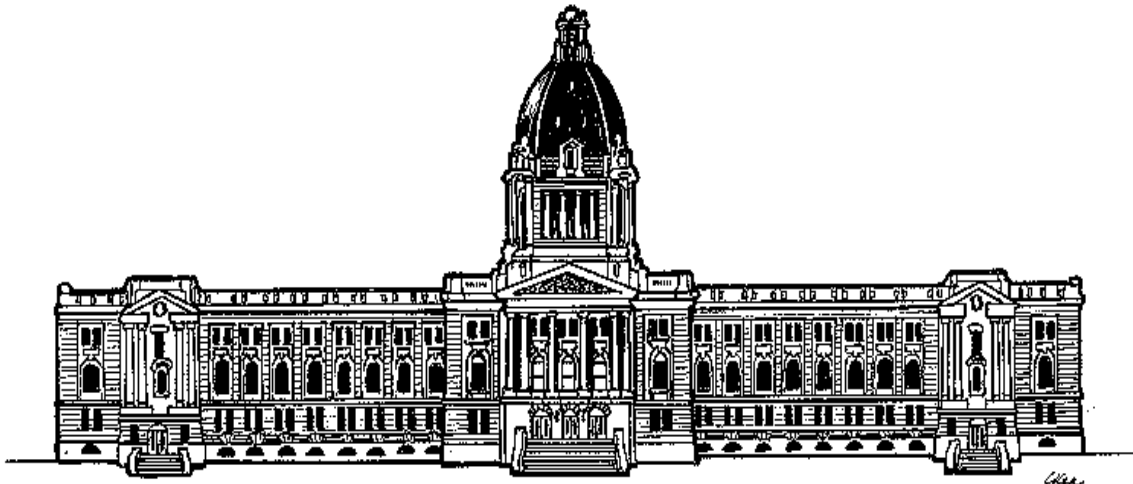




# **STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

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## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

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Mr. Glen Hart  
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Ms. Christine Tell  
Regina Wascana Plains

Mr. Gordon Wyant  
Saskatoon Northwest

[The committee met at 11:06.]

**The Chair:** — Welcome, everyone. Seeing as it is now past 11 o'clock, the chosen hour for our committee to begin, I'll call the committee to order. Good morning to all committee members, the minister and her officials, and those at home. I'd like to welcome you all to the deliberations of the Standing Committee on Human Services. On our agenda today we'll be considering the estimates and supplementary estimates for the Ministry of Social Services.

Members of the committee are Mr. Cam Broten, and substituting for Ms. Judy Junor today will be Mr. David Forbes. We also have Ms. Danielle Chartier with us this morning. And on the government side, we have Mr. Glen Hart, Mr. Gord Wyant, Ms. Doreen Eagles, and Ms. Christine Tell.

We'll be tabling a document, HUS 76/26, Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration, a letter clarifying clarification to statements made during the May 10th, 2011 appearance before the committee, re two email statements dated May 11th, 2011.

**General Revenue Fund  
Social Services  
Vote 36**

**Subvote (SS01)**

**The Chair:** — Committee members, we are now looking at the estimates and supplementary estimates for Social Services, vote 36, central management and services, subvote (SS01), outlined on page 131 of the Estimates booklet, and subvote (SS12) outlined on page 7 of the Supplementary Estimates booklet.

Madam Minister, would you like to introduce your officials and make an opening statement, please?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. And to all the committee members, good morning. I'm pleased to be here today to discuss the income assistance and disability services portion of the Ministry of Social Services for the '11-12 budget.

I'd like to introduce the officials that are here with me today. I have Marian Zerr, the deputy minister; Bob Wihlidal who's the assistant deputy minister of income assistance and disability services. Alan Syhlonyk is the assistant deputy minister of corporate services. Jeff Redekop is the executive director of income assistance and disabilities services, program and service design. We have Lynn Tulloch, the executive director of income assistance service delivery; Beverly Smith, the executive director of community living service delivery; Miriam Myers who is executive director of finance and administration corporate services; Lori Mann, the director of financial planning and corporate services. Gord Tweed is the acting executive director of strategic policy; Doug Scott, the director of benefits policy; and Don Allen, the assistant deputy minister of housing.

I'd like to start by talking about the accomplishments in income assistance and disability services. Similar to my ministry's

previous appearance before the Standing Committee on Human Services, I'm going to tell you about some of the accomplishments.

As you know, a large portion of the ministry's programs provide support and services to individuals with intellectual or long-term disabilities. In 2008 in October, our government announced the largest investment in the province in support of citizens with intellectual disabilities. I'm proud to say that as of March the 31st, 2011, services are in place or in development for 316 individuals from the wait-list of 440 individuals that have specialized . . . the needs of specialized residential and day programs.

New or expanded residential and day program services have been developed in 37 communities across the province. A new day funding model program, based on the assessed needs of individuals, was piloted in 2010. Because of the success of this pilot, work is now under way to fully implement this initiative province-wide this year. We've also implemented enhanced supports for improved private service home sectors. We've developed community-based crisis support and prevention programs and we continue to collaborate with the Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres and CBOs [community-based organization] in the development and implementation of CBO staff recruitment and retention initiatives.

In 2009 we established the Saskatchewan assured income for disability, a milestone for people with disabilities in our province. Earnings exemptions have increased by \$100 per month for singles and by \$125 per month for childless couples with family members who have a disability. Also, the asset inheritance exemption level in the SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] program has been increased to \$100,000 which began to fundamentally differentiate benefits between the Saskatchewan assistance program and SAID.

To assist with the cost of living pressures associated with our province's growing prosperity, our government protected the adequacy of social assistance shelter rates through semi-annual reviews. Since November of 2007, social assistance shelter allowance and rental supplements have increased six times. The most recent change was effective on April the 1st, 2011 and a commitment has been made to extend the semi-annual adjustments to October of 2011.

As you know, our province was not entirely immune to the effects of the recent economic downturn, and we saw some growth in the social assistance caseload in 2010-11. However the economic downturn affected this province differently than most others in Canada. While other provinces were losing jobs in 2009-10 and '10-11, employment actually increased in Saskatchewan by about 1 per cent in each of these years. Our economy produced more jobs but they could not keep pace with the growing number of people who came to our province to share in the Saskatchewan advantage. And in this more competitive job market, individuals with lower levels of education or experience were displaced in some cases.

While the number of people unemployed in this province grew as a consequence of our growing economy, some in this group

eventually turned to social assistance for support. The dependency rate for social assistance, however, when compared to the overall population, remained stable. I'm pleased to report that this situation appears to be improving. The caseload is now stabilizing. In fact the combined SAP [Saskatchewan assistance plan], TEA [transitional employment allowance], and SAID caseload was lower in both March and April of this year than it was in the same months a year earlier. We are therefore confident in the forecast that we've advanced for 2011 and '12.

To accelerate the transition to work for employed clients of Saskatchewan assistance program and the transitional employment allowance, five measures called Accelerating Connections to Employment, or ACE, have been implemented. Early indicators show a positive impact on the employable client groups. New employable clients are leaving social assistance at a faster rate due in part to these new measures.

Significant work is also under way to re-engineer the income assistance. We are taking a step back to examine and revamp our income assistance programs to ensure that they are relevant, that they meet our clients' needs, and they're delivered in a citizen-centred manner. The many complex programs and multiple points of entries to these programs, along with 30-year-old IT [information technology] infrastructure, have posed some challenges to present common sense solutions to some of our common clients' problems.

Four pillars are guiding this important work. We have a citizen-centred service delivery, providing the right service at the right time through appropriate methods. The second one is taking advantage of opportunities to improve the efficiency of current business plans for the business processes, and that's the lean methodology. The third one is implementation of a five-year plan to re-examine all seven income assistance programs to ensure they are designed to meet clients' needs. And the fourth is to extend the ministry's new Linkin case management system to income assistance programs.

These are just a few examples of some of the tremendous progress we've made. Our budget for '11-12 will allow us to continue.

The Ministry of Social Services budget for income assistance and disability service in 2011 and '12 totals 553.8 million. That represents a 46 million or 9.1 per cent increase over last year. The total includes a further 1.5 per cent increase for community-based organizations. So over the last four years, we've increased funding to CBOs by a total of 14.8 per cent.

I'm very pleased that this budget includes an additional \$14 million in support of people with intellectual and cognitive disabilities. This new funding will continue the progress on the multi-level initiative that provides specialized residential and daycare programs for people with intellectual disabilities. By the end of 2011-12, residential and daycare program services will be in place or in the development for 373 people, or 85 per cent of the wait-list of the 440 individuals. This new investment will also expand services for individuals with emerging needs beyond the original wait-list.

[11:15]

A hundred thousand dollars has been allocated to enhance the Canadian Paraplegic Association's program for peer support, rehabilitation counselling, and outreach services for Aboriginal people with spinal cord injuries and other physical disabilities as part of the \$4.35 million and five-year investment in the Rick Hansen Foundation.

An additional \$2.3 million is allocated this year for the continued development of the Saskatchewan assured income for disability program. In 2011 we'll begin implementing eligibility assessments that are required to enrol additional clients to the program. And in January of 2012, a \$50 per month benefit increase will be provided for SAID clients in residential care settings. This increase is only one more important step along a much longer journey. Our government will be making future investments to increase benefits for all our SAID clients. Importantly, we'll continue to plan the development of SAID with our partners in the disability community.

To support people who rely on income assistance, Social Services '11-12 budget includes an additional \$12 million for income assistance programs. This funding will address caseload and cost per case increases in the Saskatchewan assistance program, transitional employment allowance, Saskatchewan rental housing supplement, and child care subsidy.

One additional notable, the initial investment of \$4.35 million to allow the expansion of the Linkin case management system to income assistance programs, is very much appreciated. This is a necessary step towards transforming our current system to a client-centred model.

While we continue to make progress, there is certainly more to be done in the area of income assistance and disability support. I believe that we are starting this fiscal year on a firm foundation, both in terms of the investment we continue to make and the initiatives we've identified as priorities. Ensuring that our province's most vulnerable people receive the supports they need is the primary role of our government.

Mr. Chair, I'd be pleased to take questions, but I would like to tell the member opposite that he had made a request about housing supplements so we did some work to find out where we could be asked some questions. The member can request through the Chair of the Human Services Committee to have the committee meet for consideration of the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation annual report or have the opportunity to discuss the annual report at Public Accounts. And the Chair of the Human Services Committee can call a meeting of the committee outside session if you would like.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. I'll open that point up for discussion. What are the committee members' feelings on this point?

**Mr. Forbes:** — Well I appreciate the answer because that was going to be my first question. And so that's good. And so what you're saying is that, but it is not during these estimates that we should be talking about the report.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — We can do it during the estimates. We agree on a time that we're going to do it. And so that's why I asked that the Chair could call a special meeting at any time

that we can agree on, and we'll definitely discuss the estimates.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I mean at this point, I don't feel a need to go back to review that. I think we've . . . In fact, but I will be referring to that report during one of my questions later on. But at this point, I don't feel that we need to have a special time. But it's good to have that on record, in the record about the opportunities to do that. And so thank you for that. That's good. Okay.

**The Chair:** — So for the record, Mr. Broten and I will discuss this point further and come back to the committee with a decision.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much. And as we move forward and we conclude the estimates, we have about a couple of hours on this. So that'll be kind of focusing on page 133. I've let my colleagues know in our caucus that this is their chance. If they do come in, they may have questions. So we may be going back and forth, and you're wondering why are we going here when we've talked about that topic. It's because those folks have come back in the room, and when people have specific interests or things have been raised to them in their constituencies.

The first question I have, I want to ask, is around the Saskatchewan child benefit. And we see quite a significant growth there from last year. It was 14.7 million to 17.5 million. Am I reading that right? I want to make sure I've got to line this up right. Oh no, it's 574 million. No, what am I . . . 574,000. You know, sorry, I take that all back. I am talking about . . . I had the numbers right, but the wrong title. I'm talking about the child care parent subsidies, and it's 17.5 million, and last year it was 14.7 million. So what are the increases, what's the increase due to?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — The caseload has remained relatively stable for the last several years. However, last year utilization began to increase because we have more child care spaces in lower income areas.

**Mr. Forbes:** — What is the utilization? What has been in the last couple of years, going back two or three years, and what is it last year? What do you project it to be?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Thank you to the member. I can go back for a number of years if you would like me to.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Just maybe 2007-08, that year.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — 2007-08. In 2007-08 there was 9,153. And '08-09 it was 9,699. And in '09-10 it was 10,900. In '10-11 it was 11,600; and in '11-12, 12,700.

**Mr. Forbes:** — 12,000. And that's what you're projecting it to be?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — That's correct.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Right, okay. Now has there been any change in the subsidies over the period of time. . . Oh, sorry.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Can I just clarify? I've given you the

spaces.

**Mr. Forbes:** — What's that?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — That's child care spaces that we're talking about.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Oh, spaces?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Yes. I gave you the numbers for the child care spaces.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. Do you have the number of clients that actually have a subsidy? Has that grown?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — We'll do that again and we'll start at 2007. Okay, in 2007-08, now I've got to make sure I'm doing it right here . . . I'm going to let the deputy minister, ask the Deputy Minister Marian to take this.

**Ms. Zerr:** — Good morning. Marian Zerr, deputy minister. So what I can tell you is this, Mr. Forbes. I'll combine the two pieces, but in the 2010-11 budget, we had anticipated that the average number of cases would be 3,225, and in the '11-12 budget we're looking at 3,515 as our forecast. And the real significance of the change has been our ability to get those child care spaces into low income areas where they are more accessible to those particular sets of parents.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Now can you go back into the past, if you have that? What did you have, how many families in 2009-10 who were qualified for . . .

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — In 2009-10 it was 9,159 . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . 3,159.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. And do you have 2008-09?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — In 2008-09 it was 3,278.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And just to make it all tidy, do you have '07-08?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — At 3,412.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. Now the other question that I have been asked is that . . . And I'm referring to this handout, "Child Care Subsidies", this pamphlet that people get. And the questions that was raised to me refers to that paragraph that says:

What are the income thresholds to qualify for maximum subsidies?

. . . subsidies are provided to families with monthly incomes below \$1,640 if they have one child under [age] 18 years of age. This threshold is increased by \$100 for each additional child under 18.

And then you give some examples, but the note on here is that these have not changed for several years. This 1,640 number has not changed. Is that correct?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — It's correct.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And then, you know, we find that interesting because, you know, we thought that in 2006-07 . . .

**Ms. Zerr:** — I'm still in my pink boa phase. I'm trying to get past that, my Elton John concert last night. Pardon me, I'm sure Hansard didn't need to know that.

At any rate, because there hasn't been a change at the income level, what there has been is a change in the benefit which changes how people exit from the program. And for a better explanation of that than I am able to give you, we could bring Doug Scott forward.

**Mr. Scott:** — Yes, Doug Scott from the ministry. It's true, Mr. Forbes, that the maximum — we call it the turning point, the point at which subsidies begin to be reduced — hasn't changed in a number of years. So it's been 1,640 and 1,740 if you have two children and 1,840 if you have three children and so on.

But the exit threshold or the maximum income eligibility point for the subsidy has changed significantly, and that was due to the 2006 enhancements to the child care subsidy. So at that point, the exit threshold for the subsidy or the maximum income eligibility was pulled up quite a bit because the subsidies were increased quite a bit.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Now this person's quite alarmed. Actually they say it hasn't been changed since 1982, which goes back quite a ways actually.

**Mr. Scott:** — We looked at the subsidy last time that we did the major, sort of rethink of the subsidy.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I'm looking at two press releases. One is from September 28, 2006, and one is actually from a document of mine from June 2007 when I was minister of Labour. And we had talked about all this, but it sort of wasn't very precise. This sounds like it's kind of a grey, vague area. So we thought there had been some changes. But can you explain why what the ministry has done is a better plan than going with, dealing with the basic threshold of 1,640?

**Mr. Scott:** — The basic threshold of 1,640 is where the subsidy begins to be reduced. So families are eligible for the child care subsidy with incomes far beyond that range, up into the \$40,000 a year range for one or two kids. And it's difficult to give a precise sort of maximum income eligibility threshold for the subsidy because the subsidies vary. The maximum income eligibility thresholds vary by the amount of the subsidy. That is the magnitude of the subsidy that's given at the maximum level. If you were reducing \$10 at a rate of 25 per cent for every dollar earned, it would be different than reducing \$20 at a rate of 25 per cent for every dollar earned, if that's clear at all.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Now the part that sticks in my mind is the trigger that starts the reduction is when you hit 1,640. Right?

**Mr. Scott:** — Yes.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And if that hasn't changed in many years but incomes are going up, even with minimum wage going up, 1,640 a month is . . . what is that? How much is . . . I knew I should have brought my calculator.

**Mr. Scott:** — It's about \$20,000 a year, I think.

**Mr. Forbes:** — \$20,000 a year, that's minimum wage, so minimum wage because there is 2,000 hours in a work year at \$10 an hour, which is pretty close to that.

**Mr. Scott:** — So they would still qualify for the maximum subsidy if they were working 40 hours a week at minimum wage, and they would qualify, they would still qualify for a reduced subsidy if they were working at quite a bit more than that, at 15 or \$16 an hour. It wouldn't be the maximum but it would be a reduced subsidy. They'd still have eligibility.

[11:30]

One of the reasons that we didn't change that turning point in 2006 is because when we looked, the subsidy covered a broad range of incomes, and 80 per cent of subsidy users had incomes below the turning point. And so when faced with the decision with a fixed pool of funds, whether to pull the turning point out or to put that money toward an increased subsidy, we decided that we would put it toward an increased subsidy.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So do you think now that that 80 per cent has moved up in terms of where their income . . . If you were keeping that 80 per cent in to get the maximum benefit, it might be better to . . . because wages have gone up even for low-income people.

**Mr. Scott:** — Yes. I don't know. And to tell you the truth, I haven't looked for a year or so.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Minister, I would ask you to really look at this one because I think this is one where we see a threshold that, if this person is right, hasn't been changed since 1982.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, and to the member, also there is another program, the SES [Saskatchewan employment supplement] program that that actually adds to this as well.

And also with the difference in the number of . . . the increasing of the personal exemption for paying tax made a difference to this too. But I would like Gord to come up and explain some of the numbers that would be an added benefit to people that qualify under the SES program.

**Mr. Tweed:** — Gord Tweed. So the program that the minister's referencing is the Saskatchewan employment supplement program, and a program I know that you're familiar with. It was introduced a number of years back and includes benefits to help parents with the child-related costs of going to work. Much of that would be related to child care costs that they would incur. So it's not associated with the child care subsidy program where you started your line of questioning, but there is another budget allocation of \$20.7 million this year to help parents with those child-related costs.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Yes. But you know, this is a political discussion, not so much a bureaucratic . . . The thing that, you know, as when the Sask Party came to government and we hadn't increased the SIP [Saskatchewan Income Plan] for many years. And your government had come in and seen that and said we've got to fix that right away. And it just made a lot of sense.

It made a lot of sense.

Here's a situation where you have a minimum, a maximum . . . or a threshold of 1,640 that hasn't been changed. And according to this person, since 1982 . . . and I don't know if that's right or wrong, but we've heard it's been for many years, that I think that it would be really worthwhile to update these thresholds just to make it look like it's current.

You know, because when people come and they tell us this, and we say, since 1982? That's hard to believe. That's through how many administrations? We have the Devine administration. We have the Romanow administration, the Calvert. Somehow that hasn't changed? And probably there's good programs, a series of good programs, but the fact of the matter is, you do have to keep these things current. And the incomes have gone up since 1982. That is almost 30 years ago. And it's hard to defend. I tell you, the person who was telling me this is a religious person, and I'm saying I can't believe it. You know, I wouldn't want to tell her that, you know . . . When she says something, I kind of have to believe it.

And I think they're looking at this little thing, but yet it means a lot because when they say it hasn't been changed for years, that's not a good thing for any government to be dealing with.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I'm going to remember that and some of the areas as well, but I think it's important to remember that that hasn't changed. But there is the \$20 million that we've added to the SES program, the Saskatchewan employment supplement, that does help offset some of the child-related costs with child care and transportation, and it really does provide an incentive for families to earn additional income.

So one of the things that I talked about earlier was the fact that we do have a number of programs, and trying to fit them all together right now is one of the goals that we are doing. Hopefully . . . I won't even say hopefully. It will happen when we have the computer system set up, so that we're not asking people to fill out additional information on different programs that they try and apply for. And that, I believe it will help to synchronize some of the monies that are coming in and make it simpler, so that when we look at an individual we can see what they're doing instead of trying to fit them into numbers and programs that have been in place for a while.

This Linkin project that we're working on is an expensive one, you know, that we did it with the children. The pilot is being worked on now, and we're working on it now with these programs. And I agree with you: it's time to get some of them simplified, and that is one of the big goals of the ministry at this time.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And that's so correct because if you're working on this citizen-centred program, the fewer programs but better programs that meet . . . especially for younger families who may not . . . As you get older, you seem to be a little bit more wiser how to make programs work for you. But child care is so hugely important that to simplify it, and I think that . . .

So I don't know if any of my colleagues have any questions further to that. But just to go back and take a look and say . . . because I accept the answers and I think they're good. But I do

think this is something that's hard to defend when it hasn't been changed in . . .

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I agree with the member. And we do have to make sure that we simplify them to make sure that we put everything together that's available is something we should be doing.

**The Chair:** — Ms. Chartier.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Could someone explain the exit threshold for me then on the child care subsidy?

**Mr. Scott:** — Doug Scott from the ministry. Yes I'm sorry. The exit threshold is sort of a technical term. In brochures and things, we would explain it as the maximum income eligibility point. So you could say that families with incomes below a certain amount would be eligible for the program. Most income-tested programs are reduced as income rises. And so at some point income becomes so high that they're no longer eligible for any of the program. And that's what I was referring to as the exit threshold, the maximum income eligibility point.

**Ms. Chartier:** — And where was that raised to? I know you said it's hard to, it's a hard number to pin down.

**Mr. Scott:** — And unfortunately I didn't bring any examples with me today, but for a family with two kids, say an infant and a toddler, it's in the \$40,000-a-year range.

Okay. We do have some illustrations. So let's see if I understand them correctly. If I was a single parent with two children, one pre-school and one school age, and they were both attending full-time care, and they were in Regina or Saskatoon let's say, the family would qualify for the maximum of \$680 with no income. And then it would gradually be reduced and it would be at about \$4,500 a month of income they would have no eligibility, but at \$4,000 a month they would still have eligibility for \$115 a month.

So does that help? The subsidy is reduced as income rises. And when this particular family hit \$4,500 a month, they would have no eligibility at all.

**Ms. Zerr:** — At 4,000 a month, so \$48,000 a year, she would have a \$230 a month eligibility for those two children or 2,900 — what would that be? — yes, \$2,900 a year in addition to her \$48,000 income.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Would it be possible to get a copy of that?

**Mr. Scott:** — Yes, I think so.

**Ms. Chartier:** — That would be great.

**Mr. Scott:** — I have one with a bunch of scribbles on it right now, but we could provide a copy of it, I'm sure. Yes.

**Ms. Chartier:** — That would be very helpful, thank you very much.

**The Chair:** — Ms. Higgins.

**Ms. Higgins:** — On this whole area of the subsidies, has the drop-off point — and I apologize for coming in late — but has the drop-off point where subsidies start to reduce the amount of income, has that been extended? That's what you were just talking about, or no?

**Mr. Scott:** — Yes.

**Ms. Higgins:** — So where is the drop-off point then, where it starts?

**Mr. Scott:** — It begins to be reduced at \$1,640 for a one-child family and \$1,740 for a two-child family, and it goes up by \$100 for every additional child.

**Ms. Higgins:** — Sorry, I'm thinking of this a little differently. At what point in my income does my subsidy start to . . . is it calculated that way?

**Mr. Scott:** — Yes, that is the way it's calculated. So you would qualify for the maximum subsidy if you had one child. You would qualify for the maximum subsidy as long as your income was below \$1,640 a month. And you would qualify for a reduced subsidy well beyond that, but it would vary, depending.

**Ms. Zerr:** — So in the example that was provided, the single mother with a preschooler and a school-age child would not qualify for any subsidy when her income hit \$4,500 a month or \$54,000 a year.

**Ms. Higgins:** — Switching to a different topic then, at what point has the ministry met the government's mandate to reduce staff 4 per cent over the four-year period and hitting a 16 per cent? Is that still a requirement, for the full 16 per cent coming out of Social Services?

**Ms. Zerr:** — So thank you for the question. The targets for Social Services have not been set quite the same way as other ministries have been set. So last year our target overall was to move from 1,967 FTEs [full-time equivalent] to 1,910, or a 57 FTE complement. However we then added the Status of Women office at the end of June or early July into our complement, taking us to 1,913. So this year our target is 1,895 and change, 1,895.4 or point six; I can't recall off the top of my head.

**Ms. Higgins:** — What percentage of a reduction is that for the Ministry of Social Services?

**Ms. Zerr:** — So a percentage of 1 per cent is 19 FTEs, or nineteen and a half FTEs. And so if we go from 1,913 to 1,895, we are roughly decreasing this year in that not quite 1 per cent.

**Ms. Higgins:** — So what was your staff complement in 2008?

**Ms. Zerr:** — In 2008, we had a staff complement of, in 2007-08, we had a staff complement of 1,932.1. In 2008-09, that was restated and augmented to 1,973. In 2009-10, it was 1,967. In '10-11 as I'd mentioned, the target was 1,910 and then three were added. And our target this year is 1,895.4.

**Ms. Higgins:** — Target this year, 1,895 . . .

**Ms. Zerr:** — 1,895.4.

**Ms. Higgins:** — So you're looking at a reduction this year of 18, I think is what it works out to?

**Ms. Zerr:** — Yes, thereabouts.

**Ms. Higgins:** — Plus or minus a point something.

**Ms. Zerr:** — Yes.

**Ms. Higgins:** — Where are you taking those positions from or where will you meet your targets from?

[11:45]

**Ms. Zerr:** — We will again be focusing very clearly on . . . And it kind of goes hand-in-hand with the previous conversation around the whole look at our benefit streams and our policy streams and how are we delivering services. One of the real challenges in the Ministry of Social Services is that many of those benefits are very good programs that were added on to. Somebody in administration had a good idea to meet an unmet need, threw in a program. And what we haven't had is a, what I would call a step back to look at how we coordinate the delivery of those programs better.

And so there are a number of things — I'm not trying to dodge your question, but there's a bit of a pretext to this — there are a number of things that we need to do to make sure that we are aligning our human resources in ways that make the programs best for the citizens to access, and in ways that make, that are lined up with where the volume and case management issues are. So that's kind of a backward step. It's saying we're trying to look at, in the first place, the benefit stream. So that is the seven or eight programs where we deliver benefits, where clients have to access them all in different ways, all in different channels. And it has not been what I would call good for the citizen, and it's also labour-intensive. We tend to do things twice and three times and sometimes four times.

So part of what we have taken some real effort at this past year has been to look at where our caseload volumes are, start to try and standardize across the province how we can manage on the income assistance side particularly in terms of ensuring that we are getting better at that and at the same time understanding that one of the real critical factors in getting better will be getting the technology in place.

We've undertaken some of the things . . . I'm sure you've discussed lean at this table and other initiatives, but the example I'd give you is the SAP application process. So the front-line staff put their hands up and said, we've got to take a look at this. We have different forms all across the province, we do things not really as consistently as we should, and we ask a lot of the client, depending on how they are applying to us and for what. And so all of those things will contribute to, as we go down the path this coming year, an ability again for the ministry to look at how we are best managing our resources.

So I want to put that out there as that's part of our job to do that, to make sure we're doing that better. At the same time this is a ministry with a number of retirements coming up, far more



retirements than I would personally like. The public service is aging and so we know that there are many retirements coming in our system, whether people actually take the option, we can only forecast people who are eligible. So we know we have retirements to manage, and then of course we know that we have some things we have to manage in terms of caseload volume and decreased client base in some of our particular areas.

**Ms. Higgins:** — So then the question is, with all of that in mind, do you just put a number in the budget and that's a target, or is that an actual number that you've gone through that process already and have an idea that you can actually reach that target through specific measures? So I guess the question is, where are the 18 jobs coming from?

**Ms. Zerr:** — And so again I would say to you, a target is what I understand as the deputy is my accountability to the deputy to the Premier. He holds me accountable to deliver on all of the budget, not just pieces of it. It's my job to do the best that I can to bring the ministry's budget in all its components in on line. So yes, I am accountable to hit that target. It's not notional. That's the first message.

The second message would be, have I identified specific jobs? We have not identified specific jobs. What we are going to be able to do, for example in how we were able to look at the staffing models in a number of our areas, we'll be able now — we did a bunch of that work this last fiscal year — we'll be able to annualize and regularize some of that this year. And we will get some savings out of that. We have not cut people's jobs. We have not required that to happen. We aren't requiring that to happen this year. That's not part of our plan.

**Ms. Higgins:** — Well I guess I'm going from previous experience, that if you had of put that number, if you are putting that number in paper in the budget and have built the budget at that number, then you have specific ideas where the adjustments will be made to make sure you meet that target and stay within your budget in the coming year. I guess I'm having a hard time with the notion that without concrete kind of steps put in place, just having a target number in the budget, if you're not sure what steps will be taken to meet that target.

Do you know I'm looking . . . I would expect numbers in the budget to be definite numbers, that you've worked through the process and you know you can meet those budgets or those targets. If you can do better, well I guess that's a bonus if there are some adjustments that could be made. But I'm almost getting the feeling like this is a number that's been picked out of somewhere and put in the budget, and now you're working through the process to find out how and where you will be able to meet those targets. It's almost like backwards in my point of view, I guess.

**Ms. Zerr:** — It's not backwards. That's the first message. The second message would be part of hitting a target. And the target is not a notional target, it's not suggested. And it would be my contention that it wasn't pulled out of nowhere. It's a very minimal target for our ministry, as opposed to how other ministries would be asked to look. And it's been taken based on the fact that we have been very clear that we're looking at our benefit stream and trying to make sure that we look at that, that

we're looking at our number of retirements.

Some 3 per cent of our workforce will likely retire this year. That's a significant number. And so the message for me as a manager of those FTEs, is not just around hitting the target, it's making sure I can hit the target, not from the negative perspective but from the positive — how I'm going to manage the retirements, how I'm going to make sure that the critical jobs and the critical skills that we can recruit, we recruit.

So I am quite honestly, Ms. Higgins, not trying to dodge your question. But I also, as a deputy, have to have the flexibility when I am managing and allocating FTEs, when we are asked to do policy reviews, when we are taking forward a good, solid look at a program stream, a large program stream, that hasn't by and large been looked at since the '60s. We would understand that as we go through that process we're going to have some adjustments, and as we add in the technology base we're going to have some adjustments.

Because what would be a critical mistake would be to take that opportunity to put technology into the system and just say, you know what we're going to do? We have all of these paper forms and processes. We're just going to take those and technify them, if that's even a word. But we're going to take all of our existing forms, all of our existing processes, we'll make them e-forms, and away we'll go. We won't look at our policy. We won't say to ourselves, what are the channels that clients want to access us? Because, you know, it's really not a phone call any more, and it's often not an in-person. They want to access this on the web. They want to access this through email, and that requires a different kind of a resource and a different level of resource.

And so part of this is very much taking a sincere effort at, what are the right kinds of services for us to deliver? What are the right channels the public wants to see them in? How can the public best access us? And what's the right time to deliver the service? So really doing that piece that asks us those questions, and then saying all right, if that's what we're going to do, and we're going to have a technology base to do it, and we know that lean is telling us that we've got some critical challenges out there in terms of duplication of effort, then how do we line the resources up to make that fit? And knowing that we have far more retirements than we would ever need to hit our FTE target, I have perhaps as a deputy the luxury of saying, what's the best way of lining this all up?

**Ms. Higgins:** — Will there be . . . Now I also know that in Moose Jaw there is a number of vacancies in the ministry in Moose Jaw. Are those part of this whole process? There is a number of vacancies in Moose Jaw in the Social Services in a number of areas. They've been pretty drastic reductions through a variety of reasons. We have lost some people that have many years of experience in Moose Jaw that were very well respected and provided a great service for the people of the city. Will those jobs be refilled and those areas be staffed up, or are they part of the mix at realignment?

**Ms. Zerr:** — So in the city of Moose Jaw, or in the Moose Jaw service centre office, we had sadly one of our employees who had a very early death, and we've had two retirements. Those are in the process of being staffed.

One of the challenges in terms of vacancy management and filling vacancies . . . Social Services is an interesting ministry. We tend to recruit our own, and so when you have a vacancy at a supervisor level, we tend to recruit from our front line. So we fill that vacancy but we've just created another one. And so certainly, churn internally as opposed to external recruitment is one of the challenges that we're really trying to focus on in terms of saying, you know, we want to make sure that we give our people every opportunity to grow and develop their careers, but at the same time we have to make some real effort to manage the number of terms, particularly short terms. And so there's some work that we have to do with our management and supervisory staff in terms of recruitment and retention and making good decisions that allow us to stabilize some of that churn.

**Ms. Higgins:** — So then you are looking at replacing or filling the vacancies in Moose Jaw?

**Ms. Zerr:** — Yes.

**Ms. Higgins:** — Okay. Question then. Valley View Centre is always a concern in the community of Moose Jaw for numerous reasons, the care it gives, which we could always get into a debate over between the various groups that have varying views on Valley View. But it does have a big impact on Moose Jaw and it does provide a service to many residents and families across the province and beyond. Is there any expectations in the department that we will see further job reductions at Valley View Centre?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I'm going to speak to the big picture first of all and tell you that right now there is no current plans to close Valley View.

**Ms. Higgins:** — Good.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — But we have spoken to the mayor. We've spoken to individuals that work in there and have family in there, and we know that the time will come. But the most important thing for us right now is making sure that when the decision is made . . . And I think for anybody who is listening, I think it's important to know that at one time there was 1,138 people living at Valley View and 278 in North Park, and we're down to 218 now.

But I do realize, and so does the government, that's home to a lot of people. We haven't had any new clients or new individuals come in for . . . What would it be?

**Ms. Zerr:** — 2002.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — 2002. And we do lose clients every year, although they are cared for very well.

So the important thing is knowing that when the time comes, and there is no time that I can put a finger on in the future, but we do know we have to work with them. We have to make sure that people would have, that they're supported in a way that they have a home, much like we're doing with our wait-list right now, that 440 wait-list. Some of the individuals that are on that wait-list have many needs as well. And so we've been finding more community, you know, private homes,

community-based homes, places for them.

So at this time, there is . . . I've had conversations with the mayor, and he's told me about the importance of Valley View as an economic driver in the community. But at the same time, when we back away off, it's for the clients. So we have to make sure that as we've worked very hard to find places for the 440, and I think we're at 317 this year when we're finished this year and that takes a lot of work, we just can't . . . We have to find a place before we even consider it.

As for the source for the number of staff that may be not working there this year, I'll ask Marian.

**Ms. Zerr:** — So with respect to the minister, the new number . . . The number was 218 clients; it's now 217 clients.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — 217?

**Ms. Zerr:** — 217 clients. And so in terms of Valley View, when we were here last year we had 230 clients. Our target last year was ten and a half FTEs. That was done through a remake of the staffing model, very similar to what I've described as some work we need to undertake in the social assistance benefits stream side. Nobody lost their job. There was an adjustment to make sure that we managed that process well. I have in Valley View this year the potential for 41 retirements. So my concern is a different concern.

The average age of the clients in Valley View is over 57 years right now. Many of them have been there for more than 40 years. And the one message that I want to make sure is on record is that those clients have been cared for as family by the staff of Valley View Centre. Those staff have been committed to really supporting those clients in a strong and as supportive manner as they could do. And they see them as family. And so one of our challenges over the next number of years will be change management as we go down the path of the decreasing client load and making sure that we support staff in those changes as well.

In terms of how we will go forward this year, our annualized savings from the staffing model change will take us down the path of perhaps 10 to 12 FTEs difference. And that's from the kinds of things that we did last year. And I can give you a better explanation of that if that would be helpful. I'll bring someone up to do that.

[12:00]

**Ms. Higgins:** — So you're just expecting to move forward with that change model, or you're expecting to realize more reduction in staff, or streamlining, or however you want to put it?

**Ms. Zerr:** — We also have to understand that the fewer clients you have, the fewer number of group activity aids that you need, the fewer number of nurses that you need. And so as the client load decreases and as we have retirements in those categories, we're able to manage.

**Ms. Higgins:** — So you don't have a definite model, if I'm . . .

**Ms. Zerr:** — No, we have a model.

**Ms. Higgins:** — No, sorry. A definite number — sorry — to target it at, or expectations to be reached out of Valley View Centre. It's just continuing with the model and see what further efficiencies are found?

**Ms. Zerr:** — With the qualification that we would anticipate, again this year . . . Let me talk to you about the clients that are there, the 217. Of those 217, roughly 87 of them would be considered high level 4 clients, high medical needs clients. Another 117 of them are a different kind of client that we have to give some serious thought to ongoing management on. Those are the high behaviour needs clients. And then we have 13 clients that would be classed as level 3 there. That's sort of more moderate needs. So that's the client mix that we have.

When you talk about staffing, you have to make sure that your staffing reacts to and is absolutely relevant to the kind of client needs that you have. That's one of the criteria of the staffing model. The next piece of the staffing model is to ensure that what you have are appropriate skill mix per sort of a professional designation or not, so nurses do nursing things, group activities do group activity things, to make sure that we are best using our resources to match up to client needs and in a way that is respectful of fiscal and human resource management. Those things are pretty important.

So when I talk about the fact that we will be able to annualize the staffing model, we put in place a staffing model last year that looked at those precise things. And as we annualize that through, as clients decrease, we've been able to . . . I mean I can forecast for you on retirements. Whether I get 46 or 36 will be up to individuals who make those decisions, but based on years of service and history, we can kind of forecast that number of retirements.

So it's . . . I haven't sort of said it's that job that's going to disappear. What I've said is we also know we can anticipate, sadly, somewhere in the neighbourhood of 11 to 15 or 16 deaths in a year. We know that that will happen. And so you can forecast your client number, you can forecast your retirements, you can look at your client mix, and you can come up with a pretty accurate staffing model that tells you where you can go and what you will likely be at the end of the year.

**Ms. Higgins:** — There has been a policy in place — this is my understanding from speaking to a number of people that have worked at Valley View Centre for a number of years — that the policy right now is you have to have two people phone in sick before one is replaced. It's been ongoing for two years that I know of.

And I have to say, when you're giving the level of care that's required with many of the residents at Valley View and the intensity of the work, it's I mean in my view, you will just feel the repercussions farther down the line of higher WCB [Workers' Compensation Board] claims, more sick days, more . . . So it's, you know, I'm not sure if it's a hard and fast policy, if it's, why it's put in place, but I do know that I've heard of it a number of times. And I mean in my view you just will feel the costs down the road. You may ease off on the labour side and the immediate costs, but it will cost more down the road. And I

would also question if that gives the appropriate care to residents that are in the facility.

**Ms. Zerr:** — So first of all, client safety and client care is paramount. Decisions would not be made that would jeopardize client safety and client care. It would be up to . . . So I don't know of a formal policy as you have described it.

However, what I would say is this. And having been in all of those situations over the course of my career, it would be up to the manager of the day, the nursing supervisor of the day, to look at her client care mix, their needs on that particular day, and whether or not she needed to backfill any particular person who was sick or wasn't sick or was going off for a medical appointment. Decisions are made on the ground based on client need and based on client care and client safety. And as you've heard me say, the quality of client care is excellent.

**Ms. Higgins:** — No, I would agree with you there. And I know that many of the staff that have worked at Valley View for many years have formed some pretty close attachments to many of the residents, and there is a good working relationship between staff and residents at the facility.

Going back, Minister, to your comments about whether or not the facility is closing, and I think everyone will acknowledge that it is aging and that we are seeing residents aging and passing away and the numbers have dropped. And I believe if you go back even a little bit further in the very early days of Valley View Centre, your resident numbers were probably higher and closer to 1,500.

So anyway, but we do know that, with no more admissions, that the numbers of residents are reducing. And there was a commitment, I believe, two years ago. And it kind of all got wound up and started right around the family picnic that's held every summer where family members from all over the province and outside of the province will come. Anyway it's quite an occasion at Valley View. And there had been representatives from the family organization that had requested meetings with the ministry and with officials to actually begin having discussions and talking about not what if Valley View will close at some date in the future but what accommodation can we make and can we all be prepared for it.

I think the family organization was quite enthusiastic about getting together and having the meetings with the ministry so they wouldn't be left, kind of, out wondering what was going to happen and there would be a flurry of letters and concerns when rumours started to fly, which seems to happen on a fairly regular basis.

Now my understanding is that one meeting was held with the family to, kind of, get some common kind of direction or what the expectations were from the meeting, but then it kind of fell by the wayside. And my understanding is that there hasn't been a continuation of this discussion.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — To the member: I agree with everything you've said. And I think that the whole issue of Valley View is something that's . . . it's an important part of who the province was, and the people there are still very important. I have met, myself, with People First, and I know that there was one family

meeting. I think it was November 2009 is when ministry officials had met with some people.

There hasn't been meetings because there hasn't been a formal plan. But this is what we have told. We have told the Valley View Centre family advisory group, and they've requested that they know that there's a limited lifespan of Valley View and they want to be in the planning, and we've had that discussion with them. The Saskatchewan Association for Community Living has gone on record talking about the closure and wanting to be involved. Valley View family advisory group and People First and SACL [Saskatchewan Association for Community Living] have met with the ministry staff, and everybody wants to be in on the planning, as does the mayor.

So once we've started thinking of getting it together, there will be discussions with people. We're not going to go out and do it by ourselves.

**Ms. Higgins:** — Question: has there been any consideration given to Valley View being used as an expanding service, whether as a transition, respite care for individuals, or temporary care for individuals that may be in need of help? It's pretty difficult for a family when a person may be having intellectual difficulties. Once they become of adult age, there is really nothing in Saskatchewan for them.

Anyway I've run across this a number of times with constituents, and I always envisioned Valley View as . . . while the institutional model may not be the preference for many, that there was an opportunity when you have trained staff that are readily available, you have facilities that are in pretty good shape — some not so — but that there would be an ability to transition Valley View not only into the institutional care but transitions, temporary care, respite care for a number of areas.

Any consideration by the ministry into that, or are we just looking at the sole deinstitutionalization issue?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I'm just going to comment, and then I probably will let someone else comment. But I had the very same idea — what else can we use this facility for? — until I was told bluntly to my face that the building is structurally not as sound as I thought it would be, and the cost to renovate it or rejuvenate it would be far more costly than starting from the ground up. So I was disappointed when I heard that, but that was what I was told. I'm going to ask somebody to give me some more comment on that, but saying that there is a need for some sort of facility is not way out there. I think that there could be a need for that, so can somebody comment on the structure of the building?

**Ms. Zerr:** — Just the first piece and then the second piece. I'm not so much going to comment on the structure of the building, but I think you really had two questions. One was, is there a need for respite and other kinds of services? And then the second one is, and could we link those to Valley View?

So in terms of the need for services, I think we're going to ask Jeff to speak to you about some of the things that we are doing because respite services are a critical part of the continuum, particularly if you're going to maintain clients perhaps in lower level of care settings and yet make sure that their caregivers

have that opportunity for a rest as well as making sure that the client may get some different services and respite. So that part is important.

In terms of the Valley View facility, I would speak to you from a different perspective. I've spent a good part of my career managing hospitals and nursing services and all those kinds of things. And dear God, let me not to have to do it there. The facility is really a significant challenge to try and deliver that kind of service. So I think the question is, what are the services that are needed and then how do we create whatever it is we need to create to ensure that we deliver those services.

**Ms. Higgins:** — I look at it more as, I look at Valley View as much as a concept as the buildings. I mean, it's not the buildings. It's the residents. It's the care. It's the service that is provided because, I mean, as a former minister of what was then SPM [Saskatchewan Property Management] . . . I mean, I've toured Valley View. I've seen the infrastructure and been through it all, and it is an old facility. But I always, I guess, envisioned an opportunity for a new structure that would provide services that are more appropriate to what's deemed best practices today for the residents that are there but also adding in respite, temporary transitional services that are needed.

Because what I run across at my constituency office, and have a number of times, is adults that are no longer under the care of parents or parents no longer have that legal authority over them. So we run into problems with medication. We run into problems with these people being on their own, living in less than favourable circumstances, not being able to hold a job, not being able to keep a job, just struggling for some type of support and service and ending up, in a couple of cases, where they ended up in trouble with the law and ended up in jail.

But it's just that it's horrible circumstances of citizens that are falling through the cracks without the proper support. Is there transition services that would help get them back on track? I mean I'm way over my head here. I mean I have no training in this area. I just, I guess, deal with them on a . . . you know, not that frequently, but it just tears your heart out to see these folks and parents that have no recourse or no support to be able to address the needs of a child even though they're a grown child.

[12:15]

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — To the member, I agree with you. And what you're talking about isn't something that's happening just in Moose Jaw. It's something that we're hearing right across the province. One of the areas that I hear it a lot of, the families that we're dealing with right here in Social Services and that we care for, but also families of children who have FAS [fetal alcohol syndrome] and autism. And their big fear is, what happens to my children when I'm not here any more? Where do we go to? What kind of a structure?

And the idea of an institution isn't really what people want, but they do need support on a 24-hour basis. They need someone to make sure that they have taken the medication or have cooked a meal, in some cases even get them to work on time because some people are capable of doing that. So it's a whole idea of looking at the way we deal with people with sometimes

physical but lots of times intellectual disabilities and how do we make sure there's a life that's the very best people can live, and what do we do as government to provide that? It's something that I think about a lot, and I know that all members do because that's how we are judged: how do we do deal with the people that are most vulnerable?

So there isn't something that we have in a plan right now, but I do know it's something I hear of a lot across government. And it's supporting people who need temporary help, sometimes even supporting the family that have children that need support. It's a good question. It's something that has to be thought about, not just within government but families. How do we support them as well? So I'm in over my head when I talk about it too, but I do know that it's something that I hear a lot from. And some of the work that we do with some of the non-profits absolutely amaze me where people have said, you know, we should be there too. Can we be there to help?

But I'd like to hand . . . Jeff has a couple . . . I think you asked a question about the building, and I think we should put it on record just so people are aware.

**Mr. Redekop:** — Jeff Redekop with the ministry. So I'll be speaking about the, I guess, the broader context of respite. And I'd like to take it beyond the building to the whole province in terms of the caseload across the province.

So community living service delivery is working with just over 4,000 people with intellectual disability across the province. And there are certainly ranges of needs across the province of individuals including, as you heard our deputy mention earlier, similar to the profiles at Valley View where people have high medical needs, behavioural support needs, and people with lower needs.

And there's a need for crisis support respite across the province. And there's quite a range of activities that have been going on over the last three years that I think are important to share at this time.

So the contents of respite includes quite a broad range. It includes a subsidy paid to family members of up to \$6,000 per year, based on the level of need of a child. So that's supporting families with a child with an intellectual disability. There is a subsidy paid through our approved private service home sector that allows approved private service home providers to take a break so that they can recharge and make sure that they have the capacity to continue providing care.

In addition through the wait-list initiative, we have investments that have occurred already and more that will come in the future to support individuals with complex needs. As folks may be aware, we're just completing work on assessing individuals for the day program funding standard. That project will include funding for a level of complex needs so that people with higher levels of needs can be served in their day program properly and with the right intensity of service.

In addition there have been investments made in crisis support across the province. A couple of years ago, we began the South View Home project, which is in Moose Jaw very close to Valley View, which serves three individuals with complex

needs. And we reserve one space for people that are in crisis.

Also a number of years ago, we opened or redesigned the North View program in Prince Albert. And both North View and South View are operated directly by government. And these programs both use the same model of service delivery, serving people with higher needs and also the capacity to serve people in crisis.

And the crisis support model ranges from outreach and training to individuals to ensure that people can be supported in their home without escalating to a crisis. The catch phrase is, the best way to avoid a crisis is to, well, not have one in the first place. But in addition, that model provides residential support for individuals in crisis. There are up to two spaces in Prince Albert in North View Home, and, as I mentioned, one space in South View Home.

Additionally investment was made in the last year in our community-based organization just out of Saskatoon to continue that continual crisis support outside of the government-direct delivery, and that program is operated by Menno Homes in Waldheim. So they're becoming part of that crisis support network.

In addition, what's not to be forgotten is the importance of training of both our own personnel and the personnel in CBO sector. So our division continues to provide state-of-the-art training around behavioural support, crisis intervention, crisis support, prevention to both our own staff and to community-based organization staff.

**Ms. Higgins:** — Now my understanding is the one that you mentioned in Moose Jaw close to Valley View, which is actually a renovated . . . they used to be doctors' homes that are along the edge of the valley. One of those has been renovated to use for . . . What did you . . . crisis, temporary?

My understanding is that these are residents that have been moved out into group homes because they were deemed to be able to function well in a group home setting. It has not worked. And while Valley View is fairly or the ministry is fairly hard and fast on the notion that no admittance or re-admittance to Valley View Centre, that what happens is when these people don't fit into a group home setting and have trouble, if there's no other option, they go to this house that is within the grounds of Valley View Centre. I have a bit of a problem with that.

Is there a time limit for residents if they don't adjust to group home living or to an appropriate group home, and they cannot be admitted back into Valley View? Is it just once you're out the door, you're over and done, you're on your own or you're into the system? Or is there a time that you can see if residents will actually adjust to a group home setting or find an appropriate group home that they are comfortable in, and they can return? My understanding is once you're out the door, you're out, and the numbers continue to fall.

**Mr. Redekop:** — You have asked several questions.

**Ms. Higgins:** — I know I have. Sorry.

**Mr. Redekop:** — I'll see if I can go back to near the beginning.

I think one of the comments was about people that have moved out and then come back to South View. That isn't the explicit purpose of South View. South View serves people from anywhere in the province. It's possible that individuals who are there may have lived at Valley View at one time. It provides both a long-term home for individuals there and one space for crisis as required. So it may well not . . . The population who's living at South View — populates three people so, you know, we use the word population — it may well comprise or be comprised of no one from Valley View. So I wanted to make sure that that was clear.

Now the question about the time limit for people leaving Valley View Centre. Now there haven't been, there hasn't been a large number of people moving in the last few years from Valley View. However the practice has been in the past, when an individual leaves Valley View, that staff will continue to support for quite a long time. And the full transition is only made when the supports are found to be adequate for the individual. Now that doesn't mean that that individual's needs won't change over time. And it's very important that we keep resources in communities so that people can be served in their home.

As I mentioned in terms of the crisis support model, what's most important is people served in their home rather than having to leave their home to receive services. So through the wait-list initiative, new investments have been made in supporting the crisis support programs, and more investments will be coming in terms of a complex needs funding standard. It's not been finalized yet for residential programs. That work is under way this year in collaboration with community organizations.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I think also too, and to the member, it should be noted that since 2008-09, there's only been one discharged from Valley View.

**Ms. Higgins:** — But I guess the question is, once you have been discharged, is there any opportunity, if the transition doesn't work, to again be readmitted to Valley View? Or no, once you're out the door, you're out?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I can't . . . I'll see if my officials can answer, but that transition would have been three years old now.

**Ms. Higgins:** — Anyway thank you very much. I could ask a pile more questions, but I know my colleagues do. And I want to thank David for giving me a little bit of time, and thank you very much for the responses.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Ms. Higgins. Mr. Yates.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. I have a couple questions regarding Valley View and community services division.

The transition from Valley View to a more community model over a number of years does present some challenges, I think, for some families in the community. There are always going to be those very high needs for behavioural management reasons where we need to accommodate, and those spaces are somewhat limited, or they have been somewhat limited, across the

province for those high-needs individuals. Is there any plan to expand, over the next four or five years, spaces for high-needs children in the province, those with behavioural management?

The current model . . . And I've, you know, to be real blunt, when I was the minister, I ran into these problems, the same problems you're likely facing now: the odd, you know, real high-needs individual that's difficult to place; families who need assistance and are sort of at arms-length as to where do we go. And you know, since that date, or right at the end of our period, we opened North View, which provided an additional number of spaces. I don't know if that's been adequate for that need over the last two or three years, four years. Or are we continuing to have pressure for those high needs spaces?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Thank you to the member opposite. And I know the member knows this, but just for clarification for anybody who might be watching, Valley View is just for adults. There's no children involved there.

**Mr. Yates:** — I referred to them as children. Yes, I'm aware they're adults.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Yes. There has been, besides Valley View, there's what the member knows that we refer to as the 440 wait list, that's the number of people who have disabilities. And we have managed as of the end of March, there's 316 of those 440 people have actually found, they've found a space now. And these are high-needs people, people that either needed day programs or respite. And with the dollars that we put in this year, there'll be 373 out of those 440. And as well as that, there may be people who come into the system that have needs that are maybe even higher than the people that are on what we call our wait-list, and we found places for them as well.

So we have to continue. We're dealing with the numbers that were on the wait-list but know that we must continue to deal with the emerging needs as well. We don't have a place like Valley View to go to now. It's more in homes that have two or three people, and they're right across the province.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. I was talking about those that would be above in their needs, those would be on the wait-list. There were a number of individuals who were housed at the regional psychiatric facility in North Battleford. Or when I was the minister for several months, there was an individual that was housed in the psychiatric ward at Royal University Hospital because they needed a level of care and supervision and training in the home that wasn't readily available within the basic system. At that point we had North View in Prince Albert which was a government-run facility just coming on line, had a number of beds. I guess my question is, has that facility been adequate to deal with those types of individuals over the last three or four years, and is it projected to be adequate in the next three to five years?

[12:30]

**Mr. Redekop:** — Yes, I can respond to that. North View along with South View and the community-based home have been a very helpful addition to the continuum of services for people with high needs. And they have helped immensely in reducing a

number of situations where it wouldn't be clear, when the individual has needs beyond the capacity of their current home, where they might be served when the capacity of that home is exhausted.

That's changed very much over the last three years. The number of crises at the end of the week has reduced significantly. And in terms of what's being developed for people with higher needs, the wait-list initiative as mentioned by Minister Draude will serve, by the end of this fiscal year, 373 individuals from that wait list that includes individuals with complex needs. So there's no . . . The wait list is about, or the way services are being developed through the wait-list initiative are based on the individual's needs. It's a person-centred planning process that includes the family, the individual, and other supporters who know and care about the individual.

As I mentioned earlier, there's also a complex needs initiative within the larger wait-list initiative that will seek to ensure that funding is matched to the level of need of the individual. And that also includes developing resources that are for individuals with a higher level of need. So there's still work to be done. We're in the final two years of the wait-list initiative. Much has been accomplished. We're quite amazed at how far we've come. And there is still a lot yet to do, and it will include work on individuals with complex needs.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. And my final question has to do with, I guess, what is the inevitable when you have a clientele at Valley View of 57 years, average age of 57 years, and an aging clientele. Inevitably that facility will get down to a point where it'll be relatively small. Are there transitioning plans being made? And the facility's getting older. You put the combination of facts together to build some new capacity within Moose Jaw as the facility gets older and the numbers reduce in order to . . . Many of those people . . . And I should tell you it'll be 30 years ago this June, I worked there. I first started work there at one point. And when I went there for a picnic some four years ago, I was surprised that there were residents who remembered you. Like, I would not have thought that. But these individuals have lived their life there. And one thing I heard from many of them is they want to remain there.

And so you know, I'm just wondering if those plans are being made as the numbers continue to reduce and to build some additional facility, maybe even on the grounds, that provide some capacity for the province much like North View does in the North, that type of facility that'll be there as a resource longer term.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — To the member, there has been no decision made right now.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I have a question that came up. You know, in the fall we passed that legislation around protecting animals, and I had brought the things forward around service animals. And it came to my attention that some of the folks with disabilities who are on income assistance look to that money to provide grooming for their dogs, and it's a real challenge for them. And I made a commitment that I would raise that here today. That when they heard that good news, they said there's

more to talk about.

So if I could ask, what is the policy? And has it been looked at in terms of service animals and making sure that people who need them have the resources?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — To the member, it's an important question. We're going to see what the people who are with me can find for an answer. But I will commit you that if there isn't one right now, we will find you one because it is an important item.

I know it's not just Seeing Eye dogs. I know that there are other animals that are very important in the lives of people that have disabilities, and I know that they interact with them in a way that maybe humans don't or can't. I also had an interesting story yesterday about a group home in Prince Albert where the horses have made a big difference to the children in those homes. So I understand where you're coming from. And I guess maybe we do have an answer.

**Mr. Tweed:** — I think the question, Mr. Forbes, is around supports available to people with disabilities and service animals. In the social assistance program, there is a provision specifically around that area. And if I may, I'll just read it to you.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Sure.

**Mr. Tweed:** — So:

Funds may be provided for food and veterinary costs if there are no other resources for specially trained dogs to assist clients with disabilities who live independently. Actual veterinary costs may be paid with prior approval.

So there is an accommodation within the program.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Are there any other costs? This person actually talked about grooming, you know, in terms of taking care of, you know, the claws and all of that kind of stuff that people with more resources just take for granted. And when you have a service animal these things can add up.

**Mr. Tweed:** — Yes, the policy as presented is the program policy of the day. There is obviously room within that policy to look at special considerations. For example if there was a veterinary need or an identified veterinary need around the care of an animal, we can provide for some support for that.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And that's probably what they were speaking for, and they're grateful for the vet costs because that can be significant. But as we were, you know, pretty positive about the Bill last year and being passed, the protection of animals, they said there are other things. And so I would ask the minister and the ministry to take it back and say, listen, you know, we know that there are other costs involved in having service animals. Should we review this as part of your, as you say, your client or your citizen-based approach? Because this is an emerging issue. Actually it's interesting. As I've become more caught up in it, we hear more and more about not only is it for Seeing Eye dogs . . . Epilepsy and all sorts of things. So it'd make a big, big difference. These animals provide a huge role and it's far more

... They do a really good job as opposed, you know, as a caregiver. So I would make the case and I would ask the minister to take a look at this, and the staff.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — We'll take that into consideration.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I want to then turn to SAID. You had talked a little bit about SAID and the new program that's been coming up over the last few years. And in the budget, interestingly, now I do have to ask you, it does look like — and if I have this right — last year's estimate for 2010-11 was 39.3 million and now we have an estimate of 33.5 million. Why would that, why is that?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — To the member, there was about 500 cases that were eligible to be on SAID that chose to remain on SAP last year.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Now what is the enrolment? What are the numbers for SAID and what's it looking ...

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — In '11-12 the caseload was 2,687 and we're expecting to grow to 2,840 this year.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And how many of those would be in residential group homes or residential services?

**Ms. Zerr:** — So at the time of enrolment, they would have all been in residential care settings. We believe there's some 60-plus, a small handful that may now have moved outside of residential care.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Now as you said in your introduction that you have allotted a \$50 increase into their allowance for the last quarter of this budget year, what is the long term? Have you started making plans in the out years, the next two or three years, where you might go with SAID? Because I know a key part of this and what they would like to see is an income program that affords a better quality of life.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — To the member, I think what the member knows is that we have the tool that's being developed right now to determine people that are on SAP, the ones that could go on to SAID. And we believe that, by the time the enrolment in the program is finalized, we could have 8,000 people on — or maybe even more — on the program. So then you're right. I'm going to ask Jeff to add ... Bob, not Jeff, to answer some of the questions.

But then that is the next question because we do know that there needs to be some change. But we've been focusing right now on making sure that we can get everybody who should be on SAID on to SAID by developing this tool. And our next steps now is saying, where do we go from there? It was really important to make this, the \$50 and the inheritance exemption and some of the other work that we did last year — I think we announced it in November or December last year — and just to make sure that the clients that we have on SAID recognize that we know we're not finished. But at the same time, we're getting a lot of pressure from people saying, let me be on the program and then be part of developing it.

This is an impact-based assessment tool, something that is

maybe different than in other areas. I think the member opposite knows — and I'm going to use an example that Marian uses — just because, for example, I can be diagnosed with diabetes doesn't mean that the way I am is impacted the way my life would be. And there are other, you know, other conditions that may be the same. So we are, the board is working really hard as they develop the tool to have this impact-based assessment tool in place. And it's simpler and part of what we're doing in government. So I'm going to ask Bob to describe some of the process.

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — Bob Wihlidal, ADM [assistant deputy minister], income assistance disability services. So just a few comments, and then I'll ask Doug Scott to come forward to give us a little bit more detail about what the assessment mechanism will look like when it's fully implemented in the fall.

As the minister has described, we have a new program that is attempting to meet the recommendations of the task team that came forward in 2008. They had 50 recommendations, and in amongst those recommendations and observations were a desire from the community to build a distinct, non-stigmatizing program, and that's what we've established as of October of 2009. In those recommendations also was the establishment of a socially acceptable level of income for those people who have significant and enduring disabilities.

So in order to properly enrol and assess people, we needed to determine what kind of assessment mechanism would be used and what would be the eligibility criteria. We're in the midst of that work right now in collaboration with the program implementation advisory team, a community-based team that is supporting our analysis and decision making. And we've concluded with them that what we need is a functional impact assessment tool, as the minister has described which, just in a very high level, will be a rigorous and standardized way of identifying the range of people's impact, I guess, in terms of their daily living support requirements. So it goes beyond diagnosis of a disability but determines ... Even with the same diagnoses, two people can have quite a different impact in their daily living requirements. So I'll ask Doug to come forward and speak to that.

Between now and September, we will be finalizing that tool development and then putting it into play. In September or thereabouts, we expect to start using the assessment mechanism and beginning the enrolment and expanding the program to its ultimate size of about 8 to 10,000 people, we expect, based on our current understanding of the tool and its eligibility.

As mentioned earlier, we had initially invited 3,200 recipients to the program. Approximately 2,500 have accepted that offer and are now enrolled in SAID. And those invitees were people in residential care settings at the beginning. As Marian mentioned, about 60 or 70 of those are now in more independent settings than they were when they were first invited. So there is this transition from time to time in people's circumstances from residential care to independent settings, and that is something that the impact assessment mechanisms and our program design needs to accommodate as well.

So there's a fair bit of work that's been required too, to understand those dynamics and plan for them. I will ask Doug



just to come back, come forward here and speak a little bit more about what this assessment mechanism will look like.

[12:45]

**Mr. Forbes:** — I have to say, I didn't ask about the assessment, so thank you.

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — Oh, I'm sorry. My apologies.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So I do have some other questions that I . . . I notice the clock is ticking, so we might even get out of here earlier, but then we can come back to the assessment tool, so I do have a . . . But thanks for the offer, and I appreciate it. And maybe I don't, I don't think I did. But I did want to say that in terms of your announcements in the fall, and they were tied into, some around SAID and some were just about the basic, the increase in the clawbacks for people working, and they came into effect at Christmas or in February, I think there were. And it seems to be well received in the community with people with disabilities and they didn't have to be on SAID, I understand.

Have you considered . . . It's been raised to me that they would also like to see an ability to average that out. If these people are on long, like they're on the static caseload or we have a sense they will be part of SAID or on SAP for an extended period of time, that certain times of the year, you're more likely to get work, i.e., Christmas. And so you might make more money over the Christmas period, but you may not in January, February, but because you've worked more than the \$230, \$240 — you might've made 3 or \$400 — you've lost that. Has the ministry considered (a) expanding the idea of the clawback and also expand, thinking about the idea of averaging a bit?

**Mr. Scott:** — Doug, Doug Scott from the ministry. Yes, this idea of expanding the earnings exemption, we're doing something different with it so there would be averaged over the year. Came up quite a bit in the context of the community consultations that happened around the production of the task team report that resulted in SAID, and it's been something that's been raised on a number of times by members of the disability income support coalition. And there is some work that's going on. I shouldn't say there's work going on. It's on the list of things to explore as we move forward with SAID. There's some collaboration that's going on with the community around the design of the benefits, and one of the recommendations of the task team was to explore this issue.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Well thanks very much. I wanted to ask a bit about the CBOs. And there has been much talk in the past year of some of the CBOs and the struggles they've had, and there was a lot of hope come out of the summits a few years ago. And some of the CBOs have struggled with their capacity to deliver on programs. And I'm thinking that Equal Justice for All in Saskatoon, which I understand . . . I don't know actually what the status is of Equal Justice for All. I know welfare rights, I've written you, the minister, about that and got a response.

And you alluded to some work around the human resources capacity, particularly with Sarcan and those folks. Have you done more work or is that in the, along the horizon? Because I know for CBOs they identified that in the summits the idea that human resource capacity, both hiring people, keeping people,

and being able to manage people, is a challenge.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Thank you to the member. I'm going to ask Jeff to do some, describe some of the work we've done with organizations like SARC [Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres]. But I know the member opposite is aware that we have put 14.8 per cent of an increase into the CBOs in the last three years, which I've heard very positive results about. It's made a big difference. And I know that CBOs spend their pennies wisely and that they are very . . . They make a big impact on individuals. So yes, there's more work to be done. And I'm going to ask Jeff. Or is it Bob?

**Mr. Forbes:** — I'm asking not specifically about Sarcan because I trust that they're doing well, and they are a very good program. But I'm asking more about the other CBOs that are facing the challenges of not having a good human resource plan. And how is the government reaching out to them?

**Mr. Wihlidal:** — So starting with SARC, because that's where we have done some work and I can describe some of it, this does relate to the CBOs summit conversations that were held back in 2008, yes, but it also relates to the wait-list initiative and how we have strategized that piece of work. And there were five core elements to it.

One of it was support to the CBO sector and, in this instance, SARC agencies. And what we have been able to do as it relates to human resource management for these agencies is to improve supervisory training. We've added some interviewing and recruitment supports to the agencies in that part of the CBO sector, standardized recruitment tools for agencies to use.

And one other project that we undertook was the design of a realistic job preview video. So we established a video that they are able to share with prospective staff, and they get a really clear idea of what kind of work a CBO, or this particular CBO, might do. So those are the elements that we've applied within the SARC agency group.

And your point, though, is beyond the SARC agencies, similar kinds of supports are required. And the point, I guess, would be, yes, that those kinds of things do need to migrate into other CBO sector supports as well.

**Mr. Forbes:** — What has been the impact of the CVA [central vehicle agency] policy or the change in policy last year or the year before on the CBOs? Because, you know, I'm hearing of course it's much more costly, and the impact in terms of having employees have their own vehicles, that type of thing, it has been a challenge. That's the word I'm hearing. What's been the impact you're seeing in their budget requests?

**Ms. Zerr:** — In terms of the ministry overall, all CBOs that were impacted by that decision have made arrangements with Government Services to purchase or to return their CVA vehicles. And we have a process with a number of those CBOs to talk to them about operational funding pressures, should those have resulted from this decision.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Did any come forward? Did you hear . . .

**Ms. Zerr:** — I actually can recall two particular CBOs. They

were not in income assistance, nor were they in the disability side. And the recall that I have is that arrangements were made to support them in terms of the way for them to purchase their vehicles.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you. I want to now turn to the rent supplement program, rental housing supplements which now is budgeted for 31.6 million and last year was 22.5 million. What's the reason for the increase? What are the reasons for the increase this year from 22.5 to 31 million?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Thank you to the member opposite. And I think you must smile when you ask me that question. The question that has been probably most often asked in the legislature in the last 40 days or 36 days is about rents, and now I'm getting a question about why are you putting another \$6 million into rents. That sounds like A isn't following B here.

I think that what we are doing, and I know the member is aware of this, that this is based on CMHC [Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation]. And it's based on a 1.5 per cent vacancy rate, and it's based on the four tiers across the province. And I think the point that the member opposite probably knows, but I'd like to underline is the fact that our commitment was for April, but we also in this budget are committed to do the rent increase, the indexing again in October.

The member opposite will know that that's during the election, and it's something that wasn't a commitment that we had to make, but it's important to us. It was a conscious decision by our government to make sure that if there was a rental increase needed during that time, we would do it. So that additional money that is put into here acknowledges the fact that we will be supporting people through their rental supplement not just up and through April but right through with the rental increases up to October.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Now how many families and people with disabilities are actually benefiting this current year, and what do we expect next year?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I'm going to give you . . . Gord will give you some answers on this, but I just wanted to break down the money, this 9.1 million increase. 7.5 is the base budget increase, and that's 4.2 to adjust the maximum supplement levels effective April the 1st; 3.25 for a volume increase; and 1.6 to provide a further adjustment to the maximum supplement level effective on October the 1st. That's the breakdown, but I'm going to ask Gord if you'll . . . Doug, sorry.

**Mr. Scott:** — Doug Scott from the ministry. You asked how many families and households with family members that have a disability are benefitting. In March of this year, there were 5,538 families that were receiving a supplement and 3,301 households with a family member that has a disability. Now there may be some overlap between those two groups insofar as families with children may have a disabled family member as well.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And so you're predicting, I assume, a volume increase of 3 million, so that's to go for more people on this program. So what are you projecting at?

**Mr. Scott:** — I believe the volume increase was projected to, on the family supplement side, 5,900 cases, and on the disability rental housing supplement side, 3,690 cases.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Do you have it for the past two years? And we could take the March numbers if you've got them by . . .

**Mr. Scott:** — Yes. So looks like we have the average monthly caseload for 2010-11 and '09-10 as well. So maybe I'll start with '09-10?

**Mr. Forbes:** — Yes.

**Mr. Scott:** — '09-10, the caseload in the family side of the rental housing supplement was 4,158 cases. And on the disability side of the supplement, it was 2,042 cases.

Moving to 2010-11, it was 5,019 cases on the family side of the supplement, and on the disability housing supplement it was 2,850 cases.

[13:00]

**Mr. Forbes:** — Okay. Well that would be about 8,000 then. So you know when we look back at that history of the rental housing supplement over the last few years from the numbers I have, 2007-08 there was 6 million allocated and about 5.6 million used. And then 2008-09, it was 7.1 million and actually 10.6 million was used. And then 2009-10, 13.7 was allocated but actually 17.9 — actually \$18 million — was allocated. And now last year, it was 22.5 million and it's 31.6 million is allocated.

And if the trends keep going the way they're going, is that they'll be over expended and it has been the last couple of years. I don't know, is it on track to be over expended this year? I guess, past, current year, but we haven't got the public account books out so we don't know.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I'm not aware of it, but the member does know that this is indexing. Like that's what we're doing is exactly what I think the member opposite would have been asking for, is ensuring that we're indexing it so that rental supplements they're getting is keeping up with the market requests in that area.

**Mr. Forbes:** — The question I had asked was, in this past current year, does the ministry have a record of how much was actually spent?

**Ms. Zerr:** — So last year the '10-11 budget for the Saskatchewan rental housing supplement was 22.5 million, and the actual expenditure was 23.17 million or 670 K over which is, on a percentage basis, pretty decent forecasting.

**Mr. Forbes:** — For sure. Is there a long-range plan? I think that you know, we were the administration that introduced this program, and at that point it was 5 million or \$6 million allocated. I'm not sure we thought we'd see this grow to 30 million in that course of time, and I think we probably having conversations about that kind of money going out and not knowing . . . And we've asked this in estimates last year — I'm not sure if you were the minister at the time — about when you

have that kind of money going out, \$30 million, who is getting that 30 million? Of course we know it's the tenants who are getting it, and it's good that it's indexed. But at the end of the day, it's going to some landlords. And do you have a sense of who's getting that \$30 million?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — The member answered that question. It's for the benefit of the people that are living in there. And of course the members opposite wouldn't have had looked at as being a bigger, a huge amount of money because they hadn't put the indexing in there, especially not indexing twice a year.

So to the member opposite, there's been a lot of things have changed since the program was introduced, things like growth in the province, the number of people that are moving in, and the changes that are happening overall in the province. And as I've been saying in question period and at other times, this is one of the parts of growth that we accept, we understand.

I think the member opposite knows also that the dependency rate hasn't changed in the province a lot even though there has been an increase in the number of people. We are still doing very well as a province. This amount of money isn't something that I'm begrudging at all because, as a government, we know that there are people that we need to be helping, and we're doing that.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Well you know, I was looking at the Sask Housing annual report last year, and this is on page 18. And they talk about their results, 2010 results of operations. And the one bullet says, "Grants provided for the Saskatchewan Rental Housing Supplement decreased by \$7.7 million to \$5.0 million . . ." So in 2009, they had got 12.7 million from the rental housing supplement, and it looks like it's being decreased to 5 million . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . What's that?

**Ms. Zerr:** — I didn't hear the first part.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Yes. And it's on page 18, and it's a Sask Housing annual report, 2010.

**Ms. Zerr:** — So while we're looking for the information . . .

**Mr. Forbes:** — Then I have a second question while you can do that. So you index the supplements twice a year. You take a look at indexing. And I understand it's been raised six times. Which regions or tiers or areas of the province have actually experienced six increases in the last . . . because I know it's not everybody gets it all the time. But you've often said six times and I . . .

**Ms. Zerr:** — It's based on CMHC rates.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Right, absolutely. But when I hear on the street, Saskatoon Centre, they haven't seen the increase six times, I don't think.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — You don't think?

**Mr. Forbes:** — Well I don't know. I mean I don't get notifications of these things, so that's why I'm asking right now.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Okay, and we'll get that information for you. But part of what we have to ensure is that the accommodations that people receive are safe and accessible. So the supplement makes sure that the homes the people live in are quality homes. And so 80 per cent of the homes that we inspect pass on the very first inspection, and 88 per cent pass on the second inspection. So the issue, making sure that people have safe housing is an important one to the government.

**Mr. Allen:** — Good morning or good afternoon. Don Allen, assistant deputy minister for housing. The comment that you're referring to in the annual report of Saskatchewan Housing Corporation is in connection to a one-time transfer. We were able to use federal money to offset the increase in the rental housing supplement, expenditures being incurred by the General Revenue Fund. So the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation has a different fiscal year than does the General Revenue Fund, so you see a variance in terms of the numbers. We had to report it twice, once in two fiscal years in the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation.

But what we did was we were able to use federal funding, money transferred from the federal government, from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation and flow it then on to the General Revenue Fund to deal with that surge that was experienced back two years ago in the rental housing supplement.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I'm not sure I completely understand this. So what you're saying is you took some, you had got some money from CMHC. That's what I'm hearing, that there was some federal money involved in this. How was federal money involved in this?

**Ms. Zerr:** — In terms of the federal-provincial agreement that we have with CMHC on housing, there are, as there are with all federal agreements, some boxes around what we can spend that money on. You are aware from our discussion in housing estimates that we talked about the new FPT [federal-provincial-territorial] agreement that we would hope to sign now that we have a government that is able to make decisions again because that was put off while the election period was on.

So one of our concerns, as the Government of Saskatchewan putting forward issues, was this question over flexibility around how we best use federal money so that it meets Saskatchewan priorities. And so in terms of the existing agreement, there was opportunity within the funds that we get from CMHC to look at things like housing supplements as a way to appropriately expend that money. But you have to move it from the receiving entity to the GRF [General Revenue Fund], who actually pays the rental housing supplements. So it is simply a transfer of the funds that were already existing as part of an existing federal agreement.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So there was federal money that was being given to the province. And what program was that?

**Ms. Zerr:** — It's in the federal-provincial agreement on housing.

**Mr. Forbes:** — And it's called . . . That's what it's called? On

housing?

**Ms. Zerr:** — I don't know what the exact title is. It's the federal-provincial agreement on housing.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Affordable housing?

**Ms. Zerr:** — We don't know what the exact title is.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I'm serious because I mean this is very interesting, because we're finding that there's 12 million and now there will be \$7 million this year used for . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well that's what it says. It says . . . Or no, it's the 5 million. But still, you're taking \$5 million of federal money to do the housing, the rental supplement program . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . What's that? So is the rental supplement actually \$36 million this year or is it actually costing you 26 million?

**Mr. Allen:** — The ministry receives its total allocation, its total appropriation for the rental housing supplement from the General Revenue Fund. What appears in estimates is the total budget for the rental housing supplement in its totality.

Where the General Revenue Fund gets the money from is many sources. In one particular year, some of it was transferred from the Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation through Sask Housing and then into the General Revenue Fund, but that occurred once.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Well it looks like it's twice. And according to that book it's twice.

**Mr. Allen:** — That's the two fiscal year question. You know, we make payments on a monthly basis. So the money was transferred monthly. And because the housing corporation's year-end is December 31st, it actually hit two fiscal years of the Housing Corporation, but only one fiscal year of the General Revenue Fund.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So why would it say decreased by . . . So grants provided for the Saskatchewan rental housing supplement decreased by 7.7 million to 5. So in 2009 it was 12.7. So you're saying for it to be in the one fiscal year for the Government of Saskatchewan, three months was of one thing and then nine months was of 5 million. Is that what you're saying?

**Mr. Allen:** — Assuming that the payments were made equally every month, and that's approximately what would have happened, within one fiscal year there would have been a \$12 million transfer of nine months of payments from the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation. And then beginning in the next fiscal year, there would have been three months that totalled 5 million. The sum total of those payments over the course of a 12 month period from Sask Housing Corporation would have been \$17 million, but it would have landed in two fiscal years of the Housing Corporation, only one fiscal year of the General Revenue Fund.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Now did they . . . And CMHC of course would agree to this and this is appropriate use, but they didn't make any announcements. I mean they didn't say, we're going to give you \$17 million to deal with the rental supplements in

Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Allen:** — No, under the terms of the social housing agreement, the money is provided by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and provided it's used for acceptable uses, of which the maintenance of the portfolio is what a lot of that money is used for.

**Mr. Forbes:** — What would other things . . . If you didn't use it for the rental supplement, you had \$17 million that you could have used for . . .

**Mr. Allen:** — It could have been used for the maintenance of the portfolio. It could have been provided and is being provided in some cases for rent supplements directly through the Housing Corporation. The Housing Corporation provides rent supplements on a much, much smaller basis, much more targeted basis, and uses federal funding for that.

**The Chair:** — Mr. Yates.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Just for clarification purposes, this wasn't new money; this is money that's regularly transferred from CMHC to the Government of Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Allen:** — That's correct. The social housing agreement between the province of Saskatchewan and the federal government was signed in 1997, and that spells out precisely how much federal money the province will be receiving through to the year 2038.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. And in previous years that money was used for maintenance and upkeep of the housing stock owned by Saskatchewan Housing. Is that correct?

**Mr. Allen:** — For most of the years between 1997 and today, the money was not spent completely. Some of it has been set aside for future years and other purposes of which this would have been one.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. In the agreement with CMHC is the intended purpose, though, for the upkeep and maintenance of the housing stock?

**Mr. Allen:** — No, it has many purposes, of which maintenance of the housing stock is but one.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much. Could you provide us with a copy of the agreement between CMHC and the Government of Saskatchewan, please?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I can't imagine why not.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So you know, and again when I look at the increases — and I still have an outstanding question about the six increases — is that hitting every region, every community in the province? So let's deal with that first, so it's not still on the table.

[13:15]

**Mr. Scott:** — Yes, Doug Scott from the ministry. We've just examined the historical increases and it looks like tier A has received five of the six increases, tier B has received six of the six increases, tier C got an increase on five out of six occasions, and tier D got an increase on four out of six occasions.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you. So when I look at the increases here that, you know, as the rental supplement went up 5.6 million, then to 10.6, then went to 17.8 or well basically 18 million, then 23.2, and during that year that it was actually 17 or \$18 million, that was the year that Sask Housing kicked in through the GRF \$17 million. Is that right?

**Mr. Scott:** — What year was that, I'm sorry?

**Mr. Forbes:** — 2009-10. I sure hope it wasn't the year before because they only spent 10.6 million on it, so it couldn't have been that year.

**Mr. Scott:** — Yes. Yes, I've just been informed here that's the answer.

**Mr. Forbes:** — So you have that valley and then all of a sudden we're going back up to 23 million, then we're in like up to 32 million. This is kind of wild. It's a wild and crazy ride here. If we're counting on CMHC and we're not going to get any more, we're not using that fund, are there plans to use that fund again to supplement this program?

**Ms. Zerr:** — One of the challenges is that we're right now in the waiting for the signing of the new agreement. But when we had the housing estimates, we talked about the new flexibility opportunities being much more broad in the new agreement than even the existing one. And we're very clear that in the existing agreement, the opportunities to spend money were rigorously adhered to appropriately, number one. And number two, that there were a variety of deliverables that one . . . province's could . . . a menu to select from, let's call it that, in terms of how they chose to target their funds. In the new agreement, the menu is broader yet.

**Mr. Forbes:** — See, I do worry because again these costs are going up like that. And if you're taking money out of potentially repairing and renovating your housing stock for Sask Housing, but yet doing it for another program to support housing not within the social housing stock, I mean CMHC's giving you money to make sure Sask Housing buildings are well-maintained and you've diverted it off into something else, then I have a problem with that.

But I do want to go on to some other questions here, and it's around the social assistance adequacy. And I do want to talk — and there are people watching this at home — and one of my colleagues . . .

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I want to interrupt the member because . . .

**Mr. Forbes:** — Well I have questions here and our time . . .

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Because I want to make sure that the information is correct that you just talked about. You said that the money was, basically you said the money was spent in a

wrong category. That is not correct. The money that came from the federal government could come through the GRF through Sask Housing and go back into the ministry to pay this if this is what we wanted to do. And that's definitely what was a legal thing to do, and something that we had the right to do. And it's not just for Sask Housing.

**Ms. Zerr:** — It is for housing . . . [inaudible] . . . social housing.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Well, I mean the point is, that some things don't get done when you don't budget well. And I think there's a real problem when you have some things when you don't budget well.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Some things don't get done when there isn't houses built, and some things don't get done when things haven't been changed for 30 years. The member opposite can decide, I can ask questions on this budget, but the point of being here is not to ask questions on policy. Because the decisions we made here as a government is what we believe is the right thing for the people of the province. And we've decided that making sure that indexing the way the markets . . . to the values in that area is what we needed to do.

I assure you — and the member opposite is well aware — that we've put in a tremendous amount of money into renovations and upkeep of buildings again right now. And we will continue to work within our government to make sure that what we believe is the right way to spend the money for the people is what we'll be doing, and the people of the province will judge that on November the 7th this year.

**Mr. Forbes:** — I think there's a little politics in that. I'm just telling you, Mr. Chair, that when you allot money on one that you haven't appropriately budgeted for, and you see this budget going from some 5 or \$6 million a few years ago to over 30 million and having to bring in money from another source mid-year, there's a real challenge there. But I want to talk about . . .

**The Chair:** — Mr. Forbes.

**Ms. Eagles:** — Point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — Ms. Eagles, you have a point of order?

**Ms. Eagles:** — Yes I do. The member asked a question of the minister, and in asking the question he also chooses to answer it in a way that he sees fit instead of giving the minister a fair chance to answer it. And then when she does answer it, you know, bringing politics into it. I mean, you know, what's the point of him asking the questions if he's already got the answers set in his mind? You know, the minister respected him by letting him ask the questions. He should respect the minister by letting her answer them.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Ms. Eagles. Mr. Yates.

**Mr. Yates:** — Mr. Chair, the point of order raised by the member is not a point of order. It's a matter of debate between the two individuals. As you know, the Assembly and these committees are there for that purpose, to ask questions and to

debate the issues. Simply it's not a point of order.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Mr. Yates. I will agree with you. It is not a point well taken. However, when the member asks a question of the minister, the minister's got to be respected to answer regardless of politics or whatever you might think is in the statement. You have the right to ask a question, which quite often questions are asked in this committee room, they get quite political. The minister has all the right to answer in whatever way she sees fit or he sees fit. So I would ask the questions and the answers to remain respectful so we don't have to go through the Chair. Otherwise we will direct all questions and answers through the Chair, which will take up some of your valuable time.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you. I'd like to turn now to the whole issue around the Saskatchewan assistance program and the adequacy of that. And I know there are people watching this, and this is probably a concern for far too many people in this province. And I do have one that, one note here from a colleague who would make sure I brought up the concerns of their constituent, who I think that their concerns reflect many people in Saskatchewan who find themselves unfortunately on social assistance.

But her point is, how can anyone make it on \$8,000 a year without any outside resources from . . . help? And the whole thing around food is huge. It's huge because, as we know from the food banks, some of the stats are coming out, particularly around seniors who are now having to turn to food banks. It's a big concern. And these people are cutting coupons and looking through their sales flyers to figure out how they can make ends meet.

And I know the minister just said a few minutes ago about making sure we use our pennies wisely. And it's interesting. This person actually makes a note there. She says some say get rid of pennies but she feels that she's already counting pennies, literally, just to make ends meet. And I think that too many of us don't realize how important it . . . of making every penny count. She's not asking for extra cash for movie nights or any kind of travelling, but she just wants to eat properly and in a decent place. She's looking forward to maybe buying some winter boots but really she feels like there's no real prospects of getting winter boots.

So with that, you know, the minister has alluded to the fact that they're looking at, looking at the Saskatchewan assistance program and the adequacy of it and how it's delivered, but more importantly making sure it is adequate, that people can have not only basic shelter, but basic food, basic clothing so they can be healthy. And that's basically all they want, and I think in Saskatchewan that's what we all expect will happen.

Is the minister looking at some ways of increasing the adequacy of social assistance?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — We're always looking at how we can spend our money in the province. And to the member opposite, one of the things we do is we consider income from all sources: things like the federal and provincial transfers, including the rental housing supplement, including federal child tax benefits and the GST [goods and services tax] credit and the

Saskatchewan low-income tax credit.

The incomes for families with children on social services based on 2011 tier A rates exceed the market-based measure and fall between 104 and 117 per cent of the after tax low-income cut-off.

So to the member, I know that it's not easy to be on assistance. And one of the issues that we all have is how do we make sure that people on assistance, the ones that have to be on assistance like SAID, and we talked about that earlier . . . And our desire is to move more people off of assistance, that are on SAP, on to SAID if that's where they should be. And we know that that's an important part of what we're doing.

We also know that there's a lot of work being done on ACE, which is the acceleration of people to employment. There has been some success in making sure that people who can work have a job with job opportunities we have here in the province right now. So there is that balance of making sure that . . .

And also I should mention that the amount of money we're spending on education, especially adult basic education, has increased substantially in this budget. So again we're trying to make sure that those that we need to look after, that cannot look after themselves, that we give them the very best quality of life that we can. And those that should be and can be in some circumstances working, help them, to the greatest extent that we can, find work. In the meantime, we're looking at it and knowing that we are between 104 and 117 per cent of the measures. And that's cold comfort to people who are watching and knowing that there's more in need.

But I look at things like the food banks' numbers, and I wish I didn't have to do that. In fact I wish that the comment that would have been made, I don't know how many years ago now, and that there was going to be zero people using food banks, that didn't happen. I look at the food bank number. In 2007 there was 24,997 people. In 2009 it was 18,875. So there's fewer people. I know there's fewer children using food banks now. But that's from the numbers that I've received and maybe we'll have to . . . I think that was something the member opposite disagreed with me on, so I guess we'll have to check on that. But overall that is the goal.

And I also know that the work that we are doing in places like food banks is not just supplying food but teaching people how to spend their money wisely, cook their food wisely or do the cooking, providing foods for their family in the wisest possible way. So yes, there is more work to be done, but it's something that we take seriously.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Well I know the food bank, Saskatchewan food banks released this document last year, last, I think it was November or December, *Access and Affordability*, and that's when the questions came up. And of course it's difficult because when you have stats, and I'm not sure where the minister is getting her stats from, but we know that the highlights from their report, and I'll quote from page 3, "Since 2002, food costs have increased in Saskatchewan by 22.2 per cent."

And we also know that on April 1st, Westons increased the cost

of their bread by 5 per cent — a basic staple. We know that as well in the last year, the Regina Food Bank has seen a 15 per cent increase in clients. Now that may not contradict the numbers that you have, Minister, but in the last year it's been a significant increase. Forty-five per cent of the clients who use Regina Food Bank are children, 63 per cent are Aboriginal, 70 per cent list social assistance as their primary source of income.

You know, these are startling stats and the one . . . Single women or men receiving social assistance through SAP would spend approximately 97 per cent of their income on rent, leaving 3 per cent to cover food, transportation.

And I guess you know, and I would ask the minister when they're reviewing, particularly I think with single men and women and as they get into that difficult age group between 50 and 65 . . . Before you're able to get onto your senior retirement years, you're caught in that age trap of getting work and whether ACE . . . does ACE have something specifically for that age group of 55- to 60-year-olds who, you know, family they may be expecting other things happening.

I'm not sure, but I would say that I think the staff . . . and I would ask the ministry particularly that this is a serious issue, that this is very important because as this woman writes in on a piece of paper like this, to say please raise this . . . We had that in question period today about about women who are not 65 but who are caught in a trap, and they may even have grandchildren, you know, and tough times. And the good work the staff does is phenomenal because they have to deal with this all the time. I can just imagine the heart-wrenching stories that you folks hear all the time.

But this is really . . . This is a crunch that we're facing, the two solitudes and how if that one solitude shrinks and eventually goes away, people are caught in poverty.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Thank you and to the member, and I'm going to read the summary of the Food Banks of Canada, *HungerCount 2010 Report*. The national average for food bank usage is 2.6 per cent in 2010. And Saskatchewan remained below the national average even with an increase in population. And the number of individuals assisted by the Saskatchewan food banks in March of 2010 was lower than the number of those assisted during the years from 2004 to 2007. And our government has committed over \$50 million of new funding for enhancements to income support.

I know that the member opposite feels strongly about these issues. I'm aware of that. And I know there's more that has to be done and we're doing that.

**Mr. Forbes:** — With that, I'm done. And I want to thank the staff and the minister for her candour and her answers. And I appreciate the extra time this year. I think we've covered a lot of ground. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Mr. Forbes. We'll move to the vote, and then we'll wrap up at the conclusion of voting of the estimates. Vote 36, Social Services on page 131 of the main Estimates book, central management and services, subvote (SS01) in the amount of 41,691,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Child and family services, subvote (SS04) in the amount of 197,833,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Income assistance and disability services, subvote (SS03) in the amount of \$553,782,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Client support, subvote (SS05) in the amount of 16,904,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Housing, subvote (SS12) in the amount of \$12,746,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Amortization of capital assets, there's no need to vote; it's for information purposes only, in the amount of \$1,893,000. Social Services, vote 36, in the amount of \$822,956,000. I'll now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2012, the following sums for Social Services in the amount of \$822,956,000.

Mr. Wyant. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried.

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

**The Chair:** — We'll now move to the supplementary estimates, vote 36 of Social Services on page 7 of the supplementary book. Housing, subvote (SS12) in the amount of \$42,140,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Thank you, members. Madam Minister, do you have any final comments? Oh I'm sorry. Back up one paragraph. Social Services, vote 36, in the amount of \$42,140,000. I'll now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2011, the following sums for Social Services in the amount of \$42,140,000.

Ms. Eagles. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Now, Madam Minister, would you like to make any closing comments?

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Thank you very much to the Chair and members for being here. Thank you for the questions. I want to thank the people that work with me in the ministry for their hard work, and I know that they don't have an easy job. As the member said, most of the phone calls we get in this ministry aren't ones of people that are singing praises of joy, but there's a whole lot of very important work that gets done. So I thank them for their work on a daily basis and caring.

And to the member opposite, I remember last November he said, I'll think be sitting here next year asking you the same questions again, and I think it might happen. So I look forward to November. Take care.

**The Chair:** — Thank you Madam Minister. The committee would also like to thank the minister and her officials for coming this afternoon and finishing up estimates for this committee. And I'd like to thank the members of the committee for their work.

We have one more order of business before we recess this committee or before we adjourn. The Standing Committee on Human Services has the tenth report. Committee members, you have before you a draft of the tenth report of the Standing Committee on Human Services. We require a member to move the following motion:

That the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Human Services be adopted and presented to the Assembly.

Mr. Hart. Mr. Hart has moved:

That the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Human Services be adopted and presented to the Assembly.

Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. I'll ask for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Wyant has moved a motion to adjourn. And I would just like to thank again, seeing this is our last committee meeting before this session ends, that I'd like to thank the committee members, especially the Committee Clerks, the Hansard staff, and the staff of this building for making this committee work a little bit easier on us. So thank you, members, and with that we stand adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 13:38.]