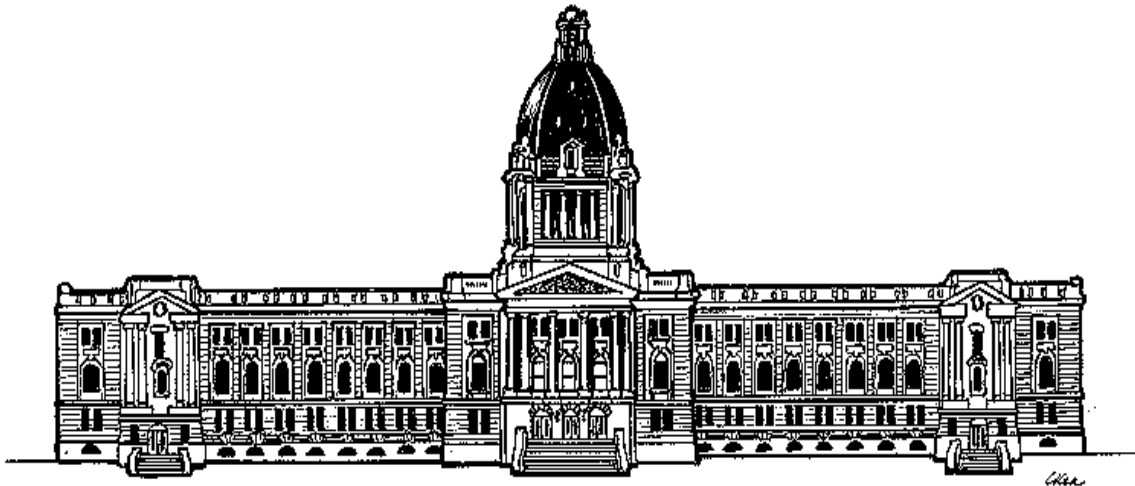




# **STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE**

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL  
AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE**

Mr. Warren Michelson, Chair  
Moose Jaw North

Mr. Frank Quennell, Deputy Chair  
Saskatoon Meewasin

Mr. Greg Brkich  
Arm River-Watrous

Mr. Michael Chisholm  
Cut Knife-Turtleford

Mr. Wayne Elhard  
Cypress Hills

Ms. Deb Higgins  
Moose Jaw Wakamow

Hon. Laura Ross  
Regina Qu'Appelle Valley

[The committee met at 14:56.]

**The Chair:** — Well good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. We are here at the Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice. In pursuant of rule 146(1), the estimates of the following ministries we have deemed referred to the committee as of March 31st, 2011: vote 73, the Corrections, Public Safety and Policing; vote 25(163), the First Nations and Métis Relations; vote 3, Justice and Attorney General; vote 30, Municipal Affairs; vote 85, the Office of the Provincial Capital Commission; vote 27, Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.

This afternoon the committee will be considering the estimates of the Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing, and later this evening the committee will be considering the estimates for the Ministry of First Nations and Métis Relations.

#### Election of Deputy Chair

**The Chair:** — As we get started, we have some business to attend to. We have a change in our committee membership. Mr. Trew has been replaced by Mr. Quennell. With this change, the position of the Deputy Chair is vacant, and therefore I will now ask for a nomination for the position of Deputy Chair. I recognize Ms. Higgins.

**Ms. Higgins:** — Mr. Chair, I'll make the motion:

That Frank Quennell be elected to preside as Deputy Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

**The Chair:** — Mr. Quennell has been nominated as the Deputy Chair for this committee. All in favour?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Agreed. That is carried. Mr. Quennell, welcome to the committee. Other committee members are Ms. Higgins, and as well as Mr. Chisholm, Mr. Brkich, and Mr. Elhard.

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

##### Subvote (CP01)

**The Chair:** — As we move forward, we will now begin the consideration of vote no. 73, the Corrections, Public Safety and Policing. Minister Huyghebaert is here with his officials. Mr. Huyghebaert, I'd ask you to introduce your officials, and if you have any opening remarks, you'd be pleased to make them right after.

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome to committee members. I'm definitely pleased to be here today with my officials from Corrections, Public Safety and Policing for the opportunity to provide highlights of our ministry's budget for '11-12, our financial plan, and to answer questions.

But first off, let me introduce my ministry officials. To my

immediate right is Deputy Minister Al Hilton. To my immediate left is Assistant Deputy Minister Mae Boa. At the back we have Tammy Kirkland who is the executive director of adult corrections. Beside Tammy is Murray Sawatsky, executive director of policing services. We have Bob Kary, executive director of young offenders, that's beside Murray. We have Margaret Anderson, executive director of corporate services, sitting to my left on the left-hand of the side of the table immediately behind me. We have Tom Young, executive director of protection and emergency services. And Rob Nicolay is at the back. And I'm sure you all know Rob; he's my chief of staff.

Mr. Chair, I'll be speaking to a number of pieces of the CPSP [Corrections, Public Safety and Policing] financial plan for this year. Overall I would like to note two things: 31.3 million in additional funding, which represents an increase of 9.3 per cent; and no layoffs of CPSP employees or program and service reductions related to the '11-12 budget.

Also a highlight for us in this budget is \$7 million for year one of a two-year, \$12 million capital project to design and construct a pre-engineered building at the Pine Grove Provincial Correctional Centre for women in Prince Albert. The building is intended to provide more cell space. Pine Grove's current inmate daily count is about 120 with the facility originally built to house 63 inmates in appropriate bed space, meaning single bunks in secure cells. This capital project will go a long way to alleviating the significant safety and security issues resulting from overcrowding where we're compelled to house inmates in program space, gyms, libraries, and so on.

[15:00]

Now I'd like to speak for a few minutes on the details of the funding allocated to CPSP out of the '11 and '12 provincial budget. I should note that this funding allows us to continue to work toward achieving the mandate set out by our government: completing the government's commitment to hire 120 police officers over a four-year period ending in '11-12; continue to advance Corrections's *The Road Ahead* response to improve safety and security, staff performance, correctional practices, and infrastructure; providing free home security devices and home safety audits to low-income seniors and seniors who have been victims of break-ins or home invasions; continue to work with other provinces and the federal government to develop an effective national Canadian gang member database; continue to work as an active participant in interprovincial Western Canadian partnerships to develop joint approaches to emergency management.

As well, to help us continue with progress on these mandate commitments to strengthen our ability to be responsive to communities struck by natural disasters and to ensure appropriate case management in custody and in the community, the ministry staff complement will increase by 63 FTEs [full-time equivalent]. These are allocated as follows: an additional 24.5 FTEs for year three of *The Road Ahead*; 25 FTEs to manage custody and community caseload growth in adult corrections; 10 term FTEs for provincial disaster assistance program; and 4 FTEs for the provincial public safety telecommunications network, of which I will after refer to

PPSTN — it's much shorter.

Let me provide you with a detailed accounting of how our funding increase will be allocated branch by branch. Policing services, again this year significant expenditure will be made supporting provision of police services to communities across Saskatchewan. I am pleased to advise that with 2.7 million for the addition of 30 new police officer positions effective July 1, our government has fulfilled our mandate commitment of 120 new police officers on the streets in four years. Although the exact location of each of these 30 positions is yet to be determined, I can tell you that a decision will be made in consultation with police leaders, giving consideration to crime rates and local needs. As well another 3.5 million is earmarked for analyzing the costs of providing the 30 new police officer positions approved in '10-11.

The RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] will receive additional new funding in the amount of 6.5 million to assist them in their role in law enforcement here in Saskatchewan. These include costs for core salaries, operating cost increases, and detachment maintenance. They will also see an increase of 230,000 for third party capital totalling 2.1 million. This funding will be directed to the radio system network and for minor capital equipment.

And to maintain the momentum on the fight against organized crime, CPSP's contribution to the western gang database is \$250,000. This automated criminal intelligence information system allows police to gather and share intelligence related to gang activity.

Protection and emergency services. As you know, in 2009 we announced development of the PPSTN that saw public safety telecommunication users moved on to the system in January of 2011. The network is geared to provide interoperability between users making it easier for emergency responders from different organizations or communities to talk to one another. As well, having all users on the same system ensures sustainability for the network over the long term. The project is a multi-year, multi-organizational initiative being led by CPSP to build on the existing SaskPower-RCMP network. Funding of 3.7 million has been allocated this year to continue work on the system.

Under the provincial disaster assistance program, we are still receiving claims from last year. With flooding predicted for many regions in the province this spring, officials are also anticipating new claims for the 2011 season. My ministry has new funding of 14.6 added in the budget for disaster assistance; this also includes 10 temporary staff to help with processing claims.

The seniors' home security initiative is one of our mandate commitments. We know that seniors, particularly those who are low-income, can't afford the kind of security devices that most of us have in our homes. So to help increase the safety of this vulnerable segment of our population, \$500,000 has been put forward for a program to distribute free security alarms and to conduct home safety audits.

Protection and emergency services also received \$400,000 for the joint emergency preparedness program, which provides for federal cost-sharing of emergency response training programs.

And \$100,000 has been earmarked for ongoing legislative policy, gas and electrical responsibility related to licensing for these services.

I'd like to turn to Corrections for a moment, who got a healthy share of our increase for 2011-12 for a number of important initiatives. We have seen considerable growth in caseloads in our custody facilities and, in particular, in our community operations. To provide the kind of individualized case management that offenders need for successful integration back into the community requires appropriate skilled staff. To that end, 1.94 million and 25 FTEs have been allocated to address growth in custody and community.

As I mentioned earlier, corrections received 24.5 FTEs and 1.167 million to support year three toward completing the action plan from *The Road Ahead*. Activities in the upcoming year include expanding video court services in correctional centres, developing and implementing a security classification system for correctional centres, and enhancing orientation and induction training for all new probation officers and correction workers.

We know that drug addictions play a significant role in leading individuals to criminal behaviour, either through use or through trafficking, and the crimes that are committed have an impact on the safety of our communities. As a result, \$270,000 has been committed to regional health authorities for the health drug treatment program. The funding will help us continue to contract regional health authorities to provide drug addiction services inside correctional facilities.

Four hundred thousand dollars has also been earmarked to assist Corrections with working on procedures and protocols for prisoner transport. This service is currently being provided by the RCMP, who transports prisoners between court, RCMP cells, and correctional facilities.

An additional \$500,000 is available to support youth and adult anti-gang initiatives. Finally, the young offenders program will see 100,000 to increase the budget for its intensive rehabilitation and custody supervision program to \$567,000. This program, known as IRCS [intensive rehabilitation and custody supervision], provides targeted intervention to youth who present a set of risk factors that make them candidates for reoffending behaviour. High-risk offenders receive high levels of supervision right away while the targeted interventions are introduced.

I'm also pleased to note that community-based organizations connected to CPSP will be receiving a 1.5 per cent increase. CBOs [community-based organization] play a valuable role in providing CPSP services to their communities, and their continued support ensures strengthened ability to meet our objectives.

Government own-capital funding, CPSP received overall government own-capital funding of 13.5 million, which includes the two capital projects I spoke to earlier: 7 million for the first year of construction of a pre-engineered building at Pine Grove, and 3.7 million to complete work on the PPSTN.

Capital funding of \$800,000 will go to work on the staff

workforce scheduling system for adult and youth custody facilities. This system will provide a more effective tool for scheduling employee shifts in a 24-7 work environment.

Another \$2 billion is earmarked for the criminal justice information management system or CJIMS to replace the outdated courts and corrections system. This is a joint project between CPSP, Justice, and ITO [Information Technology Office].

A final couple of items: the ministry received funding of 3.3 million for salary and information technology cost increases.

Those are the highlights from CPSP's 2011-12 financial plan, Mr. Chair. And now, with the help of my officials, I'll be pleased to answer questions.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Before we go into questions, I would ask that any of the officials, for the record, if you'd state your name as you answer the questions, just for the record. We'll open up for questions. Mr. Quennell.

**Mr. Quennell:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the minister for his opening remarks. And I want to join with the minister in welcoming his officials. I recognize at least a couple that worked in Justice when the Justice minister was responsible for policing. And I was that minister, but now they are here because they've been poached over to Corrections, Policing and Public Safety. I want to welcome everybody here, and I trust that all of you will be of great assistance to the minister.

The first area I wanted to talk about, because I know at least one of my colleagues has some questions in this area, is policing. With the 30 that are added in this budget, is it the position of the government that the 120 will be completed with this budget?

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Yes.

**Mr. Quennell:** — Okay. Now there were . . . I think the minister's answer was yes. I'm not sure it got picked up. And there were 30 last year. For my purposes at least, appreciating I'm new to this critic area, could the minister go through the rollout? Has it been 30 a year over four years, or how did this take place?

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Yes, there has. There's been 30 a year for each of the last . . . well this is into the fourth year, so it's been 30 per year. And this being the fourth year, that completes our 120. Even with my limited math skills, I know that 30 per year over the four years, we're at 120.

**Mr. Quennell:** — It's simple. Now I think I heard today that this 30 is 15 municipal and 15 RCMP. Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — No.

**Mr. Quennell:** — How's it split then?

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — I can give you a breakdown of the 90 that we have. The 30 that's coming on this year, we will not decide until later on. And I stated this morning, probably into I'm going to say July we would have a rollout plan. And the reason is we wish . . . of which we have done is been in

consultations with our policing partners — the RCMP, which is our provincial policing organization, and the municipal police — and we look at where they're most needed. And I would say that I've talked to police agencies. And how many is enough, I guess is one response that I use because you could always use one more. So what we do, we look at the crime severity rate, the crime severity index, and then in negotiations with our partners we would determine where these are best suited.

Now in a general . . . this is very general, but it's a 60/40 split. But we don't really look at it that that is a solid must because again we want to look at where the crime severity index and crime severity rate is the greatest. And that's where I wish to see the policing be tunnelled to. And that can be debated, but that's why we consult with the chiefs of police and the RCMP to determine where these positions should go. I think, to answer your question, for the next 30 we'll be deciding that and announce it into July. If you'd like for the last ones, I can give you that.

[15:15]

**Mr. Quennell:** — Yes. Let's do the last 90 at least, and then I might have some more questions about upcoming plans.

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — The last, the breakdown of the 90, there was 51 RCMP and 39 municipal.

**Mr. Quennell:** — Now the municipal police officers, those are fully funded? This is not a cost-share with the municipalities, right?

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — They're fully funded.

**Mr. Quennell:** — And that was our practice, that was our practice in the previous government as well. But that's not the practice across the country. People should know that. But funding an RCMP officer and funding a municipal police officer aren't exactly the same price. Am I correct in that?

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — I can find you the figures, but there's some variances as you would know because funding the RCMP is based on a 70-30 in some cases. And I won't say it's all cases because it depends where they're deployed. For our provincial policing, it's a 70-30 split. But when we get into on-reserve policing, it's somewhat different — 48-52 for our on-reserve policing. So one definitive answer is not there. It will break down.

Now on the municipal side, we pay 100 per cent of the municipal . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Just to clarify that, on the municipal side, we provide \$100,000 to offset the costing of a police service for the municipal police.

**Mr. Quennell:** — But what you would provide for an RCMP officer would be less than \$100,000 because you don't pay the . . . Or would it be more?

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Our 70 per cent share of an RCMP officer is about \$130,000. And part of that, that's an average, because the cost of policing in the North is . . . There's different allowances, etc. So I wish I could give you one answer that says this is it for everybody. You can't do that. It'll vary.

But 130,000 is our share, and just to . . . 130,000 average for RCMP; 100,000 paid to the municipality for municipal police.

**Mr. Quennell:** — I guess the minister may know or figure out where I'm going. Twenty RCMP officers at \$130,000 and then 10 municipal police officers at \$100,000 will cost you more than 20 municipal police officers at \$100,000 and 10 RCMP officers at \$130,000. And so I wonder how Corrections made its budget decision about how much 30 police officers would cost without knowing what the mix is and without knowing what the mix is until July of this year.

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Yes, I think I understand where you're going. But when you look at the overall police budgets, it's a very, very small percentage that you're dealing with when you start looking at the difference between the municipal and the RCMP. That being said, we have a pretty strong indication, even from the numbers I gave you before, 39/51. If you change that by one, is it going to make a huge difference in your budget? Absolutely not. Because when you look at the size of the policing budget, the difference of \$30,000, it doesn't even make it up into the rate of a portion of a percentile.

Again my emphasis and our emphasis is where they're needed. And we have to look at, in the provincial policing with the RCMP, where they go and operate. I guess I could suggest that if you put money into the municipal police in Regina, you don't have that flexibility of having them deployed to the North where the crime severity index is a lot higher. So that's a balance that we look at, and that's why I keep saying and will say continuously, we have to look at where the crime severity rate and index is the highest. And that's what's going to get the emphasis of our deployment of the new 30 police, which, as you can tell from the past, it's been the same.

There's no doubt that there is a need for more policing in this province. There is absolutely no doubt when we talk to the policing community. And if you look at some of the initiatives that we have done in the past three years, it's exactly where we're going is where the need, we felt with our partners, was where it was the greatest. The ICE unit for an example, the integrated child exploitation, I don't think there's anybody in this province that would argue with us that that was essential.

And how do we do that? We looked and realized that there is an issue and a problem here. The exploitation of children is something that is totally unacceptable. So we tunnel resources into that, and that one was an integrated facility or integrated policing project. So what I can say is when we looked at where the need was the greatest or we felt the need was the greatest, that's where you start tunnelling your resources.

I look at another initiative which is the northern anti-gang and drug unit. Again I don't think there's any one of us that would argue that we didn't need that. If you would argue that, say we need more, I would agree with you. But we really needed that because we know that there is a gang and drug issue in this province. And so by developing a strategy to deal with that, this unit has been extremely successful.

I'll get debate even back from even North Battleford saying, well it hasn't impacted there maybe yet. But we're dealing with 11 members, 11 members that are travelling throughout P.A.

[Prince Albert] to the high North. And they've been extremely successful in interdiction, confiscation of contraband, illegal drugs, weapons, you name it. Confiscation of cash. Could there be more? I would say yes. I would say definitely yes. But these are the things that we wish to look at where we start deploying the next 30.

All that being said, you have to balance it off to a city that's in a lower crime severity index. And I will receive this, there's no doubt about it. I will have a city that'll say, we haven't got a police officer for a couple years. And say, well yes but when we negotiate with the policing community, we need these people where we feel that they're going to be the best utilized for the benefit of the people of the province of Saskatchewan. And I know I get it from municipalities where they say, we haven't received one, or we need more. But that's a decision that we make in consultation with our policing partners. I hope that answers your question. It's a little long, but I hope it answered your question.

**Mr. Quennell:** — I'm familiar with the discussion the minister refers to and would sometimes tell municipal leaders, and particularly rural municipal leaders in southern Saskatchewan, a reward for having a low crime rate was to lose their police officer. And the RCMP of course makes those decisions based on sort of a rolling three-year average. And I assume that's still the case.

But the minister did touch upon my next question area, and that was the designation of police officers. I certainly agree with that policy. The New Democratic Party government started that with auto theft. We did it with break and enter in Saskatoon. Initiated ICE, which I'm certainly not going to argue about its continuation.

And when we added police officers, particularly municipal police officers, Mr. Minister, we did have the habit of, or I had the habit of, doing two things. One was trying to increase diversity on the municipal police forces and saying, if you're hiring new officers with provincial money, we need more women, more people of colour, particularly more Aboriginal people in the police forces in Saskatoon and Regina. Has that been done with any of these 120 officers?

And the second part of my question is, in the case of municipalities — where I think you have a bit more influence on where the officers are used since you're funding them 100 per cent and they're not going anywhere else but the municipality — are any of the 120, including the 30 to be coming, designated to particular programs, ICE or any other programs the minister has designated as strategic programs that need more officers in urban Saskatchewan?

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — You may get some long answers again because there's lots to talk about. As far as when you asked about, and I'm assuming maybe these aren't your words but, are we putting quotas in for Aboriginal and females policing. And the answer is no because we don't dictate basically who comes to the police college or the RCMP Depot Division and applies to become a police person. However we sure deal with it in ways other than the direct policing, whether it's in support of Aboriginal policing which, as you are aware, that we support. For an example, the File Hills Aboriginal

policing initiative of which, when I visited, there was at least one Aboriginal woman in that police force of six?

**A Member:** — Seven.

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Seven. Is one female?

**A Member:** — I think there's one female.

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — So we look at, we look at whatever, whatever we can to assist. But into the direct policing, we don't set quotas.

In answer to your second part, I have a very, very busy graph here that I would share with you, but I'd have to get it photocopied. But I think you might find it interesting because it goes to where all of our policing, what we've added. And I think it would take you a bit to read it, but I think it's something that you, might be worthwhile having to have a look at.

**Mr. Quennell:** — So these are designated officers to programs that come out of the new officers that have been added.

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — It'll be collective.

**Mr. Quennell:** — So not necessarily new officers, but the officers employed in designated programs?

[15:30]

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — I'll have to go back to my chart here, but till you get your sheet over to you, this goes back to '01-02 and right through to the '11 and '12 and it shows the positions that have been added. For an example . . . [inaudible] . . . SCU, the serious crime unit and the dollars that have spent and positions added over that period have been five, and it goes right down to the numbers that have been added. And it breaks down from Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Battleford, Lloyd, Yorkton, Estevan, Weyburn, and miscellaneous.

**Mr. Quennell:** — Now I might have some questions arising from the chart when it arrives.

Mr. Chair, the minister and I were speaking before the committee started, and I didn't think we necessarily would get done today. I know that some of the colleagues have some questions on some matters. And the minister is willing to come back, and so I just wanted to advise the Chair and the rest of the committee that since the minister's willing to come back and I'm certainly willing to come back, that we would like to schedule some more time — particularly since receiving interesting information as we go along. Thank you. Thank you, Minister, for the chart. And I will review it and it may be helpful with my question in that area.

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — You may wish, maybe after even, to have one of our officials to explain that chart to you unless you'd like one of them to do it extensively right now.

**Mr. Quennell:** — Well not extensively right now because I haven't had a chance to review it. But I had a couple other questions about policing.

I've heard some suggestion, more from the RCMP than municipal police officers, that some additional provincial support in providing civilian support to do work that doesn't necessarily have to be done by police officers in the detachments would free up police officers. Now that doesn't help you with your promise, but is there in this budget or any plans on the part of the government to provide additional civilian support that would make the current complement of RCMP officers more effective in doing the work on the street and the highway and the roads that can only be done by police officers? While I'm at it, and so we're talking about Corrections as well, the work that the RCMP officers do in prisoner transfer that could be done by someone else and perhaps at less cost.

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Yes, I wanted to get some accurate data. But we've been working with the RCMP to determine effectiveness and efficiencies with, related to what your question basically was. What kind of a mix would it be? Again our objective is to have more police on the streets rather than doing duties that could be done by somebody else.

I'll give you an example where we put in administrative support for the Criminal Intelligence Service of Saskatchewan. That was one where we actually had police that were doing the input. Well that takes away from basically the effectiveness of an individual if they're spending their time doing data entry when they could be out on the street. So yes, we have definitely been working on that.

As far as prisoner transport, we have a major review going with the RCMP related to prisoner transport and what is the most effective and the best way to do it. Again utilizing the policing services to what they're trained for — although they're trained to transport prisoners too — but looking at what the best mix is going to be. So we're working with them on that to try and come up with how we can better deal with the transportation of prisoners.

**Mr. Quennell:** — I have I think one more question on policing. And Mr. Taylor I think has some questions maybe specific to North Battleford on this subject, so I'll yield the floor to him for a little while.

When I was the minister responsible — and maybe I should have seen this coming; I just didn't think it would happen — a municipality, upon receiving an additional police officer, decided they would stop funding a police officer. So it didn't end up with it being an additional police officer in that municipality, it just ended up being one more provincially funded police officer and the same contingent, which seemed to me that they were saying that they didn't need more police officers, or the city council was. They were simply saying that they were happy with what they had and very happy that the province was going to fund one of them.

Now are there safeguards in place to make sure that we actually end up with additional police officers in all these circumstances and not just uploading the cost of police officers to the province of Saskatchewan?

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — I remember this happening. But I just also, just got to clarify, I believe it was under your watch when it happened.

**Mr. Quennell:** — It was.

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Since then it has not happened. And we have put the safeguard in place, if you wish, where if somebody was suggesting this was going to happen, the deputy minister would pull funding.

**Mr. Quennell:** — The minister's correct; it was under my watch. And I can tell you I was less than pleased, and I'm glad it hasn't happened another time. My colleague, Mr. Taylor, has some questions I think on this subject. So before we leave policing, I'd like to surrender the floor to him briefly.

**The Chair:** — I recognize Mr. Taylor.

**Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. And thank you to my colleague from Saskatoon Meewasin for providing me the opportunity to ask a few questions. And I also want to thank the minister and his officials for their attendance today to help us get a better understanding of funding for this year and how it applies to some of our communities.

My colleague, Mr. Quennell, correctly indicated that I have some questions relating to my constituency, The Battlefords. The minister has had some discussions with the mayor of North Battleford and city officials, and I know that the minister's officials have also had some discussions with representatives of the city of North Battleford.

I'm pleased, in his earlier remarks, that the minister referred to the crime severity index and the amount of emphasis that the minister places on the crime severity index with regards to the rollout of perhaps police officers or other matters. North Battleford, as the minister knows, rates number one on the crime severity index of cities over 10,000 people in all of Canada. This is not a number one spot that the city of North Battleford wants to maintain, and it would very much like to see itself drop down that list a considerable ways.

To do that, of course, means we have to be doing something different. If we want to see some change happen, we need to do something different. A number of suggestions in the community have been made, including the addition of police officers, some strategic activities that might include the Neighbourhood Watch or Citizens on Patrol. And others at community meetings have indicated any sort of crime reduction strategy should be a multi-ministerial responsibility including Minister Responsible for Housing, minister responsible for training and education.

So my sort of broadly based question to the minister to start with basically is, I know he's familiar with the circumstances in North Battleford. I know there have been some discussions that has taken place. Is there anything the minister can tell us today with relations to funding that's available in this year's budget that might be of some assistance to North Battleford and the desire of the community to see its rank on the crime severity index reduced?

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Well as you have mentioned, I'm very aware of the crime severity index of North Battleford. Rated number one with cities over 10,000 is not a statistic we want to see. You don't want to see it. The mayor doesn't want to see it.

I have met on, I don't want to use the word several occasions, but far more than a couple of occasions, I've met with the mayor and city manager and have discussed the situation in North Battleford. They have provided me with a very compelling reason why they need something to change. And one of the changes, of course, they talk to me about is an additional police officers.

I cannot sit here and tell you that they're going to get some in the next allocation of the 30. However, reading between the lines, if you look at the compelling case that they have and crime severity with what my statement has been, that's where we want to tunnel the policing, the new 30 police officers into areas where the crime severity index is the greatest. They have a very compelling reason to be the recipients of some.

[15:45]

I cannot give you that yet because that is going to be done in consultation with the policing community, understanding full well what you say with the crime severity index of Battleford. But I'm sure you visited the North, and you look at the crime severity rate and index in the North and now start debating as to where resources need to go. And that's why I would definitely not sit here and say one is going here and two are going there because that will be done in total consultation with the policing communities of which are represented by the chiefs of police and the RCMP.

A case is obviously there for Battleford. I've just talked to people from La Loche, and one could argue there is a case for more policing in La Loche. And I've been to Stony Rapids where one could argue the case is great there too. And all of a sudden you visit 30 new communities and every one has a very compelling reason. But I'm very familiar with North Battleford, is what I can tell you today, and there's a very compelling reason for additional police officers to be in that area.

As far as other initiatives, and I think the community has helped out a fair bit. And I'm not sure you will know and understand, but such things as Neighbourhood Watch, that doesn't come from us but it's something raised within the community. And I've had communities in my own constituency that would say, well this is an issue for the police. And there are people that can sit and talk to them and say once somebody has . . . If there's a problem, yes, the police can get involved, but the police can't be everywhere all the time, so a community Neighbourhood Watch — and this has been very effective — where two people in a vehicle might be just out cruising and seeing activity and then calling the police, and this has been quite effective in a number of communities. And I know they were starting that in one of my communities at home. Rather than come to a meeting and say, well that's all your problem, it's your issue, it's now the community saying, how can we help out and do something?

And I know — you'll know what it's called — but the place in Battleford that got flooded. It's a home where the young people go. Those initiatives are absolutely outstanding because they take . . . If you didn't have that, then what do these younger people do? So it's initiatives like that that the community can definitely get involved with and provide some place and a facility for these young people to go do something productive rather than to find the stuff that's not so productive to do.



And this is, when I've talked to the mayor and the city manager, we've talked about initiatives such as that. It still does not detract from the fact that there's more police officers that are probably required there.

**Mr. Taylor:** — I appreciate the minister's comments and recognize the understanding there and I thank the minister for those comments, and the fact that he did mention and had toured the Boys and Girls Club in The Battlefords after their flooding, recognizing that indeed the city has been funding programs for youth.

There are considerable challenges in the community that remain for funding the types of programs that are necessary, one of which has been recognized as an emergency shelter or an emergency safe house for adolescents and teenagers in the community. Not that it is the minister's responsibility, but with the housing crisis, the street workers are indicating that quite a number of young people are cruising the streets of North Battleford 2 o'clock, 3 o'clock in the morning, not because they're interested in causing mischief, but because the house that they're living in, there may be a party going on that they want to get away from. There may be an addiction problem in the house that they're trying to get away from. And so they don't go home to sleep and instead, because there's no safe accommodations, those people will gather in groups and group behaviour sometimes leads to activities that would involve the police eventually during the course of the evening.

So that's one of the things that I think has been suggested and it would be interesting if the minister would agree that, in addition to policing services, an interdepartmental or inter-ministerial approach to the reduction of crime, not just handling crime when it occurs or after it has occurred, but an inter-ministerial approach that would show that the Minister of Public Safety, the Minister of Housing, the Minister of Social Services might meet with some communities facing challenges to find an inter-ministerial approach to these things. Is this something that the minister would be open to?

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — We are, we are open to looking at ways that we can solve a number of these concerns. And I'm not going to get, I'm not going to get political, but I think you will understand what I'm going to say is what we've done in the past. We've lived in silos, and every department was compartmentalized into a silo, and there was very little cross-ministry work done. And I'll point that out from where I saw things when I first got into the ministry.

And there's very few of these that are single-ministry problems. There are many ministries involved. And I know one of my comments early on — and I know the people within the ministry are probably tired of me saying it — but we have to break down these silos. We have to be able to work with other departments, other ministries to solve some of these problems because if you're stuck within a silo, then it makes it far more difficult.

I hear exactly what you're saying. We've got an initiative going right now where we've got seven different ministries working on a project. Is it going to solve your problem in Battleford tomorrow? No. But you have to look at sometimes some of these problems have taken literally generations to get to where

they are, and they're going to take quite a period of time to break that pattern. And we are looking at how we can do that.

And I can give you an example. When you start dealing with youth, is it a housing problem? Is it a CPSP problem? Is it an education problem? Is it a medical problem? And if you start dealing with any of those issues in a silo, you will never solve the problem.

And so now we're looking at how we can do this on a basis where we're looking at it from a support of all the different ministries. Like my deputy here, for an example, one day we sat and talked. And he said, wouldn't it be nice if we could come into a room and there's about eight people sitting around the table and we have a file and said, here is the problem. And that file goes to every ministry around the table and say, we can do this, oh but we can do this, and we can do this. And everybody helping rather than say, it's not my problem; here, I'll move the file on. Now it goes someplace else and it gets stranded. And so all of these issues get delayed or maybe not looked at, and we are definitely looking at how that can be done. I know this is a long answer, but I think it's important to know that we're looking at initiatives such as that.

The police chief of Prince Albert has a very compelling story about a Joey's story, and I wish everybody could hear this story because that's exactly what happened. It's a very sad case, but there was just dozens and dozens of chances for intervention and it didn't happen. And so that was compelling enough for me and our ministry to say we've got to be able to look at this from a far broader perspective.

The crime reduction strategy in North Battleford — I think you're probably familiar with the crime reduction strategy there — has three key components: supervision of repeat young offenders; early intervention for low-risk young offenders; and a wraparound program that works with children under the age of 12 years who are involved in criminal behaviour. And a committee including representatives from us, the YOP [young offenders program] custody in community, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, education, social services, mental health services, Crown counsel, North Battleford and Battleford council members, and Battleford Tribal Council directs and oversees the strategy.

So there I guess I would say that there's work being done in Battleford to that. And I don't know if that totally answers your question, but there is work being done and that's obviously interagency.

**Mr. Taylor:** — Yes, I appreciate that and two things come to mind. The first is the meetings will take place and discussions will happen. There will be some identified activity that will be recommended going forward. And so obviously I think that, number one, if the regional intersectoral committees that act throughout the province can find some additional funding to help them respond to some of those recommendations, and two, if those recommendations come forward and they require some additional funding from within the various ministries, that I would hope that the minister and his colleagues will look favourably upon the recommendations that might come forward. It's quite the team that's in place, and I have a great deal of faith that there will be some recommendations coming

forward in that regard.

I know the new staff sergeant, Phil Wilson, in North Battleford with the RCMP has acquainted himself with the issues very quickly. He's had considerable amount of past history in other communities where he's had to deal with some similar issues. And I think within the RCMP, Staff Sergeant Wilson will be a considerable ally for the people of The Battlefords and I would hope for the policing community in advocating for either additional police officers or some additional measures that perhaps need to be funded.

The reason I say this of course is if we're going to get rid of that number one designation under the crime severity index, something different has to be done. And that something different likely is going to require a few extra dollars to address, and so I appreciate the minister's responses.

I have one other question while I have the floor, and it has to do with young offenders so it's a little bit different. But we have a young offenders facility in The Battlefords. That young offenders facility occupies part of a facility that used to be all Saskatchewan Hospital, North Battleford. The Minister of Health, as the Minister of Public Safety knows, Corrections knows, the Minister of Health is reviewing a plan to build a new facility for Saskatchewan Hospital.

Given that the young offenders facility is attached to the Saskatchewan Hospital property, building per se, have there been any discussions within Corrections, within the minister's office amongst his officials with regards to replacement of the young offenders facility in North Battleford as well?

[16:00]

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Yes. I just wanted to get a little update. I do want to go back to your comments prior to your question about looking at Battleford and this number one position and what we can do. And I think, Mr. Taylor, you would understand or remember where Regina and Saskatoon sat in the listings of number one or number two in the crime rate in certain areas over the last numbers of years. And in fact, we've seen that being reduced. So there's reasons why that has happened. And this is why I'm looking at Battleford as being one that can follow along in those steps, if you wish. And we know the break and enter strategy is one, the auto theft strategy is another that's happened in Saskatoon and Regina. So there has been some good movement on that, and a lot of it is because we've got more police on the streets.

With respect to the youth facility at The Battlefords Sask Hospital, I visited there a couple of times. I'm very familiar with the issues there. But I would say that nothing really has changed in the last 10 to 15 years, and until something one way or the other changes . . . We are, in Corrections, Public Safety, in our youth side of it, we look at options. We look at options on a regular basis as to the what-ifs, but until such time that a decision comes forward whether the hospital's going to be rebuilt or what's going to be done, we're basically subservient to that decision.

We need facilities for the youth. I would be very pleased to say that our youth incarceration rate has been down, but you still

can't eliminate the facilities. So suffice I think to say that when a decision comes forth on Sask Hospital, then we will be in a position to say what our decision will be with the youth facility. We know it's old also, but it sure serves a purpose.

And like I say, I've had visits there, and I know they've had some issues. There's some issues that could be solved internally, which they have. The stairway, which you may be familiar with, was an issue. Well if you move your high risk to the bottom floor, you don't have a stairway issue do you. So those are things that since I've been visiting there and I said to the director that this is an option that you can use, so there's some workarounds within the facilities that have actually happened.

But to the heart of your question is, we will wait till the decision is made on the hospital before we're going to have to come forward with a decision of what we do with the youth facility.

**Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Minister.

**Mr. Quennell:** — Because a couple of my colleagues have some questions about the provincial disaster assistance program, I'll jump there. And I have a couple, and maybe neither of them will become as surprises to the minister because we've been corresponding on these issues.

The first question raised by a constituent of mine was the refusal or denial by the provincial government to refund the provincial sales tax on goods used to make repairs in reparations to damaged property. The answer that came back from the minister was that the federal government doesn't refund the tax, so the provincial doesn't refund the tax. The minister knows that I don't understand that answer because the federal government doesn't collect that tax; provincial government collects that tax and ends up collecting it twice because of a disaster which is not the responsibility of the homeowner.

Is there some legal requirement because of an agreement with the federal government that the province can't refund the tax that the federal government doesn't refund? Or is that simply a policy decision, which I expect that it is, and is it a policy decision that the ministry and the Government of Saskatchewan is considering changing?

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Well I remember responding to your letter and from your constituent. And I'm going to say at the outset I found it interesting because I've listened to complaints around this province to the tune of thousands, and that one just never came up until yours, believe it or not. So one person has, out of the thousands of complaints, had a complaint about paying the PST [provincial sales tax] on replacement. And I gathered it was the PST on doing something that he was replacing, whether it's in his basement or whatnot.

When I mentioned in my letter to you about the federal government, and do you understand possibly what DFAA is, a disaster financial assistance arrangement? If we are in accordance with DFAA, we will receive back upwards to 90 per cent. It's usually in the neighbourhood of, say, 80 to 90 per cent that we

can get back from the federal government if we are in accordance with their plan. So we submit, we submit our claims to them, but PST is not one of them. So it's not the federal government collecting PST because that's provincial. But if we put in a claim and said, this is the amount that we've put in in PST, then it becomes totally a provincial responsibility because it does not come under DFAA. I don't know if that makes it clear to you or not.

I also said to you in the letter, because we have totally listened to the people of this province . . . And I'm very happy to talk about PDAP [provincial disaster assistance program] because of the extensive changes that we've made to PDAP from top to bottom. Is it a done deal? No. Even as recent as two weeks ago or three weeks ago, I announced four more changes to PDAP. If this was, if this was a great issue from the people of the province, then we would have our officials deal with DFAA and see if there's an exclusion clause that can be brought in for eliminating PST or not using PST but that it would be claimable to us within our total claim amount to DFAA.

It might be easier to explain DFAA vis-à-vis PDAP. When we looked at raising business exemption, DFAA states it's \$2 million. Well what if we go to three? Sounds great. You might have somebody in your constituency that has a \$3 million business and is flooded. So why don't we make it three? Because DFAA has stated \$2 million. So anything we go above the \$2 million, we're on our own hook for that. And then we're paying it out of, 100 per cent out of provincial taxpayers' money.

So when we stay in the guidelines of DFAA, then we're able to collect the . . . And there's a formula, and I'm sure you understand and know the formula. But if we go outside of the guidelines, then we're on our own hook for it. And we go . . . So our officials have just been, they've bent over backwards in the last 12 months or 11 months, whatever it is since our first flood, because we sit and say, this is an issue. This is a real issue.

Deductible. That was probably one of the early ones. How come 20 per cent deductible? We could reduce that deductible without interfering with the DFAA guidelines. So we reduced the deductible. It cost the people of the province less that were subjected to these disasters. It cost us maybe 10 per cent more as a province. But it went within the guidelines of DFAA, so we were able to claim that and get our 80 to 90 per cent back when we eventually finalize our claims.

So all that being said, the PST does not come under DFAA. They don't collect it. It's us putting in our bill. And so they would look at our bill and say . . . [inaudible] . . . here's one that's not claimable. So they eliminate that amount out of the claim return that would come to the province.

**Mr. Quennell:** — So the bottom line is if the province refunded the provincial sales tax that the province collects, that would be 100 per cent cost to the province?

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Exactly.

**Mr. Quennell:** — But is that something the province is considering doing? I mean is that such an enormous amount of

money that . . .

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Well we have not considered doing it strictly, as I mentioned. I have received one, I won't even say complaint. It was your letter to me that identified this as an issue, and that's one out of the 6,000 or 60-some-hundred claims. In fact I would say maybe 7,000 because there's 6,000 roughly claims, but there's other people that have had comments that actually did not submit a claim, but they were wondering and curious about if they could receive funding from PDAP.

There's very interesting situations in PDAP, and I'm sure you're all aware of it. And once this has been out and on the street, there's a lot of changes that have resulted because of change, number one, and people realized that we were listening to their concerns.

And I have a total list of PDAP changes. If you'd like me to go through them all, I'm more than happy because I was very, very pleased that we were able to do that. But again I would state that we've done them all in accordance with DFAA guidelines.

**Mr. Quennell:** — The second issue that I have — and I think my colleagues have some questions maybe perhaps more general on the delivery of the program — but is again an issue that comes to my attention as issues do to MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] from their constituents who have an issue. And this is a case — and the minister may be aware of this as well — where an engineer engaged I think by the program has decided that the damage was pre-existing, but the claimant has what she feels are contrary engineering reports that suggest otherwise. It appears that there's no sort of review process, no way to adjudicate between the experts, and that the report engaged by PDAP is the one that trumps the others because the others were engaged by her.

To use an analogy, and I appreciate it's not perfect, but in workers' compensation if the Workers' Compensation Board prefers one doctor's report to another's and the claimant has some medical caregiver on her side, then there's a medical review process. And I think the experts are sort of almost co-chosen by the board and by the complainant, and there is a decision made as to which medical evidence is to be preferred.

There doesn't seem to be — and maybe the minister can correct me, and I'd be happy to hear about it and so would my constituents — there doesn't seem to be a similar review process for contending engineering claims for the PDAP program, which again maybe this is the first time you or I have heard of this, but doesn't mean it's not important. And is there in fact some kind of review process to which I can direct my constituent? Or does the, if there is not, does the minister see the value in having such a review?

[16:15]

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Well, Mr. Quennell, as you know, we will not settle individual claims as we sit here. But I'll give you, I'll give you an example. And I don't know if this falls into the category that you're talking about or not. We have seen cases where there's a lack of understanding at the time from some individuals what the disaster assistance program is for.

What it's for is to return a dwelling or business that qualifies back to the pre-disaster condition — and that's important — to the pre-disaster condition.

So what happens if there's an individual that has a . . . And I'll give you a for example also because comparing it to workmens' compensation is probably a little bit on the stretch side. But let's just say a person has had in their house, I'll give you an example, even my house because I've got cracks in my basement wall. No doubt about it. So now if I get flooded this year and come to PDAP, do I have my whole basement repaired because of its cracking and it comes under PDAP? Absolutely not because that was a pre-disaster condition.

There have been cases where there have been engineers go into basements of houses that have had struts put in prior to the disaster. By struts, there is sagging in the floor. There's wall problems in the basement, and so there is engineered trusses or struts — whatever you wish to call them — that were put in. Then they've been subjected to the disaster and wish to have PDAP pay for the whole reconstruction of the basement. Well an engineer can go in and look at it very, very quickly and say, but this happened some time ago. Oh yes, but it's exacerbated because of the flood. That's not the intent of PDAP. PDAP is to put it to a pre-flood condition. And that is, that is I don't think understood by some people. And if there's a case like you have, that would be my answer to the individual is as a pre-flood, pre-disaster condition is that's where the goal is, to go back to that.

As far as somebody to adjudicate, if you wish, a claim, we've had people that have not been pleased with their adjuster. They'll contact PDAP, and we'll actually send out another adjuster. We've done that on many occasion. And whether that answers your question directly, we don't have a panel per se that sits around and says, this person was treated badly and so we'll go do something else.

But we've had some issues with again getting structural engineers. As you know, there's been a shortage of them, and we've had to go out of province to hire. And it's a standardization issue, and our PDAP officials deal with them on standardization.

With adjusters it's very much the same because you could hire adjusters. We don't have a plethora of adjusters here, so one adjuster can adjust a house and a house two doors away could be adjusted by another adjuster. And on coffee row they compare notes and say, well it's different. And so there's a case where you can have . . . say okay, we'll get another adjuster. And we'll go out and have a look at it. So that, we actually do that.

**Mr. Quennell:** — On the prospect of having some method of adjudicating between contending engineering reports, the answer is no.

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Pretty much. As I explained, we don't have an adjudicating panel that sits there. Again if there's a discrepancy in an engineering report, we will get a third party engineer, if you wish, to go out and do an engineering assessment. So that in itself for an example, I couldn't sit on a panel and say that we'll adjudicate this because I don't know

enough about the engineering side of it. So you have a professional that goes out and looks at what the other professional has done, or the other two professionals because if somebody hires their own and then we send out one and there's a difference, then you get a third one to come out.

And this is very interesting because I haven't heard it directly from yourself, but about the length of time with claims has come up. You've just totally explained why some claims take longer than others.

**Mr. Quennell:** — I think that's the case with everything. Mr. Chair, I think some of my colleagues have questions about PDAP as well.

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

**Ms. Higgins:** — Just a couple of quick questions. What was the total number of claims that was filed during last year's array of disasters across the province?

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — I don't want to sound factitious, but do you want it from the calendar year or whenever because we're still getting them in. We were at 5,900-and-some. We're over 6,000, but we're still getting them in from last year.

**Ms. Higgins:** — You're up to what: 6,000, 5,900?

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — The latest in, 6,002. But if you wait for half an hour, I bet you it's 6,003.

**Ms. Higgins:** — Well how long is the eligibility to file a claim on last year?

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — It's six months from the disaster, the date of the disaster. But one of the things that has happened — and again, like I have stated many times with the media who've ever asked the question — is the flexibility that we've brought into this program. Rather than be cut and dried, we wanted some flexibility. So it's six months from the disaster. So pick a disaster and then six months later is the time that the claim should be advanced.

However when I say flexible, because we have cases — and that's why we're still getting some — some of these are adjuster reports that we're getting in now that have been working their way through the system. But in some cases, it goes back somewhat to Mr. Quennell's about a basement or something because a flood may have happened, which is the case, and something might show up six months or seven months later. Do we say, sorry? So we said no, we will have a look at that, and we will have an adjuster look at it or possibly an engineer.

So put a finite time limit on it? We have not done that because some of these flood situations take some time to show up. And that's why we have the engineers, and that's why it's very critical to have the engineers and the adjusters and structural engineers. Sometimes some of this doesn't show up for quite a period of time. And that's why structural engineers are so essential to getting some of these claims forwarded because you really have to have somebody to look at the whole structure of the facility for safety, for one thing. But sometimes it doesn't show up for a while, so that's why we're still getting some

claims in today.

**Ms. Higgins:** — Well and part of it that would extend the date also is that the municipality has to declare a disaster.

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Yes.

**Ms. Higgins:** — And then you would have the individuals that would also have to come forward with their individual claims, which could stretch out the period even farther.

So of the 6,000 approximately, and I'm just looking for kind of ballpark figures because it seems to me I heard in the media a few weeks ago that only 25 per cent of the claims had been paid out from last year.

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Yes.

**Ms. Higgins:** — So what stages are these claims at? Just ballpark figures, like 25 per cent have been paid out, 25 are sitting where? What's kind of the breakdown?

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Okay. This is going to be a bit of a longer answer I think. But between April 1 and February 14, 276 municipalities, provincial parks, and First Nations were designated as an eligible assistance area under PDAP. As of March 31 last week, 6,000 — it says over 6,002, so that's why I say we might be at 6,003 already — they've been received from individuals, businesses, and municipalities. 4,015 payments totalling more than 14.9 million have been paid on these claims, and over 1,200 files closed. Now I wish to . . .

**Ms. Higgins:** — Okay. So clarification then of the 4,015 payments that have been made. Those could be partial advances?

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Yes they can. And again this is changes that we made to the program. Additionally when the first disaster hit, one of the requests that came to us was we have to have a way . . . or you, as stated by the people of the province that said, you have to find a way to get money into the hands of people's pockets because of this disaster. There is people . . . Again if you look at the emotion of what's happened when it comes to a disaster, it's shock. It's shock when a disaster hits. And then it's, part of the shock is, my gosh, what am I going to do? And that's when we were asked if we could put money into it. Do you want me to continue?

**Ms. Higgins:** — Sure. I mean I can talk and listen at the same time, so sure, go ahead.

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — So money was asked of us. So we put money into the hands of the people, albeit it seemed like maybe a small amount is a pretty large amount when you start looking at cleanup.

And it was a \$3,000 payment that we decided we'd put in once a claim was established. And we put \$3,000 into the hands of the people. I think most of them wanted it, but it was there. If you didn't want it, you didn't have to take it. But most people wanted it. Another huge change that we made was when a claim is processed, once the adjuster's report came in, you could actually receive up to 60 per cent of the adjusted claim. So that

money again if you wanted it, you could have it paid out.

So you're looking at the monies that I've said, 405,000 . . . 4,015 payments have been made, people that were coming forward and saying okay, here's the claim. And I'll just use an example of a \$100,000 claim. We could pay them \$60,000. Well it would probably be 57,000 because their 3,000 advance would have been off of that, so a total of \$60,000 they could have received as an advance.

If they were happy with the adjuster's report, they could receive 100 per cent of their claim and sign off and close the claim. As you've seen by my figures, there's 1,200 files that have been closed. Some of them . . . I know we closed one in Maple Creek a very short time after the disaster. The individual was extremely pleased with the adjuster's report. The individual wanted to get her business back together. She accepted 100 per cent of the adjuster's report. File closed. She was happy it was paid out.

So now in the terms of some of these other claims, people have not . . . They may have accepted the 60 per cent payout. Some of them may not. But those that didn't accept the 100 per cent payout, that claim could take a long time to settle. The reason is, if an adjuster or an engineer says okay, this has happened to your house; this is what I think it's going to cost to repair your house . . . Pick a figure. Let's just say it's \$40,000. And you say, gosh I think it's going to be more than that. So you can say, I'm not going to accept the finalization of the claim. I'm going to wait until the work is done, and then I will submit actual bills for the work.

Once those actual bills are submitted to PDAP, the claim can be finalized. But the actual work might be more than the \$40,000. Maybe it's less. But those bills can take a long time because, for an example, if you're getting basement work done, you know how difficult it is to get somebody to come in and do a basement, especially during the winter. It's hard to get people in some areas where there's been disasters to come in and get any of the work done because of contractors are in great demand around the province right now. So some of these claims are going to take a while to finalize, there's no doubt. But the option is still there for the individual, once the engineer's report and the adjuster's report is in and there's a dollar figure there, they have the capability to go beyond the 60 per cent and finalize it. But they just have to sign off and say that's their final, that's their final payment; they'll accept that.

[16:30]

**Ms. Higgins:** — Well out of the, I guess out of the 6,002 claims that you received so far, basically 4,800 are outstanding at some stage or another. And we're coming up to kind of the beginning of the year or what will be the first anniversary for a number of these.

The only other quick question I have is just to clarify, and I think you said this in your comments, so really none of the improvements that were made to PDAP are outside of the DFAA guidelines. So then it's not on the province's dime. That's, I think, the term you used. Just to clarify, I think all of the improvements you said were within the DFAA so they're eligible for reimbursement from the federal government.

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — To the best of our knowledge, everything is covered under DFAA to the best of our knowledge. We won't know that for sure, I guess, until a total audit is done by the federal government on the PDAP claims.

**Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you very much. That's it, Mr. Chair, for me, but I think Pat . . .

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Ms. Higgins. Ms. Atkinson, you had some questions.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — I do. Minister, I also want to talk about PDAP and in particular I want to know, has the program replaced any concrete block basements that experienced the flooding?

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — We don't believe there have been. However, we'll find out for sure and let you know if there's any. Again I have to go back to what I stated earlier. One of the issues is replacing to pre-disaster conditions, and so whether one's been replaced or partially replaced I don't know. We could find that out and get that back to you.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — I just want to raise this issue which I promised I would for an immigrant couple that moved to Yorkton, and they bought a house that was built in the 1950s, I believe. And at the time a number of houses built in that era were built with concrete block or block basements. So it wasn't cement, it wasn't brick, it was concrete block. And as a result — I just want to describe the situation — as a result of the flooding and the pressure from all of the water, they had to replace the basement. PDAP, through the structural engineer, said that this was a pre-existing condition. Not unlike my colleague, they have someone else that said the pressure was so great that it caused this — and they were concrete blocks — it caused this to fail, and they had a disaster.

And they're now sort of stuck between PDAP and SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance]. And immigrant family, I think they paid about \$160,000 for this house. They were told to go ahead with repairs. They had to build a new basement. I think it was something like \$70,000. And they're in no man's land at the moment.

So I guess my question is not unlike my colleague's. They're being told that there was a pre-existing condition. They bought the house. It was inspected. They had a concrete block house. The pressure from the water . . . I believe there were two floods. I think in early July, I believe there were two floods that water just came, you know, saturated the land or the earth, and they had a problem.

And so is it possible to have this particular case re-examined? Because somehow it just doesn't seem fair. Because their contractor says, and others apparently say, that this concrete block basement was the problem and, because of the pressure from all of the water, it caused the structure to become unstable. And they had to do something or their house was going to fall in. That wasn't the case before they bought the house or during the time they lived there. So I can send you the details. I understand that they've had someone trying to advocate on their behalf, and I've indicated to them I'd raise it in estimates.

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — By all means send me the details. Again I'm not an engineer, a structural engineer. I'm not an engineer, but definitely not on the structural side, and I probably can't even comment on it. I know there's issues with basements. I know that there's . . .

I think you have to understand some of these floods and how they happen. They came through the basement windows. So when you get engineers that are relating to pressures, are the pressures from the inside out or the outside in? Because if your basement is full of water, where is the pressure? Is there pressure equalization? So I can't . . . You know, I don't know that.

And in the discussion between SGI and PDAP, there's another issue that we have been dealing with on a constant basis. At what point is there sewer backup vis-à-vis at what point is there overland flooding? And if anybody can answer that question, I would be happier because where does insurance kick in and where does PDAP start? And I think our officials have worked extensively with the insurance companies looking at that because you could sit and debate that all day. But if your basement is full of something other than air, what do you do? So you send me the details on this, and I will have our people definitely look into it.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Just if I could, I understand that there was dirt that came . . . like when your wall collapses from the pressure, dirt piled in. So I was just wondering if you had any other people in the province that had concrete block basements. Because it's actually made me think about my own basement which . . . My house was built in 1911, and it's a brick basement. My house is brick from the basement to the rafters, and it just makes you wonder, you know, what happens? Because it's not like it's cement that's totally stable. I mean you have concrete blocks that have, you know whatever it is, mortar between them. And I'm just wondering if that makes a difference because they had a collapse. I'll send you the detail, Minister. Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Well and I hear what you're saying. That's why we have engineers go look at the facilities and the houses and the issues because there's so many different scenarios out there, even to the point of dirt basements. And we've had those. How do you replace a dirt basement? So those are issues that we have dealt with all along. I don't know if we've had any other cinder-block ones or not. Tom, we have? I guess we have. So I don't know how many. Again I don't get into an awful lot of each individual claim. Obviously I don't go through every claim, but I usually hear all of the sad story ones.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Minister, can I ask were there any cinder-block failures?

**Mr. Young:** — Tom Young. Yes, we've had a lot of different kinds of basement construction as the minister indicated. There are several basements that are built out of concrete blocks or cinder blocks. Some of them are constructed in a fashion that they're probably a little stronger than others, but certainly that type of basement is subject to probably a little more than concrete, a full poured-in-place concrete basement that's reinforced. It's subject to the conditions that you've described in terms of pressure from the soils. I'm not an engineer, but

certainly those are the kinds of situations that we have encountered.

And again the disaster assistance program is supposed to repair to the state prior to the event that occurred. And what you're asking about is certainly a situation that you don't want to replace it, necessarily, simply with another cinder-block construction. So there's a lot of, I guess, details and mechanics in terms of how you deal with those situations.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — I just have a copy of the letter that was sent from, you know, the federal-provincial program adviser. And it indicated that because this was a pre-existing condition, unfortunately this means that there will be no compensation available through PDAP for structural damage as all the damage was pre-existing and not a direct result of the disaster.

And this couple would argue that they didn't have mud and the wall hadn't collapsed before the disaster and they just don't understand this. And I have to tell you that this has put them in a terrible position, because these are low-wage workers that bought a house for \$160,000 and they can't live in it at the moment and yet they're trying to pay their mortgage because they don't want to get into trouble with the bank, and so they're just caught in no man's land. So I just learned of this last week, but I will send the minister the details and maybe we can sort this little problem out. Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Send me the information and we'll definitely look at it.

**The Chair:** — Yes. Is there any other questions? Ms. Higgins.

**Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. There are a number of cases . . . When you talked I was thinking about this 4,800 that are still outstanding, give or take whatever. New ones may come in or those that have recently been closed. What happens when we are hitting a point where flooding could soon occur as the water is accumulating and it's visible just about everywhere you go?

I do have a couple of cases where they are waiting for an inspection, but in the meantime there could be more damage done. So what happens now? Pre-existing as of when? The initial disaster? What if another one comes? How do you define, if in the meantime we have another series of flooding or disasters that may hit the same regions and people are still waiting for the initial inspection?

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Well case by case, we definitely have a look at it. I mean people that are waiting for an initial inspection, one of the first things I'd say, when was their claim submitted? What's going to happen next week, next month, a month from now? I don't know. We put \$22 million into mitigation. If there's somebody that you know that's worried about re-flooding again, maybe they should've been applying for some mitigation funds. I don't know; maybe they have. Because we've had a very strong uptake on \$22 million which is the first time in the history of the province where we've had mitigation that I know of, and the municipalities are doing quite an uptake on this. There's individual places, farms, ranches are doing uptake on the mitigation.

As far as a claim, again, when was the claim put in? I don't know. And you're not prepared and I'm not prepared to answer that of how long from the claim was put in, but if somebody put in a claim two weeks ago . . . And I've had this happen. Somebody put in a claim and they said, you haven't actioned my claim yet. And I said, when was it put in? Well I put it in two weeks ago. Well let's also be realistic. Is two weeks enough time to finalize a claim? And let's be honest about it. It takes some time to do that.

[16:45]

If you look at the number of claims that we're processing . . . As you're probably aware, it took years, a year to 18 months to get claims processed in the past. And that's something that we didn't want to happen, so we actually put a fairly large staff in charge of claims. And I know this is an exceptional, the past year was an exceptional for numbers of claims and the disasters, but even at that, it compares to only I think twice as much as it was in one other year. I've got all of the stats.

But we did not want to accept the fact that people are going to have to wait. So we have had 22 people working on claims — 22. But you can only work with what you get, and what you get is when the reports come in. So I know in the earlier stages, very difficult to get adjusters and structural engineers, which you've heard me talk about already this evening. But once that is done, the claim gets in and then we start working on the process of getting it done.

Interventions have happened on a regular basis. Somebody's claim comes in and somebody will come along and say, I'm not happy with that — just as we spoke about. So that's an intervention that takes away from the processing of the claim because now we may have to send out another structural engineer or another adjuster. So every intervention can take a period of time.

I would say that the majority of our calls up until about a month ago were more in line with, I'm not getting an adjuster. And we were working at again hiring adjusters from wherever we could because we're dealing with a lot of claims. You have to admit, that's a lot of claims. So hiring adjusters was a big issue.

More recently the calls that have been coming in have dealt more so with, my claim is in, but I haven't got my money yet. So we went ahead and I think, I think I would say quite boldly stated that we're going to add another 30 people to process claims, another 30. So our goal is to have, from the time the adjuster's report or the engineer's report in, is to have a claim paid within a period of three months.

There will be exceptions, ones that we've spoke about, ones that was just mentioned. If a wall is caving in and you need a structural engineer, then you need another structural engineer, that's going to take some time. So will that three month be a hard and fast . . . No, but that is definitely our goal is to get it done just as soon as we can after to get the money into people's hands.

So if you look at now, from the time we started this initiative which was a couple of weeks ago . . . so we're going to go through April, May. Our first flood last year, believe it or not,

was the end of June, so the goal is that we could have a lot of this done prior to what . . . last year's flooding would have really hit us.

Now runoff, spring runoff, who knows? Moose Jaw, spring runoff can affect Moose Jaw especially down in the valley. I don't know if they've applied for flood mitigation, and so there's flood mitigation dollars again that are there. And that's the whole idea of mitigation is you mitigate the problems or mitigate as many of the problems as you possibly can.

So our goal is to get the money out to the people, as many claims finalized. You can't finalize a claim until you get the adjuster's report obviously. But once the adjuster's report is in, we've set our own goal as to have that settled within three months. And that's our goal that we're going to now — again, stating emphatically that every claim cannot be settled in three months because of some of the issues that we've just talked about.

**Ms. Higgins:** — And once you get all the final reports, your goal is to have it finalized within three months. So then what is the wait-list currently for an inspection or an adjuster to actually visit and view each claim? What's your backlog?

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — I don't know if you want some exact specific to the numbers or not, but out of the 4,800 claims that have not been finalized, we have assigned adjusters, assigned adjusters to every one of them. Now that doesn't mean the adjusters have been out there yet, but they've been assigned. So they have an adjuster assigned to that claim.

Now out of that there are probably — and again if you want a specific, exact number, we'll have to go back and figure one out — but there's probably, I'm going to say half of those that were waiting for adjusters' reports. So the other ones, that's why we're going forward with the processing of the claims.

And I also, I've stated this a few times to a number of people. When we had 22 people working on these claims and there's an intervention, it delays it. There's no doubt about it. Because you've got 22 people handling claims and somebody phones with a question, well that person then is taken away from the processing of claims and now is answering the phone and reacting to the phone call. So every intervention caused some delays.

But now we've revamped how we're doing the claim process. We've gone to a two-shift system to try and get these out there as quick as we can with the extra people that we've committed to having involved, hired. The deputy has set up a structure where the people are not going to be subjected to the interventions like they were before, like phone calls, etc., because there's going to be a group of people that are going to be dedicated to do that and not impede the people that are working on the claims.

All that being said, we're working just as diligently as we can to get most of these processed and out just as quick as we can. And I can't help but go back and just state, all we've got to do is look at the program today and what it was a few years ago and the changes and how long it's taken to react. And I'm sure the member will know. When we look back to Vanguard, it

took two years before some people even got a penny of money. Two years. And we found that totally unacceptable, and that's why the changes that we've made.

Has there been some hiccups? Maybe there are, but we have tried to do as much as we can and this is done in a pretty short period of time. But we've made changes to the program just as extensive as possible to benefit the people of the province.

Now if you're familiar with the Vanguard flood and the length of time to get anything done there . . . Fishing Lake was another that it took ages to try and get something done there. So all of the stuff that we have done is because we've been listening to what the concerns were of the people and trying to get claims finalized as quick as we can. I know people would like . . . I have a flood today; I'd like to be paid out tomorrow. Well that just doesn't happen.

And trying to get people to do some of the work . . . Adjusters, as I mentioned earlier, are not easy to come by. Structural engineers. We even had to go out of province to find structural engineers to do the work. So where we're going I think is absolutely just as good as we could possibly get and the amount of people we're dealing with.

And the member might know that in Vanguard there was one person looking after claims. One. And that's why, you know, I could see why it took two years if only one person was looking after it. We looked at that. We looked at that and said, my goodness. And that's why we got 22 people working on it right away. And it fluctuated. We are a little higher and a little lower because of the dynamics of people that do come and go, but now we've committed to hiring another 30. So we've got, you know, over 50 people that will be working on claims.

**Ms. Higgins:** — So the question was, how long is the wait time expected to be for the people that are waiting for an inspector to show up? I mean, look, the department keeps statistics. The department knows how many cases they've been able to deal with over a period of time with the people that are involved. The department should or the ministry should have a projection as to how long it's going to take them to go out and inspect the other 2,400 that are waiting. That's all the question was. Do you expect it in three months? Do you expect it to take four months? Do you expect it to take two weeks? Do you expect it to take six months? I mean . . .

And I realize every case is different. I realize that there are complications with the different circumstances and situations. But I'm sure the ministry looks at this and says, okay we need to hire another 30 people to deal with those because on average this is what it's taken us to be able to get them done. I mean you didn't hire 30 people out of the blue, pick a number out of the bingo jar and decide 30 was a good number to hire. You look at it, I would hope, and have assessed that the amount of work, the time it's taken you, and what's needed to move this forward. So that's all I'm asking. What is, kind of, the time or the expected time on average that you will have the 2,400 that are outstanding addressed and moving forward? When it gets rebuilt, that's up to the person, the owner of the property. I mean that's all difficulties yet to come. All I'm just asking for is, how long is the wait-list? How long do you expect it to take to clear up?



**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Well you've asked an apples and orange question because you're comparing the 30 people we have for handling the claims compared to adjusters. We hire adjusters. When can they go out? When you're hiring a company to do the adjusting, when do they go out? I wish I could say I can direct a company to go out tomorrow. I can't do that. We hire them under contract.

I anticipate — if this is the answer that you're looking for — I anticipate two to three months that they should be, the adjuster's report should be in. Once the adjusters' reports are in, and I've stated this already to you, that we look at a three-month window that we wish to have the claims. So we're looking at two to three months for the adjusters, the unadjusted claims right now, and they've all been assigned. So every claim has been assigned an adjuster. And so now when that adjusted report comes back, that's when we say, now we have our people working on the claims where the adjusters . . . We actually hire adjusters.

**Ms. Higgins:** — So then were the adjusters you said on contract? So is the contract an open-ended contract? Or is the contract for a specific amount of work to be done by time lines in place?

[17:00]

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — The contracts are open-ended, and there's probably some good reason for the open-endedness. I think you've got to look at kind of the larger picture of this where we have eight firms that have been contracted.

So a claim, these claims have been assigned to a firm which is a contractor or an adjuster. Some adjusters, some firms might have a smaller number of adjusters, and you assign the claims accordingly. We don't have a timeline within the contract to say that this has to be done within a certain period of time. We don't have that in there. We hope, we anticipate, we press to have them done as soon as practicable. And we anticipate that most of these will be done within a month period. If they're not, then our people will start getting on to the contractors and saying, why aren't they done?

Again I guess, if you look at it in a realistic sense, if there's a firm and they're assigned X number, say they're assigned 50 claims. And how long does it take to do an adjustment? Every one's going to be different. I could not sit here and tell you that we will allow two hours for every adjustment. That would be foolish. So how long it takes an adjuster to go out and adjust a facility, we don't know. So if you're giving a firm — pick a number, just say — 50 claims to process, how can we say we want those done within this period of time?

So we're using a time frame of our own to say, we wish to see these done within a month. Some of them might take a little longer.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. It being 5, we'll have to recess this committee. Thank you, officials. And we will now adjourn until 7 p.m. tonight.

[The committee recessed from 17:00 until 19:00.]

**The Chair:** — Well good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Warren Michelson. I'm the Chair of the Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice Committee. And with me are committee members Ms. Ross, Mr. Chisholm, Mr. Quennell. And substituting for Ms. Higgins is Mr. McCall. So welcome, committee, and welcome, Minister Cheveldayoff. We are here to discuss First Nations and Métis Relations, vote no. 25.

### **General Revenue Fund First Nations and Métis Relations Vote 25**

#### **Subvote (FN01)**

**The Chair:** — Mr. Cheveldayoff, if you would introduce your officials please, and then if you have some opening comments, please carry on.

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It is indeed a pleasure to be here this evening and to join colleagues as we discuss the 2011-2012 budget for the Ministry of First Nations and Métis Relations.

First allow me to introduce the FNMR [First Nations and Métis Relations] officials here this evening with me. To my left is Ron Crowe, deputy minister. To his left is James Froh, assistant deputy minister, First Nations and Métis affairs division. Toby Greschner, assistant deputy minister of Northern Affairs, is directly to my left. Behind us, Kerry Gray, director of finance, accountability and corporate services, is here.

Also in attendance are Richard Turkheim, executive director, industry and resource development; Mark LaRocque, executive director, social development; Doug Howorko, executive director, economic programs and policies; Seonaid MacPherson, executive director, strategic initiatives; Trisha Delormier-Hill, executive director, lands and resources; and Giselle Marcotte, executive director, Aboriginal policy and operations.

Before I get to questions, I would like to provide some opening remarks. FNMR's budget for 2012 is \$82.3 million, which is a decrease of \$3.5 million or 4.1 per cent from last year. This is due primarily to the drop of \$3 million in gaming profits from the Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority casinos. It doesn't represent reduced allocations in some specific areas.

Our budget ensures that we will continue funding ongoing programs and policy development through our ministry. We also received funding that will enable FNMR to expand our role in three vital areas. Firstly \$490,000 is allocated to help advance a northern action plan, a three-year plan to work with northern leaders and communities to address social issues such as suicide and drug use amongst our youth. Second, \$350,000 and one FTE, full-time equivalent, is allocated to support First Nations and Métis engagement in the consultative process regarding the children and youth agenda. And thirdly \$333,000 is allocated towards the development of the First Nations and Métis education and employment task force.

In addition the budget provides \$120,000 in continuing operating support for the commercial fishing industry to plan

for opportunities with respect to the upcoming open market.

Approval for the 2012 Northern Development Ministers Forum to be held in northern Saskatchewan. We are excited about this forum since there are many opportunities and innovative programs that are happening in the North here in Saskatchewan.

Thirty thousand dollars for a new inter-ministry consultation database to increase the ability to share information and prevent dual applications under the duty to consult.

There were some reductions in flow-through money which includes \$65.2 million to meet all obligations under gaming agreements, which represents a decrease of \$3 million.

Three point six million in funding for all current Treaty Land Entitlement Agreements which represents a decrease of \$600,000. This is due to having fulfilled our contribution requirements for one of the entitlement bands.

There are also some funding reductions that will affect various program areas. These include a reduction of \$275,000 or about 23 per cent in funding for the enterprise regions in the North to ensure a consistent funding model for all enterprise regions in Saskatchewan; an \$80,000 reduction in the Northern Development Fund as a loan loss provision; and the Consultation Capacity Fund budget has been reduced by \$900,000 to reflect usage.

Overall the FNMR budget supports our efforts and expands our role in certain areas — the child and youth agenda, northern development, and the First Nations and Métis education and employment task force. Positive steps in these areas will ensure the best possible outcomes for First Nations, Métis, and northerners. Long-term success will equate to healthy, educated, productive citizens that will contribute to the future prosperity of our province. We are determined to continue the fine work our ministry does every day to serve the people of Saskatchewan.

With that I welcome all members of the Assembly and members of the opposition, I'll be happy to answer your questions and may call upon my deputy or various officials to provide further detail when necessary. With that, Mr. Chair, thank you very much for the opportunity, and I look forward to a productive evening.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I would just ask if any of the officials are helping with the answers, would they state their name for the record please. We're looking for questions. Mr. McCall.

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and greetings to the minister and officials this evening. As you'll realize with your division and responsibilities between Northern Affairs and First Nations Métis Relations, that division in responsibilities will be reflected in the lines of questioning tonight and those pursuing the questions. But as critic for First Nations and Métis Relations, I will get things under way for the opposition tonight in the consideration of the estimates before us, before the department.

I guess the first question is, overall in the, and I'm asking this

for clarification, do the expenditures in front of us tonight represent any transfer of responsibility from the ministry to another ministry? And for example in consultation, is there any sort of transfer of responsibilities to the Department of the Environment in these expenditures before us tonight?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much to the member for the question. There is no transfer of responsibility or transfer of obligations that has taken place. This will continue to be the responsibility of First Nations and Métis Relations, but of course we will work in conjunction and very close with colleagues such as the member mentions, Environment for example.

What you will see though is a collaboration of ministries on the child and youth welfare review. Certainly you'll see that there's seven ministries that are working together towards an enterprise approach or a cross-government approach, and that is something that we felt was necessary to ensure that we get to the desired outcome in that particular area.

**Mr. McCall:** — Okay. I guess I thank the minister for the response. Just to be sure, the increase of one full-time equivalent, I'm presuming that's the full-time equivalent attached to the consultation alongside the child and youth agenda. Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Yes, that is correct. And along with that is some \$350,000 that we're dedicating towards that initiative as well.

**Mr. McCall:** — Okay. Again keeping this sort of broad stroke questions and then we'll work our way in of course, Mr. Minister, in terms of the overall FTEs that are attached, is that position been hired as yet or has it been posted? What are the intentions on that position?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much for the question. I'm told that the full-time equivalent in question has not been hired or posted yet. We're in a consultation phase with First Nations and Métis leaders at the present time. Our framework is in place, and it looks like about June will be the time period where it will be posted and the hiring will take place. Still defining the exact perimeters as the child and welfare review rolls out.

**Mr. McCall:** — Okay. More broadly, over the years that I have been serving as critic, there have been different times where a fair number of the senior management team at First Nation Métis Relations have been serving in an acting capacity or various positions have been vacant. Just for the record, could you clarify for us of this, you know, what you would consider to be the senior management complement at First Nations Métis Relations? And how many of those positions are vacant or are serving in an acting capacity?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Well thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm happy to answer the questions. Presently there's no vacancies. And as far as the senior management team, you're pretty well looking at them here. As we joked a few minutes ago, we've got most of the senior management team here. There's one acting position in communications, and presently a competition is under way for that position. But the vast majority

— 11, I believe, of the 12 most senior officials — are in their professional capacities and undertaking their work.

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I guess if we could go through something of a line-by-line item just to establish what's represented by various subitems in the vote, I guess, starting with central management and services. That seems to be fairly straightforward there. The increase would be, I'm sure, largely attached to inflation, but it's a fairly minor increase in the expenditure. It's probably not related to Mr. Gray's bonuses or anything like that. But if you could, just for the record, take us through what's encompassed by the central management and services expenditure.

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Mr. Chair, I'm going to ask Mr. Gray to answer the question.

**Mr. Gray:** — Kerry Gray, director of finance, accountability, and corporate services. I can answer your question specifically, but I need to sort of give some background. The ministry this year went through a couple of exercises in redistributing both some salary dollars and operating dollars. As a result of merger with Northern Affairs, a couple of reorgs, we had some pots of money where we had, where some branches had too much operating and other branches didn't have enough and we had some salary shortfalls that we needed to address.

So some of the numbers may sound . . . There may be some larger fluctuations but it's a result of redistributing, not because of major increases or decreases. So as an example, within central services under the exec management, and you notice that exec management had a difference of \$11,000 year over year. It's a result of an increase in salaries of 99,000 and a decrease in operating expenses of 88,000, resulting in a net difference of 11. The sum of the inflationary impact was, let's see, 17,985 for salaries and \$6,600 for operating. Does that . . .

**Mr. McCall:** — That gives us the broad strokes for looking for it, Mr. Gray. Thank you. In terms of . . . So moving on through the vote, gaming agreements, and again there's some of these things that would appear to be fairly commonsensical. But it's always good to get the ministry on the record for them. In terms of gaming agreements, the first allocation being the First Nations gaming agreements and the reduction of the flow-through funds entitled there. To what does the ministry attribute that decrease in revenue?

[19:15]

**Mr. Gray:** — Decrease in the top line of \$3.004 million, which is a result of an increase of 7,000 for salaries, decrease of 3,000 in the operating category, and a decrease of 3.008 million in actual transfers for the gaming framework agreement for CDCs [community development corporation] and First Nations Trust which explains the difference.

**Mr. McCall:** — Now in the ministry's plan for the year to come, it includes preparations for the next round of the review stage of the gaming agreement. The reduction in gaming revenues entailed in this line item, how will that impact the review? What's the ministry's thoughts on that?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Mr. Chair, in explaining the First

Nations gaming agreements and the reduction in proposed revenues, the member is correct that the review is coming up in 2012. And it happens every five years.

But as far as the specific question goes as to how this will impact the review, it's too early to tell exactly the ramifications that this will have on it. It is, you know, the first time for us that the revenues have gone down. It's a North American-wide phenomenon. It's well understood in the gaming industry. So I think all partners at the table will understand that, you know, this is not something that is unique to what's happening here. But as it plays out, we'll continue to provide all partners with all information and look forward to working together as it has been in the past, and all indications are that that will continue.

**Mr. McCall:** — One of the factors impacting the situation of course is the impact of Internet gaming. If you could, for the committee, describe the engagement with . . . And I speak in this case specifically about First Nations because we're considering the First Nations gaming agreement. What efforts are being undertaken by the province? And in turn, how is First Nations Métis Relations engaging First Nations on the whole question of Internet gaming?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much for the question. And we're certainly in a learning phase when it comes to Internet gaming, trying to understand what indeed is taking place in our province as we speak, and also trying to look at best practices across the country and what's happening in other provinces. What we see in Internet gaming is an estimation of about \$30 million of activity taking place in the province at the present time, money that would be expended outside the province and very little, almost none, that would come back as any benefit to anyone in the province. So it's certainly a concern.

Specifically with First Nations, what we've undertaken to do is to share as much information as we can with SIGA and, you know, amongst Gaming Corporation and all entities to look at what due diligence we've done to share all that information and again to look at best practices across the country.

Certainly British Columbia is the most furthest advanced in this regard. And I have met with the minister from British Columbia to talk about not only Internet gaming but just gaming in general and just to find out a little bit more about the work that they've done as leaders in Canada. They've certainly taken a bold step. They had stumbled out of the gate, I would say to begin with, where they had a few hiccups along the way, but they were able to solve those very quickly and now manage an operation that is very profitable for the people of British Columbia.

We've taken the information that we've received. We're sharing it with First Nations. And, you know, from my discussions with the leaders in gaming on the First Nations side, they're very much in the same position where they're looking to learn as much as they can about it and see if they will be in a position to move forward with something like that in Saskatchewan.

I can tell you that no decisions have been made. But I have been watching very closely and seeing a higher profile for some of

those Internet gaming sites that are out of our province. You know, last evening on the 11:30 news, I saw that bodog.com was sponsoring the sports element of it. So I think what we're going to see in the future is more and more Internet gaming coming into our province. And at some point in the future, a decision will have to be made if the province and if First Nations within the province want to pursue this.

**Mr. McCall:** — In terms of that engagement with First Nations, is that on an occasional, need-to-know basis? Or is there a formal engagement in terms of ongoing information sharing on a regular basis? Could you describe that for the committee please, Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — We've instructed Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation to take the lead in this regard, and a couple of members from senior management have been identified as those that would be responsible for sharing information with their colleagues at SIGA [Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority Inc.]. So my information shows that that transfer of information back and forth has been proceeding and working well over the last year. From time to time, the chief of the FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] and the president of SIGA and myself will talk about it and, you know, we've undertaken to do that from time to time.

**Mr. McCall:** — Given that close co-operation on this front, Mr. Minister, could you update the committee as to the status of the question of jurisdiction around First Nations gaming and the component of the gaming agreement whereby the province is to work with First Nations on asserting jurisdiction as it relates to the federal government?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you for the question. SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority] is the agency that would be handling that specific question and would be the lead in that regard.

I know that from inter-ministerial discussions that I've had, that, you know, there has been some consideration and some work in this area. But as far as commenting on where it stands exactly right now, that would be a question that could be posed more appropriately to the minister in charge of SLGA. But I can certainly undertake to pursue that information and get it back to the member.

**Mr. McCall:** — If the minister would, it would be appreciated because of course it was a fairly fundamental component of the gaming agreement and fairly fundamental aspect of that ongoing partnership that that gaming agreement represents, and of course the good faith discharge of that gaming agreement. So if the minister could undertake to do that, it would be much appreciated and we'll certainly pursue the question through other venues.

In terms of the . . . I guess moving along in the gaming agreement section to the Métis Development Fund and the 3.474 million attached to the Métis Development Fund or the Clarence Campeau Fund as it's more popularly known, if you could for us, Mr. Minister, what does that 3.474 million represent?

**Mr. Gray:** — It's Kerry Gray, director of finance. The 3.474

million represents CCDF's [Clarence Campeau Development Fund] portion of gaming dollars, and it's based 100 per cent on SGC's [Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation] forecast for '11-12.

**Mr. McCall:** — Is there a management fee included in those dollars, or it's just a straight transfer through?

**Mr. Gray:** — The amount represents the full amount that's transferred directly to CCDF.

**Mr. McCall:** — Okay. There's some work being undertaken on what was the appropriate formula and has been referenced in years past, both in estimates and in the plans and reports of the ministry. How was that figure arrived at?

**Mr. Gray:** — The formula itself? Well the formula was negotiated, I guess, between the Tourism, Parks . . . TPCS [Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport], who looks after the Community Initiatives Fund, and ourselves, and taking stakeholders' concerns into consideration. One of the core aspects was to ensure that the funding that had been received by those groups was maintained and so that the first \$10 million is split 80/20 to sort of ensure that the core funding to both organizations was in place. And then any amounts over \$10 million is split equally, 50/50, between the two, based off a percentage of total SGC profits.

**Mr. McCall:** — So that number will fluctuate in accordance with the profits over 10 million. Okay. In years past, there have been some questions from the auditor in terms of the Community Initiatives Fund and the audits being presented. Are you aware at present of any ongoing concerns from the auditor's office concerning the Community Initiatives Fund and how that might impact the CCDF?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you to the member for the question. My officials tell me that to their knowledge there's no outstanding orders or no interest from the auditor. But that being said, we are not the lead on the Community Initiatives Fund, and that would be Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport that would have that responsibility.

I can just share with the member that I've had the opportunity to meet with members of the Clarence Campeau Development Fund board and to specifically talk about the funding formula and their desire to have a formula that reflects the, you know, the overall success of the framework agreements. And they are taking on some risk in adopting that formula. But I think they feel that there is also some upside for them as well. And they were very comfortable with that, and they were very much wanting to explore that into the future. But a very well-run fund, and it was a very enjoyable meeting to talk to them about the various investments that they are making and the success that they're having.

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Moving on to page 79 of the Estimates book, into the First Nations and Métis affairs division and heading into allocations of course, the first up there is the treaty land entitlement figure. Again the minister has touched on this in his opening comments. I guess if — again to just provide clarity so that we're understanding what these figures represent — if the minister could identify what the

figure is, what the difference is from the year previous, and what the rationale is for the figure presented.

[19:30]

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. To the member: there is a reduction of some \$600,000 in the treaty land entitlement allocation, and that is because Kawacatoose has had their obligations . . . or our obligations have been fulfilled with Kawacatoose. And so that wouldn't be outstanding going forward anymore, and that would be the reduction of 600,000. So it's moving along. You know, negotiations are going well. We are looking at taking the land values, treaty land entitlement, and moving them forward from the 1992-93 values that were in place, moving them to a formula that more reflects the cost of land in contemporary situations.

**Mr. McCall:** — If the minister could . . . And certainly, I guess it's been my practice to try and give credit where credit is due. I think that was a good, good step taken by this government to address, you know, make sure that the value of TLE [treaty land entitlement] is in keeping with the actual expenditures involved in making that entitlement whole. So I thought that was a good announcement that the minister had made at the FSIN assembly and I'd like to go on record for that.

But I guess if the minister could expand on what it means for the province to take to the TLE table a mandate to . . . or if you could expand for the committee what that has meant precisely in terms of additional dollars for the province to be bringing to the table or bringing to bear in settling these outstanding treaty land entitlements.

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — What the announcement has meant is that it gives our negotiating team the parameters of which to enter into those negotiations and the instruction to look towards fulfilling that goal of bringing that land value from that period of time to today's valuations.

There's various models that are being put forward. And that's part of the negotiations, you know, whether you look at the value of, you know, 2010 or 2011 or you took a look at an average of the last five years. And that's some of the negotiations that are being undertaken. And I'm sure there's varying views, and I've heard some of those from the First Nations group that has lobbied for this. And I know that they'll be lobbying very hard on their behalf to come up with a formula that meets their needs and will be doing so in a fashion that reflects the due diligence of the public purses as well.

But I must say that the, you know, First Nations groups have done a very good job in articulating their case. They've done their homework. And for me, it was quite an easy decision to say that I would take this to the cabinet table and to my colleagues at cabinet and argue strongly in favour of making this change. So I think the negotiating team has the parameters that they need, and I look forward to fruitful negotiations. And hopefully this will continue to help this process along.

**Mr. McCall:** — In terms of the \$3.6 million under consideration, does that fully fund what that increased mandate would mean?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you for the question. The identified amount, \$3.6 million, identifies agreements that are currently in place and does not reflect the outcome of future negotiated settlements.

**Mr. McCall:** — So for the planning purposes of the government, what does the envelope look like going forward?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Again, thank you for the question. And this current year will be seen as covering the negotiations that will have to take place, and we don't anticipate any changes to that number over this year. But indeed, in future years, we'll have to make changes to the allocation based on those negotiations. So notionally, it's there for future years but we don't anticipate any impact in this current year.

**Mr. McCall:** — And I guess for the record, if the minister or officials could just outline for the committee which of the TLE agreements are currently included in the \$3.6 million under consideration tonight.

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — All right. Thank you very much for the question. As I've indicated earlier, Kawacatoose has been settled. There's Gordon First Nation, Muskoday, Pasqua, and Sturgeon Lake that are outstanding, and the total adds up to the \$3.64 million there.

**Mr. McCall:** — I thank the minister. Moving into the First Nations and Métis Consultation Participation Fund and the reduction from \$3 million to \$2.1 million, if the minister could say for the record the rationale behind the reduction in that expenditure.

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much for the question. And this is something that caught my attention very quickly in looking at the budget and looking through past expenditures. And this \$3 million has never been fully allocated. In fact it has never been in a range of over \$2 million. In '08-09 for example, we had 1.975 and in '07-08 it was \$1.342 million that the participation fund needed to fulfill its obligation.

So in a prudent budgeting fashion, I felt necessary to have the discussion with senior officials to have this budget allocation more accurately reflect what is spent in a year and yet to have some leeway if indeed it is increased. So 1.975 was the past; \$2.1 million is what we feel would be sufficient for negotiations over the next year. And we feel that, you know, that should address the needs. But it continues to be something that we will indeed keep our eye on. And if expenditures exceed our projections, then it's something that we would look to over the course of the year. It continues to be a top priority for us.

**Mr. McCall:** — Well I'm glad it caught the minister's eye because it's certainly caught the opposition's eye over these past few years as well. And I guess the 2009-10 in particular, the \$3 million that was announced and the 375,000 that was ultimately expended that year and the additional monies turned back, at that point we'd raised questions concerning the criteria and whether or not it was perhaps a problem with the criteria being too stringent or not responsive enough to the demands being made on the fund. And at that point we were assured that that wasn't the problem so much as that it was more a matter of

economic downturn and lesser economic activity. And if I can, from the plan for 2011-12, it states:

The Ministry has little influence over this measure as the level of economic activity in the province is a significant driver of demand for the Fund and the level of Fund expenditures.

That's from page 7 of the 2011-12 plan. And certainly that echoes rationale that we've had offered to us in this committee in past and certainly in previous years' reports. I guess the sort of straight-line assumption would be that if you've reduced the amount of the fund, is it because you're planning for economic downturn in the year to come, if we're going to keep the rationale that's been offered in years past as to the activity in the fund.

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Well what we were looking at is a record expenditure in '08-09 of \$1.975 million, and that was indeed the high-water mark. So we felt prudent that putting \$2.1 million in place would be marginally increased from the '08-09 era, which was certainly a large increase beyond the '07-08.

So as in many things with the economy, we see that the trend was projecting upward up until '08-09. It did fall back a bit in the '09-10 area, but again we see that the increase in trajectory is being maintained going forward. But that being said, we feel that the \$2.1 million is sufficient to cover. If indeed it is not, we will make changes throughout the year if necessary, but we feel that the 2.1 more accurately reflects anticipated activity rather than the \$3 million.

**Mr. McCall:** — Again referring to page 7 of the annual report, 2010-11 is projected to be expending \$2.1 million for 12 applications, you know, an increase of one application over the year previous, and yet there's a difference in expenditure of roughly \$1.7 million. It's a . . . I guess in that same period has there been any, have there been any changes in the criteria for which people might gain access to the funds offered up under the CPF [Consultation Participation Fund]?

[19:45]

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you again to the member for the question. No changes are anticipated or being considered at the present time. The scope is considered to be appropriate. And, you know, capacity is being built, and we continue to monitor it very closely. And when it is clear that the resources are needed, we ensure that they're there. Whether it's Shore Gold or other activities that are taking place, this fund is there to meet our obligations, and we're satisfied that it will do that over the coming year.

**Mr. McCall:** — Could the minister enumerate for the committee the successful applicants for the year past and perhaps the dollar figure attached to it? And in the interest of saving time, an undertaking from the minister would be sufficient to just provide the committee with a list of those applicants and the dollars attached, if that's agreeable to the minister.

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you again to the member. Absolutely we'll undertake to provide as much information as

possible. You know, Fishing Lake First Nation, the James Cree, Muskoday, the Métis Nation, Onion Lake Cree Nation are various bands that have benefited from the consultation fund, but we'll put together a list for the member so he has an opportunity to examine what has been spent over the last year.

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you, Minister, for that undertaking. I guess the First Nations and Métis Consultation Participation Fund, the dollars that are earmarked there, does that include some kind of notional amount for the ongoing exploratory phase of the whole duty to consult and accommodate file, or is that anticipated under another expenditure?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you for the question. That indeed covers all of the obligations regarding duty to consult, and we feel that it will all be able to be funded under that \$2.1 million.

**Mr. McCall:** — So I guess if you could for the committee, Mr. Minister, or officials, what is the division between funds that are being held back for applicants and funds that are being dedicated towards the ongoing exploratory tables?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Of the \$2.1 million, some \$250,000 has been earmarked for the exploratory process out of that amount.

**Mr. McCall:** — So essentially 50,000 a table, or how does that break down? Or I guess to back up a bit, if you could update us on the exploratory table phase of this file. What meetings have taken place? What endgame is in mind when the exploration comes to some kind of conclusion? And then is there an allocation that sort of varies within the envelope that you've identified?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — What has been undertaken is a commitment to discuss and to outline the consultations that would take place, and the dialogue. We are still in negotiations under that, under that framework, and we continue to work with our First Nations partners on it.

Specifically to the dollar value, I'm told that it's a very rough estimate, but it would be accurate to assume about \$50,000 for each of the five tables.

**Mr. McCall:** — Do you have committed partners for those tables?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — We do indeed have a commitment to hold those discussions and to talk and to, you know, to undertake the work in the next . . . in each of the tables over the next year. And we feel quite confident that this next year will provide the opportunity to establish those bases in each of the tables.

**Mr. McCall:** — The exploratory tables have been identified for some time now. Have there been any meetings take place of those exploratory tables?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you for the question. And it's certainly something that I've discussed with the chief of the FSIN, and I understand there they're going through a portfolio shuffle right now. And you know, once all of that has been

determined, we certainly look to engaging in these negotiations and dialogue as well. But again it needs both sides to come together. For us, it's becoming more and more of a priority and we hope that those discussions will take place over the next year.

**Mr. McCall:** — And so just to recap, the exploratory tables include topics such as economic benefit sharing, environmental stewardship, traditional use studies and mapping, appropriate consultation capacity, and dispute resolution. And I guess I don't want to harp on this, but various of your predecessors have put a lot of weight on these exploratory tables and the possibilities that they might hold.

This is against a backdrop of both the MNS [Métis Nation of Saskatchewan] and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations rejecting the duty to consult and accommodate framework put forward by this government. So I guess to understand the minister correctly, the exploratory tables, they have yet to meet.

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much for the question. And that is correct. But you know, what we are looking forward to is we've had general discussions, we have a willing partner, and we want to make sure that we do move forward. But it has to be something that, you know, we put as a priority from both sides. And we continue to, from our table, say that we would like to have these take place.

So we're looking forward to those discussions, and we'll continue to. Both through my personal discussions with the chief and the president and others, we'll hope to make some gains this year.

**Mr. McCall:** — Okay. To recap, Mr. Minister, the exploratory tables, which subsumed some fairly contentious and critical issues, have yet to begin their exploration. Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much for the question. And indeed we are committed to have those discussions. The various general discussions have taken place. It needs now to get to the specific level and that's what indeed we hope will happen in the very near future. We're open to those discussions, and we're hopeful that they can take place, but indeed they are priority.

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Moving into . . . I guess we'll do one last subheading here for the benefit of your officials here, and then we'll shift into Northern Affairs and I'll cede the floor to my colleagues, if you don't mind, Mr. Minister.

But lands and consultation, could the minister characterize for the committee what that \$959,000 of expenditure represents?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Right. Thank you for the question. I'll let Mr. Gray answer the question. Indeed it gets into some very specific numbers. He's got a chart in front of them. He's got some red on it. He's got some black. There's more black than red so it should be an interesting, it should be an interesting answer. So with that I'll ask Mr. Gray to undertake to explain it.

**Mr. Gray:** — Sure. The 959,000 is made up of 756,000 in salaries, which is a \$54,000 increase from last year, and 202,600 in operating expenses, which is a decrease of 109,000 in operating expenses over last year, so for a net difference of 55,000.

**Mr. McCall:** — Hence, for the minister, would I be correct in this is where you would be funding involvement in the different treaty tables and the review of the province of Saskatchewan's approach to self-government. Would that be correct?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much for the question. And I'm told that the member's getting a little bit ahead of himself, that what he's defined there would be under the next title, the relationships and policy area, not under lands and consultation.

**Mr. McCall:** — Thanks for not letting me get ahead of myself there, Mr. Minister. I guess then if you could characterize what activities are undertaken under lands and consultation.

[20:00]

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll ask Mr. Froh to fully answer that question.

**Mr. Froh:** — Hello. Thank you for the question. My name is James Froh, and I'm with First Nations and Métis Relations. What we've undergone at the First Nation and Métis side of the ministry is a reorganization. So what we've done is we've actually created a new branch and reorganized our division. And what we've done is combined consultation, our former consultation branch, and former lands and resource branch which handled TLE implementation and negotiation as well as specific claims. And so those two work units are now together, and they're known as lands and consultation.

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Froh. Well I guess that . . . And again if you could, the breakdown in expenditure between what is devoted to lands activity and what's devoted to consultation in that expenditure.

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you for the question. Even though it does say lands and consultation, it is now under one branch, so there is no definition between the two. So it's all compiled into one under that one category of lands and consultation.

**Mr. McCall:** — So your lands people will be doing consultation and your consultation people will be doing lands, and it's one seamless expenditure in the grand reorg of First Nations, Métis Relations. Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you for the question. Indeed there are two separate work units, but for purposes of budgeting, they both draw from the same envelope. So it comes from the same funding capacity, but indeed there are two separate work units.

**Mr. McCall:** — So I guess to ask my question in a different way then, Mr. Minister, within that envelope, which amount of funding is attached to each of those separate units?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much to the member for the question. Officials tell me that it is indeed possible to roughly put that information together, but they didn't anticipate that question. But they will undertake to put that together and to provide you with an answer.

**Mr. McCall:** — Thanks very much, Mr. Minister. I guess at this stage in the game, I'll not get any further ahead of myself, and I will cede the floor to my colleague from Cumberland, the opposition critic for Northern Affairs, Mr. Vermette.

**The Chair:** — The Chair recognizes Mr. Vermette.

**Mr. Vermette:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and to the officials that are here assisting you with some of the information. I guess I'll start out with opening comments, and from there we'll determine where I want to go as far as questioning some of the budgets and some of the numbers that are in here. And maybe your officials can help with an explanation of the lacking of dollars in this budget.

But anyway, I just, I have to be honest with you. You had record revenue as a government and just about 11 billion this year alone, in the last four years \$40 billion. And we look at northern Saskatchewan and the frustration and the hope. And I have to say that there was hope. Every time we see the amounts of revenue coming into government coffers of course people are excited and, you know, the province is doing well. So we as northern people should have access to that. And some of the things that we're being challenged as community, as people, we feel that we should have the government's attention as a people in this province.

And I have to say, I know that you're responsible, First Nations and Métis Relations is responsible for Northern Affairs. It doesn't have its own ministry. It doesn't have its own minister. There's a lot of things it's lacking under your government. And that, today, is sad. And I think sometimes that's why we are having the issues with suicide, with housing, with our roads, with a lot of the issues that we're faced as a society, as a northern, I guess, area.

We look at the economics and we see the possibility of the boom. We see the fur industry. There's so much potential. I watch some of the numbers, the prices. There is so much potential. And I see in the trappers, hope. You know, maybe not all will be able to go high into that industry, but some of them want to go back to that industry, and there's some hope.

What I can see, I guess, and what they can see is very clear to them right now. Your budget speaks very loud to them and it's very clear. Your government does not see northern Saskatchewan as a priority. And that's pretty tough because there's individuals who think that the North has a right to share in the wealth, the prosperity, to have a good life for their children, not to always be sent, you know, on their hands. Our mayors should not have to come here and beg. Our First Nations should not have to come here to beg. The Métis should not have to come here and beg.

You have record revenue, but your commitment to the North has been very poor, very lacking. And yourself as a minister, there was hope. I was in the meeting where you invited them to

come here. And I have to say this. You know, there was hope. They were going to come here and hear some good things. Well I have to be honest with you. Some of them left. They did take you up on your invitation, Mr. Minister. They did. And unfortunately they left and they were not very happy.

So we can sit there and say different ways, but at the end of the day, with record revenue . . . Unfortunately, you know, it's a sad day when we see the issues. You're well aware, and you were made, of the issues. You're responsible for northern Saskatchewan, You're the minister at the cabinet table that's supposed to fight for northern people. And I'm sorry to say I don't feel in this budget that happened. Whether we look at roads, we look at the different areas. Whether it's youth suicide, we look at the different areas. We did not get the response.

And I mean I looked at some of the budgets and, you know, it's very frustrating. And I think the people will speak out and the leaders will speak out, and they will let you know. At the end of the day you will hear from them. And I know you've made comments about some of the leaders are happy; they're really excited about the budget and how good it was for them. Well we'll see how it all plays out at the end. And I hope that it does work for them, that it is a good budget. But unfortunately for northern Saskatchewan, there's a lot of areas that were lacking. There was a lot of hope when you had record revenue.

Sometimes you know, it's pretty hard to sit back. And you see the challenges. Nobody should have to come here and beg. And northern people have their pride, and they will not come here and beg to the government. But I say this. We'll do all we can to raise those concerns here in this House and to you. And maybe at the table you'll fight for us, for northern Saskatchewan. You know, I think in your heart you're a good man. You want people to have a good life. And I believe that, but I think more has to be done for northern Saskatchewan.

So I guess I want to go into some of the areas. And I'll ask in the budget, and maybe your officials can help me, what was in it for northern trappers? What was your budget, under Northern Affairs, what was in there for the Northern Trappers Association?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Well thank you very much to the member for his opening remarks. I must say at the outset that I couldn't disagree with him more in much of what he said. You know, he may be thinking that this isn't a good budget for northern Saskatchewan. While I would agree to a certain extent — it is a great budget for northern Saskatchewan because it provides more funding than ever before and it directs it at the areas specifically where it has to be directed. When we talk about education, when we talk about training, when we talk about funding social services, when we talk about the Northern Development Fund, when we talk about the economic development in the North, this is something that indeed we are making a priority.

The member says that, you know, northerners shouldn't have to beg. Well that may indeed have been the case in previous governments in previous decades. And I don't know where he's getting that from, but I can assure him that northerners do not have to beg about anything. Very, very different approach from this minister and from this ministry and from this government.



What we have done, instead of members having to sit back and wait and see what comes their way, very, very different approach where we've invited every mayor in northern Saskatchewan, we invited every chief from every First Nation in the province to come to their Legislative Assembly to see a budget that provides for them more money than ever before.

And you know, we can talk about specifics: \$1.5 million commitment to the northern action plan. You know, we don't have all the answers, but what we do have is a willingness to ensure that we can provide the funds to increase the standard of living for people in the North and people across the province.

Two million dollar commitment for the joint task force on education. And again that's something that's shared with my colleague from Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration. What we'll see in the future is ministries working closer together than ever before to provide programs and funding for northern Saskatchewan and indeed across all Saskatchewan.

A \$7.8 million increase in K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education investments. Doubling of the First Nations and Métis Education Initiatives Fund, you know. That increases from some \$40 million to \$47.8 million. A \$2.7 million funding increase for the Ministry of Social Services. And then specifically from First Nations and Métis Relations, \$350,000 in funding and one FTE as our part of the children and youth agenda that FNMR is part of.

So if the member took the time to look close at this budget and what it provides for constituents of his in northern Saskatchewan, what it provides for people across the North, it is indeed a budget that goes a long way to address those concerns, to address those needs. And you know, guaranteed there is more work to do. But I would challenge the member opposite to look at any of the previous budgets and tell me where this one doesn't meet the standard. This one exceeds the standard. This one ensures that northerners participate in the growing economy that we are fortunate to have in this province.

You know, the member indicates that it's some \$11 billion in the budget and he can see very clearly that that has gone to tax reductions that benefit all, has gone to paying down the debt which certainly benefits all, and increased program funding where necessary. And that's why, indeed, I was very proud to invite every mayor in northern Saskatchewan and every chief across the province to come to the legislature. The member is right that they came here very proudly. I was happy to welcome them. I talked to many of them while they were here. I talked to some of them after. And again, as much of the media have pointed out, as First Nations leadership have pointed out, this indeed was a budget that has gone a long way to improve their standard of living.

It hasn't answered all the questions. It hasn't solved all the problems. But it has certainly shown the concern that this government has and the openness that we have to try and increase and better the life for those in northern Saskatchewan. And that's indeed, I can assure the member opposite, why I sit in this chair.

And, you know, I will not take any instruction from him on how

vociferous I have to be at the cabinet table. I'm very proud of the work that we have done, very proud of the accomplishments that we do have, and look forward to implementing them over the next year, and look forward to going to the people of Saskatchewan in the fall and ask how we've done. Thank you.

[20:15]

On a specific question . . . just one sec. Specifically for trappers and other entrepreneurs in northern Saskatchewan, the Northern Development Fund is available for their application if they so choose. And also, you know, something that has been very successful in the North and something that I've had many discussions with northern mayors on are the enterprise regions where we encourage those individuals to work with their enterprise regions to put forward programs that may assist them in their, in enhancing their business.

**Mr. Vermette:** — Like, I guess I'll make it very clear because I guess some people didn't hear. I asked, what amount for the northern trappers did this budget give them? So let me put it again: what amount did the northern trappers receive from this budget? And I don't want to talk about, they can apply for programs. What amount actually went to the northern trappers association?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much for the question, and certainly there's no specific line item that identifies funding directly for trappers. But I'll reiterate for the member that there's certainly eligibility for them to apply to the Northern Development Fund. That's something that they are encouraged to do and they're encouraged to work with the enterprise regions. And funding is made available for specific areas such as trapping, and we certainly would like to see them do that. I think it's incumbent upon us to inform trappers and other entrepreneurs of funding envelopes that are available and encourage them to apply under that, even though there's no specific line item provision in the budget.

**Mr. Vermette:** — Okay. I'm going to come back to that because you mentioned different amount of money as you went in, in your opening comments. And when I look at it and I just kind of toss it up, it's about \$13 million or so that you talked about that's an increase. It didn't all go to the North. I see the way your wording was that it went throughout . . . So it really didn't.

Out of the just about \$11 billion, you came out with numbers at an increase and you're talking about \$13 million that really didn't really come in northern Saskatchewan. Some of that dollars went throughout the province for First Nations, Métis. So when I said, I want to make it very clear. We're talking about just about \$11 billion and very little of it came into northern Saskatchewan when you refer to your numbers that you were talking about.

But I want to go back to this because, I think, important that I get this answer. I would like to know exactly, of the northern affairs budget, how much do the trappers receive? I would like to know a number.

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Well again if the member keeps asking the same question, I'll keep giving him the same answer

— that they're eligible to apply under the Northern Development Fund under the enterprise regions. There's not funding allocated on a line item basis for every group in northern Saskatchewan. But trappers are a group that have received funding in the past and they continue to be eligible for funding in the future, and we very much encourage them and would like them to apply. So I hope that they do.

Where the member erred in his comments is certainly on the \$13.1 million that has been an addition to budget funding in the past. The total is some \$167.2 million that is dedicated to First Nations and Métis citizens from across government. And I think by any, any standards, an increase of 8.5 per cent is something that we are certainly very proud of. And many of these programs are specifically focused on First Nations or specifically focused on people living in northern Saskatchewan.

And you know, the member may not think that 8.5 per cent increase is very much, but from where I sit, I think that indeed it is a substantial amount. And I know when I had the opportunity to talk to northern leaders about the increase of 13.1 million and the total of \$167.2 million, they indeed were very impressed with that number.

And again, there's always more work to do. There's always more money that's needed. We will continue to work in that regard. But what we have going forward here for this budget is a substantial amount to show that northerners indeed should participate in the prosperity that we're seeing as a province. And I look forward to working with them to do that.

**Mr. Vermette:** — Well I guess you want to bring in the numbers and go back to that. We can go back and forth I guess all evening, and you can correct me and I'll correct you and whatever you say.

At the end of the day, I have to look at it from this point. You talk about \$130-some million, an exciting . . . and an 8 per cent increase. Well to be honest with you, when you've neglected from the first year of your government, the second year, and the third year . . . First Nations and Métis struggled to get an increase from you. Now it goes into the 11th hour and you want to come out with this great thing on the fourth year of your government being a government. You come out with this great idea that they're getting 8 per cent and they're getting all this, wonderful things. But you sure did not give them part of the record revenue you're taking in the first, second, third year. So I go back to that comment.

But I would like to know, what amount did the trappers receive last year from Northern Affairs? And if you don't have that, could you please provide that to me?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Well thank you very much for the question. And certainly, you know, the member has indicated that in this fourth year we have provided record amounts of funding. And indeed, in year one, two and three, it was a base that we were able to build upon. And I think we will be judged on our record over the four years.

And I am very comfortable on taking that record to the people of Saskatchewan and, indeed, will have an opportunity to do that. And you know, I begin by working through the leaders, the

mayors and others and chiefs in northern Saskatchewan. But indeed, I've heard from individuals as well that they see more happening now than ever before in northern Saskatchewan. And that's the way it should be, and that's the way it should continue in the future. If members, you know, want to debate that, I'm happy to debate that.

And you know, they represent that specific region of the province and certainly would know intimate details. But I'd look forward to having that discussion. From an overall perspective, we indeed have done very, very well in northern Saskatchewan.

If you want to specifically talk about trappers, in the last year they did not apply for any funding under the areas available to them. And again I would encourage them to do so because it is an important industry in our province, and we would certainly like to see them take advantage of programs that are there for their availability.

**Mr. Vermette:** — Okay. I guess I want to go into another area, and we'll talk about the fishermen. And we know exactly what's going on there. And at the end of the day, we'll see exactly where the fishermen feel that the government's supporting them or the government's not supporting them. I think that'll come out very clear. We know that. And we'll let them do the work they have to do, moving ahead.

We know that you put out a press release giving FFMC [Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation] one year I guess to continue operating in Saskatchewan with the monopoly that they have. And you've made that decision; that's fine. But I also noticed in your press release you made it very clear that you would not be providing any financial support to them to build any type of a facility or plant. Anything like that would not be happening by . . . The current government would not be supporting that. That was in, I believe, the press release you put out.

Can you tell me what this year the fishermen, northern Saskatchewan fishermen, the co-operative will be receiving from your government in the budget?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Well thank you very much for the question. And indeed it's a pleasure to talk about the fishing industry in Saskatchewan, another industry that's very, very important to northern Saskatchewan and to our province as a whole.

Indeed we received correspondence about a year ago from fishermen in northern Saskatchewan wanting us to pull out of the FFMC, and indeed discussions have taken place before I assumed this role as minister. And the discussions were very frank and to the point where fishermen wanted the ability to market their fish wherever they saw fit. And they had been working on a model where they would encourage investors to invest in a plant. They had asked for money to help build capacity, to help them raise funds. Last year it was some \$150,000. This year they're receiving some \$120,000 to help that in that regard.

A number of months ago I started receiving letters from fishermen, and they were on both sides of the issue. Some who

wanted us to continue with the decision to pull out as of April 1st, 2011, and others who had asked for some more time to build their capacity and to build their markets up.

They have been in discussions with various entities in northern Saskatchewan about investments in business. They had approached previous ministers about an investment from the Government of Saskatchewan, and we were very clear at that time, as we continue to be very clear, that we don't feel that there is a role for government to directly invest in facilities such as this.

You know, it has happened in the past, and we've seen it happen in various industries. We've seen it happen in the potato industry. We've seen it happen in the meat industry. And to be very frank, it hasn't turned out all that well. So we feel the best operation to invest in, for government, is to build that capacity, to work with fishermen, to give them what they want on a timeline that is compatible with them.

When I started receiving letters that were very different from the ones that we received a year ago, it was an immediate concern. And we undertook to consult with them, to consult with individuals, to consult with groups, and to come up with something that indeed would work for the majority of them.

Some are critical of the decision to move to April 1st, 2012. They were looking forward to the ability to market much sooner. Some have undertaken to find their own markets. Certainly in the Fond-du-Lac area, they've set up agreements in Eastern Canada and continue to do so. But they have indicated that they're willing to live by the guideline that we've put forward. But I know that members opposite as well have indicated that there was more time that was needed. And I think our approach is prudent, and it is in keeping with wanting to see the industry thrive and survive in the future. So we hope that they will use this year to build that capacity, to build their markets, and to enhance the industry in the North.

**Mr. Vermette:** — Well I want to go back, when you talk about opportunities and looking at Northern Affairs and the responsibility that your ministry does have for Northern Affairs, whether it's economics. There's a lot of different things I believe your ministry is responsible for in northern Saskatchewan, whether it's leases. There's different things. You play a role — policies that will affect the North. Your ministry is supposed to make sure that before those policies are brought forward, you have an opportunity to . . . And I say, and I hope this happens and maybe you don't, but I hope that your ministry and yourself would have some input into decisions that affect northern Saskatchewan and that it's just not done at a table where you have no input.

So I look at that and I wonder about that. And can you tell me, do you know were there any cuts to the budget with Northern Affairs? Any budget cuts at all to any of your department at all, anywhere? Do you know?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much for the opportunity to respond to the question. And I had an opportunity in my opening remarks — I combined FNMR and Northern Affairs — to discuss some of the areas that indeed receive less money and the focus on the areas that received

more money.

The enterprise regions in northern Saskatchewan have seen a decrease in keeping with what happened to other enterprise regions last year. It was a decrease of some \$275,000. But in speaking with the members of enterprise regions and those involved, they are doing very, very good work. We're challenging them to do that with less resources, but again, from my discussions with mayors and others in northern Saskatchewan, they're very, very pleased with the coordination that's taking place, the focus of the enterprise regions to bring together that entrepreneurial spirit, and to do so on a regional basis.

[20:30]

We have the boreal West; we have Athabasca and Churchill — all which are growing, are thriving. There's some growing pains along the way, but from speaking to various mayors, they certainly see that as a tool that they can use to enhance economic opportunities in their region.

The other area that received a decrease was the loan loss provision. That was something that we felt that no longer needed to be in place, that could be funded from ongoing resources. And that has seen a decrease as well.

So two areas that have seen a decrease, but again more than offset by the focus on the northern action plan, the area of northern social development which I think, if I'm listening properly, that's what I'm hearing that should be the focus right now in northern Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Vermette:** — Can you actually provide me or have your officials provide me with the actual numbers that are being cut anywhere in the budget? Can you please provide those numbers?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Absolutely. Northern enterprise regions, \$275,000 reduction, and Northern Development Fund loan loss provision, \$80,000, for a total of \$355,000. Increases are northern social development is increasing from \$185,000 to \$731,000 on an estimate basis.

**Mr. Vermette:** — So I want to be clear. I'm going to ask this one last time. There were no more cuts to northern budget? That's it? That's all you're telling me?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — What we're discussing here, Northern Affairs division (FN08) and from a global perspective, the overall reductions in expenditures, that is what I'm outlining for the member here today.

**Mr. Vermette:** — Thank you. I'll take it that's the number you're using. Okay. Thank you.

I guess my next question will be, we look at the roads in northern Saskatchewan. And we look at . . . because of the mining industry and Northern Affairs has a lot of opportunity. You look at the leases that go out. You monitor that. That's my understanding. So you have an opportunity, I think, to comment to the minister, and a goal. I hope you do talk to the Highways minister because if we look at the budget that we received in

northern Saskatchewan for highways, it's about 50 million, maybe not quite. Maybe it's so.

But regular maintenance and operations that they used to do, regular maintenance here to your staffing, think it's somewhere in there, but about 47 million 900-and-some dollars so there's not really a big increase if we look at the budget on Highways for roads. And with the economic boom that's going on in northern Saskatchewan, what role do you play in, you think, the highways is?

And some of the projects that have been committed to and promised and I think about some of these projects, the Wollaston Lake road, all-weather road, I think about Highway 120, Highway 102, there's different roads and highways that need work done to them. And whether that's in the regular maintenance or not, do you know, being that you're responsible for Northern Affairs as a ministry, what roads, project or is there any idea, talk, are we going to see anything other than the \$50 million that's there? And that's for the regular maintenance, like I said.

And do you know if there's any push to do any more, especially with the industry? And we look at economics and I know there always has to be that opportunity. And the economics is going on in the North and the government is getting some good revenue, you see. How's your department working with Highways and how's that going to work in the end? If you can give me an explanation of that and if there's any more money out of the budget, the \$11 billion.

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Well thank you very much for the question. And, you know, there's several questions in there, and I guess I've been trying to make notes as the member was speaking. You know, he's asking me, do I have discussions with the Minister of Highways? Well absolutely, and I can tell you that the Minister of Highways is very articulate in cabinet and in our caucus, talking about the record funding that is going into highways across Saskatchewan, to talk about the five-year rolling plan, the formula that is put forward that has very much an economic development end to it. And certainly he's very, very proud, and I know our government is very, very proud of the Highways portfolio and what has been done. We have a former Highways minister sitting in the Chamber as well. And I know that he began much of that good work, and the current minister is working on that as well.

The member also asks if I have discussions with the mining industry, and I can assure him that absolutely we talk to the mining industry on an ongoing basis. We know that travel and roads are a concern. With the increased economic activity we're seeing in northern Saskatchewan, the increased job opportunities, and the increased activity in general, there will be need for increased expenditures on highways. As far as specifically getting into what highway is getting what funding from the ministry, I'm sure the Minister of Highways would be happy to answer those questions. Whether it's in question period or whether it's in estimates, he would provide that. But certainly from a general perspective, I have had those discussions with him. I've had those discussions with mining officials. And I think that northern Saskatchewan is going to benefit from the increased resources that we see in highways and transportation in our province.

**Mr. Vermette:** — I look at the housing, and housing is . . . Well I guess if you look at housing throughout the province, there's a crisis. We know that. We're hearing it out there very clearly. I think mayors are telling us, the leaders — First Nations, Métis — it's very clear. I think it's an outcry, and people are pouring out with it, and they're very concerned about it. And I look at your record revenue that you received, and this year's budget just about 11 billion, like I said. And I realize your budget came out \$1.7 billion for new housing. Can you tell me, out of that 1.7 for new housing, will northern Saskatchewan be receiving?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Well I can tell you that in addition to the \$1.7 billion that was specifically outlined, the minister made a substantial announcement just a couple of days later that incorporated funds from the federal government as well to the tune of some \$252 million. I don't know where the member sits on that, but to me that's a quarter of a billion dollars. It is indeed an issue that needs the immediate action of the government and indeed that's what the minister has put forward — some \$252 million to address that for some 4,600 new units — and also to begin the dialogue with municipalities across the province to see how they see fit to increase the amount of housing that is available.

You know, it's something again that we as politicians know that we don't have all the answers for. When a growing, thriving province that is seeing more people back to our province than ever before, more people come to this province, you know, we're very, very proud about the population numbers, some 1.052 million. But indeed there are infrastructure challenges. There are housing challenges. And when governments are doing well and managing appropriately, then there has to be those resources going towards those priorities, and that's why I think the \$252 million that has been allocated will certainly go a long way, but again we're looking for more answers.

That's why we're going to be consulting with the industry later this month when the minister has her summit and talking to builders and to organizations across the province to get their input to provide even more of a direction on how that money can best be spent.

**Mr. Vermette:** — You know, and I guess you can go back to talking about positive numbers and that's fine and, you know, that's good for the province. But when I look at the First Nations and the Métis and you look at the employment, talk about the boom, and then all the people coming back here, getting jobs, and then we see the numbers coming out, and very clearly your government has been pointed out as probably one of the worst, and it could be an economic disaster if things don't turn around.

So at the eleventh hour you might think that that's a good idea and come forward with something like that, and that's fine. You can spin it the way you want, but we know very clearly the numbers are showing that First Nations and Métis are suffering for employment under your government right now.

But I want to go back to talking about housing because again I say it is a crisis in northern Saskatchewan. And it wouldn't be fair to the leaders, to the people that I meet every day and talk to me. How about our houses? Why do we have to be

overcrowded? Why do we have to have these conditions? There's so many different conditions that northern people have to deal with. And I realize it's provincially, but I'm here as a critic for northern Saskatchewan so I'm going to make sure that their view and their concerns are brought forward so that you as the Minister Responsible for Northern Affairs — and I say that, responsible for Northern Affairs — is getting the message very clear.

And I know the leaders have said to me, they have shared that information. I have shared that information whether it's in question my colleagues have, whether it's letters or concerns from citizens, from . . . People in northern Saskatchewan make it very clear, whether it's to the Premier, different ministers, have received the letters from myself, from the constituents that have raised concerns. I've made sure that you guys are well aware. And I know the leaders, First Nations, Métis, mayors, make sure that Northern Affairs knows exactly what the issues are. And that's why I say, they came here hoping, and for hope and all these good things that were going to be announced. And I'll say this again: a lot of them are not so happy. And at the end of the day, we'll see how it rolls out and we'll see exactly where they're at.

So when I go back to housing, what answers can they have from you? And you're being responsible, I realize, for what answers you have for the leaders, for the community, people when it comes to housing. And you talk about a housing summit, and then you talk about coming out with a budget of 1.7 million for new houses, and then you all of a sudden, two days later, the government comes out with an announcement, which we know and it's being debated right now, about how much of that money and how it's going to be allocated and so on. We realize we're going to get through that and there's a critic for that, and he'll do his job. But I was just curious to see how much of those dollars would northern Saskatchewan get out of the 1.7, like I asked you, that you announced in your budget. I was referring to that.

So when I ask you again, I'll go back to this. For northern Saskatchewan housing, what are the numbers, and how much of that 1.7 will northern Saskatchewan receive?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Well again the member went through many statistics, some that were accurate and some that were not. And I certainly want to challenge him on some that were not. He began by talking about employment numbers in northern Saskatchewan. And it has been debated in this House, different time frames. There have been challenges in the '08-09 period, in the '09-10 period, but certainly to accurately reflect what's happening in northern Saskatchewan today, we have to talk about the numbers that are taking place in 2010 and 2011.

And the member will know, I think he knows, that First Nations and Métis job creation is up some 1,400 since January 2010. That's not just a one-time opportunity that that has happened, nine consecutive months of increase in 2010. And as the numbers roll out for the latter part of 2010 and the early part of 2011, we continue to see that, that increase.

Outstanding amongst that is First Nations and Métis youth employment which is up some of 30.6 per cent, some 1,900 jobs. As the member knows, you know, there was a worldwide

recession. We were buffered from that to a large extent because of the diversity of our economy, but indeed it did have some effect in Saskatchewan. It did pose a challenge for First Nations individuals, for all individuals in Saskatchewan. But what's most important is how we rebounded from that challenge. And when I see numbers like this — 1,400 jobs from January 2010, nine consecutive months of increase, and an increase of 30.6 per cent in employment numbers, some 1,900 jobs for First Nations and Métis youth — it is indeed something that we're proud of, and we continue to build on and look forward to further increases in the future.

You know, the \$252 million, you know, I don't think that it's fair to be critical of that. I think it's fair to say that that will go a long way to address the needs of people who need housing in northern Saskatchewan, in our cities, and across the province. Will it provide all the answers? Probably not. Will a public consultation like a summit go a long way to provide the input necessary? I think it will. I think it's worth a try. You know the minister who is responsible for that prides herself on doing things differently and wanting to take a different approach. And this indeed is a different approach, and I think members will be very, very pleased with what they see.

[20:45]

But the member articulates that there is some concern on behalf of northerners and of northern mayors specifically he said. Well you know, I will undertake to answer any questions specifically posed by any of those individuals. They can write to me. They know that they have that opportunity. They can phone me. And if there's anything that's specifically of a concern because of this budget or any reason, we'd be happy to sit down and discuss it because, to be quite frank, what I'm hearing is quite the contrary.

What I'm hearing from those individuals is that there's more activity taking place in northern Saskatchewan now than ever before, more in the last three years than has taken place over the last 16 years before that. It's an opportunity for them to grow and to thrive and to take part in the many, many opportunities going forward. And many are taking us up on that challenge. The member was at the northern mayors' forum and had an opportunity to see some of that first-hand. It's something that again we're very, very proud of.

Specifically with housing, we're going to ensure that there is a voice from those across the province, the municipalities, the leaders that are going to work together with us as far as housing goes to define how that \$252 million should best be spent. I look forward to the outcomes. I hope that those leaders in northern Saskatchewan will be very vocal at the summit and help guide us to ensure that that record amount of revenue is directed at areas where it is indeed needed most.

Now the member indicated also that, you know, we're doing this at the 11th hour, that this is a government that is waiting till the last minute, the last period — whatever you like to say — to do it. And I again would challenge him strongly on that.

This is a government that took the opportunity to pay down \$2 billion in debt when the money was there very early in a term of office, not waiting for the electoral cycle. And I think that's

something that myself and my colleagues take great pride in, that we didn't wait for an election. We spent the money where it was necessary. And that indeed is why we see the opportunity for the growth that has taken place, and indeed very proud of that growth and doing all we can to see that it continues to happen because, as we've said before, you know, we work very hard at growing an economy and making sure that it thrives, not for a benefit on its own but so we can have more money to put into health care, into education, into schools, into infrastructure that was sorely needed over the last couple of decades.

**Mr. Vermette:** — I guess I've got one more question, and then I know the member from Athabasca would like to ask a few questions, so at that time I'll pass it on, Mr. Chair.

I want to make it very clear when I talk about the numbers, and whether it's northern Saskatchewan or the rest of the province, when I talk about the employment numbers going down, I've referred to it being and could be — as one of the professors makes it very clear — an economic disaster if we don't reach out to northern youth and the rest of the province, our Aboriginal youth.

Where I go with this question, you see a lot of our young people . . . And I say this because they're losing hope, and that's when they lose hope. And there's no jobs in some of the northern communities. There's no opportunity. And you talk about education, that there's so much in this budget for them right now. But it's a sad day when you see young people and they lose hope, and we've talked about that because when they lose hope . . . And I listen to the elders and I listen to the leaders. I listen to many community members, and that same message is out there. When our northern people, our young people lose hope — and we see the outcomes and the outcomes are not good — it's a pretty sad day.

We see the numbers, the youth suicides. It's not good. We see the poverty. The northern people, Aboriginal people are living in the conditions. When you have a government has a record revenue, just about \$11 billion . . . And I'll say this again, at the eleventh hour, you come out and you say well, it's going to be good for you now. It's going to be good. This budget's going to be good for you. And we will have differences. I'll agree with you on that one. And our leaders might say one thing or another. You might be hearing a different story. Well I don't know why that is. And I'm sure they're going to speak up. But maybe too, maybe they're a little afraid that maybe their budgets will get tackled. I wonder why? And I wonder if that's possible? So when I say that I hope you are hearing those messages and if they are good, good. I hope I hear them too.

Some things may be positive, but I'll tell you there's a lot of things, Mr. Minister, that are not positive in northern Saskatchewan, and the rest of the First Nations and Métis communities, I know, are not going good. They're reaching out. They're asking for the help. They want to have a level playing field. They have a right to that. Northern people do. You have a responsibility as the minister to make sure their concerns are heard at the table. So I will again say to your ministries, I hope you do what's been asked of you because if you don't, more people will suffer. But they don't have to suffer. It's time to make a difference with the record revenue.

You talk about having the choices. You picked out priorities where you wanted to spend the record revenue. You talked about that. You said very clearly where you wanted to spend the money. You guys identified that. You targeted that and you did that.

Well I'll have you know, northern people sure feel left out of your budget for roads, highways, health care. A lot of areas, they can use help. More help, more revenue, more resources are needed if we're going to deal with the problems. We need a government who's going to be strong, committed to doing that on their agenda. And I do not see your government doing that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Well I'm disappointed in the view that the member takes. He says there's no jobs; there's no hope. I think it's incumbent upon every member of this Assembly to articulate that there is a tremendous amount of hope. There are tremendous amount of job opportunities here in Saskatchewan.

There are needs, for sure. There are training needs. There are opportunities that need to be matched by the skills of individuals. But I think from where I sit in this chair, indeed the people growing up in Saskatchewan, whether they be youth or those that are mid-career and need to have enhanced opportunities, there indeed is a very bright future. I would contend that that future has never been brighter than it is today. There are problems to be sure. There are opportunities to be sure. And I think it's a responsibility of everyone who occupies a chair in this Assembly to ensure that those that need it the most are able to benefit from it, that are able to take advantage of programs that are in place.

And that's why we put more funding towards things like advanced education, education in general, not only on the capital side but on the operating side, health care to be sure, roads. Every element that needs to focus on an enhanced quality of life is indeed being addressed in this budget. And I'll be the first to say, and it's been said before, it doesn't offer all things to all people. But I think I'm very disappointed to, you know, to hear someone in this Assembly say that there's, you know, no hope, no jobs. There're more job opportunities than ever before in Saskatchewan. We have to make sure that those individuals that need it most are able to win those jobs, to make sure that they are able to take part in that.

What we see here is a clear vision, and the hope beats fear. It didn't end at the last election. Hope remains supreme in this province. That's what guides us as a government, and that's what we try to provide to each and every individual. So if members opposite or members in this Chamber or anybody that happens to be watching in tonight . . . I think there's a very, very good story that can be told. This isn't partisan in any way because it is what we have as a benefit in Saskatchewan.

We have resources. We have record amounts of revenue. We have record amounts of money going to address it. Money can't do it alone. It has to be done by those that administer these programs, those that have an opportunity to work with those that need it most.

Very quickly what came to the forefront for me were social issues in northern Saskatchewan. And that's why you see, from

the northern action plan, some very real resources that are put towards the needs that are up there.

Nothing is more troubling than youth suicide. It's not something that's unique to Saskatchewan. We see it across the country in northern areas more than ever. But it's incumbent upon governments to try to put those ideas forward by empowering those that are on the front line to enact their ideas and to solicit the information that we need from . . . Not all of the great ideas or the good ideas or even the best ideas come from this Legislative Assembly. But I'm very convinced that we have the resources in place to canvass the leaders in northern Saskatchewan to find out what would work best in the province and to have the resources in place to happen.

So I take a very different view than the member opposite. I take one of hope. I take one of pride. And I take one of believing in the future that we are going to have more people working than ever before. Many of those people will be First Nations people. When I see statistics like a 30.6 per cent increase in First Nations and Métis youth employment, I say we're going in the right direction.

There's more work to do. But I would encourage the member to have hope because I think that's the reason we are in this place, and that's the reason why we will get the job done. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Is there any other questions? Mr. Vermette.

**Mr. Vermette:** — Yes. I want to make it very clear and finish this up. And if the minister misunderstood me, I want to make it very clear. For those people in northern Saskatchewan that are working, that are making a good go of it and are trying . . . [inaudible] . . . tell you the cost of living in northern Saskatchewan is not easy. They work hard. My children do it. I have family who do it. So don't think that I don't understand and don't understand, appreciate the hope and the good work that northern people are doing, First Nations and Métis.

So I don't need anyone to make sure that they have to explain that to me. I know that. So I'm trying to explain that and make it very clear for your government that you understand that. I want young people to know there's hope. I want northern leaders to know there's hope. But at the end of the day, if we don't have the resources when we ask for the resources to build that hope amongst our communities, that's when the concerns come.

So we can all sit here and say yes, we believe in that. And you are saying your government's committed to that. We'll see at the end of the day what programs go on, what resources come to northern Saskatchewan, that's through health care, roads, employment, training. We'll see if your government's so committed. And I hope it is. You say that the mayors just have to ask and you're going to give them stuff. I'm glad to hear that. So thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm done.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Mr. Vermette.

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. If I may respond, Mr. Chair, you know, what I clearly indicated that the leaders in northern Saskatchewan, the residents in general in

northern Saskatchewan have a voice in the government in Saskatchewan. They have a voice through their members of the legislature to be sure, but they also have an advocate in the minister that occupies this chair, which I have the pleasure of doing. The member tells me that I have a responsibility. It's a responsibility that I relish because at the end of the day we are here to ensure that we leave this place better than we found it. And that's something that we work hard every day to do.

And I think, you know, when history looks back on this period of time of our province, we will I think meet the challenge and turn the corner and ensure that northern Saskatchewan participates in the benefits that the rest of the province is. I'm comfortable for that.

I thank the member for his passion and his leadership in this area. And I can assure him that we will not agree on everything, but we'll work together when necessary to ensure that we can provide those benefits to northern Saskatchewan residents and people across the province. So thank you.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Belanger, you have some questions?

[21:00]

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, and welcome to the minister and his officials. I think I've got about 30 minutes allotted for my time, so I'll try and get right to the point.

Very quickly, Mr. Minister, you attended a meeting in Prince Albert, and I think my colleague from Cumberland was there and I think your colleague from Prince Albert Carlton was also there, the minister responsible for municipal services. And correct me if I'm wrong, but after the meeting with the northern leaders, and you can certainly sense their frustration from the member from Cumberland, the message they got . . . And I'm not sure whether it was you specifically or the minister or a mixed comment at the end of the meeting, but the comment that was made by one of the ministers, and I'm assuming it was you, when you said, just wait for budget. You will be happy with the budget. That was the comment that I heard one of the ministers make to the northern leaders.

Now it may not be exact wording, but along those lines was what the message was. So I guess my question is what specific measures were you making reference to? And I can appreciate you can't say anything before the budget, but now that it's been said, what specific concept or part of the budget were you thinking about when you told the northern leaders that?

And before you answer that question, the reason why I'm saying that is because that's the reason many of them came down here. They thought it was going to be a major investment into highways or a major investment into resource revenue sharing concept or a major housing initiative or something. And mayors are very careful not to get too political so they're not going to say much, but I think a number of your officials heard some very strong comments from the northern leaders before they left.

But going back to the meeting in Prince Albert, what was the specific measure — if it was you that made the comment to the

leaders — were you making reference to when you said just wait for the budget?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Well thank you very much for the question. And I'm sure it could have been the member from P.A. Carlton or myself, and we probably both said it on numerous occasions because at that time we would have had the budget finalized. We're very proud of the budget. We knew what was in it for northern Saskatchewan and for those around Saskatchewan and just very, very pleased to be able to participate in that budget and to talk to northerners about how they would benefit.

I think if my recollection serves correct, specifically what we were talking about at that point in time was social issues in northern Saskatchewan and the need for some dedicated money to work towards youth suicide, drug use in northern Saskatchewan. And again there was some very passionate discussion from northern leaders about what needed to be done, some agreement that nobody had the magic wand or the answer. But what they were asking for was some dedicated funds for northern Saskatchewan and in reference, in all but name, to what isn't contained in the northern action plan.

So certainly the member from P.A. Carlton and myself were very interested in what they had to say and very, very pleased in knowing that we would be able to articulate the details of the northern action plan in the budget. And that's part of the reason why we invited every mayor from northern Saskatchewan, every First Nations chief from around the province to come and to hear the budget first-hand. I had the opportunity to meet with many of them in my office and to discuss the details.

You know, we discussed not only the First Nations and Métis Relations budget, but we discussed the money dedicated to First Nations and Métis individuals around the province. And that's some of the funding that we discussed earlier, some \$167.2 million and an increase of \$13.1 million, an increase of 8.5 per cent. That's a large increase by anybody's standards, and that's one of the reasons why you saw leaders like Chief Lonechild very, very pleased with the work. I believe his exact quote was, "They're putting their money where their mouth is." And that's indeed what we have done in that budget from this government.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Now in relation to your comment, and I'm certainly glad you came forward, straightforward with the assertion that was said in terms of the building the expectations and the hope. And I can appreciate as a minister you have to defend your budget and market your budget, and that's part and parcel of being part of cabinet. But were you making reference to the 490,000 that this budget was giving towards addressing youth suicide in northern Saskatchewan when he told the leaders the fact that they would be pleased with this budget?

Because that, according to your document here, budget summary, it says \$490,000 to address youth suicide in the North. And this is a major problem in the North, when young people either through drug abuse and other abuses and lack of opportunity in their community, and one stat that I could be challenged on is one suicide every two or three weeks. And your government put 490,000. As northern leaders, as northern MLAs, we have a job to do to highlight the challenges of the North. That's our job and we can't apologize for that, and we

won't.

But the black eye in Canada, not just in Saskatchewan but in Canada, you look at the Conference Board of Canada in terms of the standard in living, there's a big black hole, if you will, in terms of the stats that are overwhelming, that shows northern Saskatchewan is leading the nation in many categories. And the one area that we thought, and many of the northern leaders thought would be finally addressed through a series of initiatives was addressing the youth suicide issue.

As MLAs we'd rather be talking about other issues, but the most pressing issue right now is a lot of young people in the North are killing themselves. And if you do the calculation, I was never very good at math but 490,000 divided by 35,000 people, I'm not sure if that works out to 14 cents per person or \$1.40 per person. I'm not sure what the per capita allocation is, but our message to you as northern MLAs, as the Minister Responsible for Northern Affairs, is that 490,000 to address youth suicide is just not adequate.

We're not angry at you as the minister; we're angry at the inaction. And that's one of the reasons why my member from Cumberland is just distressed over this. Because we attend the funerals. We see the families broken apart, and it's not that we want to see that. We want to see that addressed. We want to see the good things happen to families.

And there are a lot of good families, a lot of good families are making these communities excellent places to live, but there's still that overwhelming stat on youth suicide that no minister . . . and we weren't proud of that as well when we served as minister. We've seen youth suicide as a major problem, and we tried every which way to figure out how you can deal with it.

We never had the resources that are enjoyed today. You have that distinct advantage. We never had that advantage. And that was the point, that was their point. When somebody says, somebody do something, now who are they talking to? Us as opposition politicians or to you as the government or to the professional staff? It's a crime. And it's a shame that we're not addressing it. So as a minister we're not here to criticize you per se. We're here to challenge you to address that issue.

Now with the same stats, and let's take a city as an example. I think the city of Moose Jaw has pretty much the same relevant population as northern Saskatchewan does. I think it's about 35,000. And if we saw the statistics that I've heard from a few health professionals, and I could be challenged on that, but if we had a young person, say in Moose Jaw, kill themselves every two weeks, as was presented to us in the northern part of Saskatchewan, there would be action pretty darn fast. And I can almost guarantee you, if that happened to a city like Moose Jaw, and I'm not ever wishing that on any region, it would really hit home.

And that's what's happening in northern Saskatchewan where we have young people. And the reason why is a varying number of reasons. I don't have the solution and I don't have the logic nor the reasoning why this is happening. I have my assumptions, but I don't know for sure. It is a cry from many of the young people in the North, that \$490,000 is a pittance of what is needed to address that issue.



Now I'm not sure how well coordinated you are in terms of dealing with other ministries, but you're our Minister of Northern Affairs, and I'm certainly northern affairs. I know you have the other portfolio of Indian Métis affairs, but I'm being selfish when it comes to my particular region. I want to talk North. And I don't want to do any broad-based discussions. I want to talk North. And that was what I think a lot of the mayors really thought you were going to come along and mention something about the number one problem in the North which is youth suicide. Yes, roads are problematic. Economy always needs work. Can do more housing. All those answers are there. But a few of them really, really thought there was going to be something major in this budget that could really signal to the North, primarily because you had the record revenue. That's the reason.

And when a government has that kind of money, people want to have a piece of it. So when they're invited — and this is what's really important, when they're invited — you raise their expectations. Of course you want to invite them because you respect them. Fair enough. And every minister should do that, respect local leaders and Aboriginal leaders. That's part of the process here as government.

But when you invited them in a respectful way, they came with expectations. They thought there was going to be two or three initiatives. If it's housing, Aboriginal affairs, that's fine, but as long as there's some benefits there. And I see from the perspective of helping the agricultural sector on paying for some of the property tax on the education portion, some of their property tax, you made that decision to help them. Fine, we applaud that too. But what gets them angry is the expectations were built, I'm talking about the northern people, and 490,000 was set aside to address this.

Something's got to be done, Mr. Minister, something's got to be done. You take that message back to Cabinet, something has got to be done definitive. And if it's not done, then northern leaders are going to continue saying, and be gracious, we'll bring you more ideas, more solutions. But if nothing is done, then it's going to turn to anger.

So that was kind of what I think encapsulated the reason why some of the northern leaders were angry. They, I know they expressed it to a few of your officials. I know. They told me they did. And there's a time and venue for this, they realize that. But the one thing they really wanted answers on was how to address the youth suicide. Again I go back to my argument: if some youth kill themselves once every two weeks in a comparable population of the North, say for example Moose Jaw, there'd be a cry. That's what northern leaders are trying to say.

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much to the member for his thoughts on the issue. And I guess sitting in my chair, I've got an opportunity here to go one of two ways. I could go very hard, very hard politically back on a lot of what he has said because when he says, we never had the resources when we were government to do it, to me, that's a cop-out. You never got it done. But that's where I'm going to end the political statement there because I think this topic is much more important than you and I duelling on a political battle. We have that opportunity all day, every day to do it here. What we're

talking about today is a very, very important topic and something that, that we immediately addressed.

The member will know that people came to this legislature earlier this year to talk about this very topic, to talk about youth suicide, to talk about drug abuse in northern Saskatchewan. And I don't know what the exact dollar figure is. It's very difficult to attach a dollar amount. You know, if the member wants the math to be done, well I can tell him that 35 to 40,000 people in northern Saskatchewan — \$490,000. You know, it's 10 to 12 to \$15 per person. Is that enough? I don't know. What's the magic number? I don't think there is a magic number. I think what you have to do is listen to those that were on the front line who have some ideas, who want to put a plan in place.

And I can tell you that there are some of these people in this room right now sitting with me here, those that have put hundreds of hours into this topic. They are the very best civil servants that we have in Saskatchewan, and I asked them to come up with a plan that would immediately start to address this topic. And they came back to me with a budget and a need which would be \$1.5 million over three years to start.

We're not going to solve this overnight. But I want to be comfortable when I go to sleep at night to feel that we are making progress with this and with the ability to work together. I feel that \$1.5 million over three years is a good start. It's something that wasn't in place before. It's dedicated funds. It's funds that are dedicated to address a need.

[21:15]

So I hope a couple years from now that we can sit in this place and say we did make a difference. If it's 1.5, if it's more in the future, if that's what is needed, if that's what officials say, I can tell you that they will have an audience with members of this government. And where possible, I strive to include members of the opposition as well because this is something that isn't political. It's something that's very sad. It's something that's heart-wrenching. Whether it's suicide, whether it's drug abuse, it's something that we wish wasn't there but is there and something that we don't have all the answers to. But we feel it's incumbent to start the process. We feel we were doing that. We extend the hand to opposition members and to anybody else out there that has an idea on how to do that.

You know, it's not just those on the margin of society that are facing this. We find that there are many that have much leadership capability that succumb to this tragedy, to this disease. And I certainly don't espouse to be an expert in this area, but I will listen to those that know much more about it than me. I will listen to all that have an idea, and I will use this position to try to put the resources necessary to address it. And I'm comfortable that that's what we're doing here today. Thank you.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Yes, just to clarify. I appreciate the point in terms of the political discussion. I agree that it's counterproductive. But certainly in the six or seven years that we served in cabinet, some of the initiatives we announced for the North included a \$65.5 million northern road access agreement, \$35 million for abandoned mines cleanup in the Far North, millions in water and sewer upgrading, millions in

housing construction. You can check the records. You'll find nineteen and a half for the Primrose bombing range settlement. You look at the transferring of forestry rights, millions in raw asset value. You look at the minor construction in new roads, major roads. Working with the mining sector, the multi-party training agreements, surface rights agreement. These are some of the things that just pop into your head.

So we're not saying that we didn't do anything the seven or eight years that I certainly was in cabinet. Some of those initiatives we're proud of. Building hospitals and schools and housing and careers and young families, we're proud of that.

So there has been a lot of work, but the prevailing problem of youth suicide is still there. And is 500,000 a year for the next three years, is that going to be adequate? Well for the record, I don't think so. I think you need a very aggressive alcohol and drug denormalization strategy, a place where you can reach out through various aspects of a northern community, whether it be awareness of the issue through hard-hitting radio ads, programs in schools, or whether it's enforcement, beefing up the police presence in the communities, or whether it's developing a comprehensive recreation and cultural plan alongside of some of the Aboriginal communities, or whether it's focusing on family-orientated activities within a certain community. There's tons of ideas out there when you look at some of these strategies.

And we worked hard on the tobacco file as a previous government to denormalize tobacco use for the health of Saskatchewan people. We took great grief from the hotel association, from many of the pubs and the bars that didn't want to see this action undertaken. And one of the ideas that certainly had a lot of merit was taking that matrix or that model of how we denormalize tobacco use, even putting them behind counters or behind curtains in businesses, not allowing advertising, not allowing them to smoke in restaurants. All those people thought that this was a government that was going crazy in terms of enforcing their rule about smoking.

In the end, it worked out well. Eighty-five per cent of the people supported that notion, 85 per cent of the people supported that notion. And the stats will show, through Health, that there was less heart attack, that there is better heart health and better lung health at the end of the day. Even those measures proved very successful. There were doubters. I didn't think it would work — I was one of the cabinet ministers — but it did.

Now in northern Saskatchewan, a focused strategy . . . Because you have the best of both worlds. You have northern Saskatchewan people, but you have a lot of First Nations and Métis people in those communities. I would say 80 per cent. And I really, truly hoped, at the time, that there'd be something along the lines of an alcohol and drug denormalization strategy because that's what killing a lot of these northern communities and killing a lot of hope amongst the young people. When drug dealers can run rampant in our communities and destroy lives, nothing is there stopping them. And I'm sorry, but 500,000 a year for 35,000 people is simply not going to do it.

The solutions that many people have brought forward, it's going to take some real resources. And my point is that when

you travel other places in the province . . . And as an MLA, I see a lot of all the province. And you have people that are safe and secure in their nice homes. They've got a nice vehicle outside. They've got a pension building. They've got work. And you go to the North and they don't have any of that. They've got overcrowded housing. They've got lack of a police presence, and I think also as well that there's nobody really worried about them. That's the problem right now.

Now we can say we've taken the demands for northern Saskatchewan to a certain level. I don't think you have to worry about a lot of the issues that we took care of in the past, but there should be a brand new agenda for the North. And that's the frustration that I have and my colleague has. We've got to get exciting. We've got to get dynamic. We've got to get different. We've got to totally adjust gears here. And that's why we pay so close attention to what you do with the trappers, what you do with the housing, what you do with the fishermen because all of that adds to the solution.

And even the fishermen, if you look at the fishermen themselves, they really, truly thought that the government is going to come along, get rid of FFMC, and do something on a fish processing plant. That's what the fishermen thought. Now how they were led to that conclusion, I don't know, but that's what they thought. So I'd go into a meeting and I'd say, what are you guys doing? What's happening? Well they're getting rid of Freshwater. That's great. I said, well if that's what the fishermen want, then that's your decision.

Because the commercial fishing industry's worth \$8 million. It helps along the way when I talk about the community problems. In Ile-a-la-Crosse as an example, my home community, there's probably about 25 fishermen, maybe 30 tops. But those guys, they hired two or three helpers. Those two or three helpers work. And they make 75 or 80 bucks a day — depends who they work for — and they become EI [employment insurance] eligible on the off-season. So that sustains them. And does that help the community economy of Ile-a-la-Crosse? Yes. Does it keep that young guy from going off and doing a bunch of drugs and not worrying about anything? It does. Does it help put more money into some of these people's pockets that may run the fish plant or may do some work with some of the ice needs in terms of packing ice? Absolutely.

The North needs help in every which way. And like I said, we can sit here and debate all night if we want. I can argue my points; you'll argue yours. That's not going to solve anything. I think we've done a lot of things that I'm proud of as a member of the former NDP [New Democratic Party] government, and we took it to a certain distance. But we lost in 2007. We had grander plans, but we lost. Now it's incumbent upon you to take up that torch or that baton, whatever analogy you want to use, and begin to address some of these issues — the poor roads, poor housing, young people are killing themselves. You're the government. You have the resources. What're you going to do?

And that's what the leaders had in their mind when they come here, when you invited them. And that's what disappointed them when they left because they had thought maybe you guys were going to listen. So it takes a lot of calmness to mask our frustration — discipline if you wish — but both the member from Cumberland and I are very, very angry about what's going

on and what is not happening in our communities. The phrase that our Finance critic used is, boom for whom?

Now when you want to go to sleep at nights, of course you want a calmness about you. You want peace so you can sleep. But know this: a lot of kids are sleeping, four or five of them are sleeping in one bed on some First Nations or Métis community. And yes, they're going to school. Teachers are trying hard to . . . That's what's saving a lot of our communities are the schools. But they see violence. They see drugs. They see all these problems. They see people that may go off to work at the mines, but a lot of them aren't working. And after they get older, guess what? They don't become productive, happy adults because their childhood isn't productive and happy.

And spend a day in any community in the North, and you'll see the problems. I'm not going to mention any community here because it's unfair to them. A lot of good people are trying to make a difference. But that's where their problem is. There's no help for addressing many of the challenges these communities face, no help.

And if you build a road . . . And I'll give you an example, Pelican Narrows. We committed to building 6 kilometres through Pelican Narrows. That was cancelled. I couldn't figure out why, couldn't figure out why. Like why would they cancel that maybe 2 or \$3 million project? And if you do that, fix that road, which a lot of the elders want because of the dust and the problems in the summertime, that's one less problem they have. But actually it qualifies them and encourages them. It encourages them, and that's our point. As you take things away and don't do things for the North, you're discouraging people. And it's not as if you don't have the resources. That's our argument.

And if there's a spark somewhere in your system, Mr. Minister, or even in your staff's system, my challenge for you today is focus on the North, as part of your portfolio, to change the stats that are staring you and I right in the face. And if there isn't that spark or desire amongst your officials or you to change that, then you have to simply tell us. That's all the northern people want. I await your comments.

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Well thank you very much to the member for his passion, his knowledge, and he's been a long-time member of this Assembly and brings that certainly to this fine Chamber. His remarks were wide and varied. There's some that I very much agree with, some that I very much disagree with when he talks about mayors and their impressions of the budget. And I certainly would like to debate that, and I guess we'll have an opportunity and we'll certainly see what comes out of that in the fall.

The member went into a bit of history, talking about the NDP government over 16 years and many of the good things that they did. And I'll ask that member just to cast his memory back to when the Sask Party was in opposition. And when the government did something right, we were led by a leader who told us: when they do something right, acknowledge that it was something right, something that was done properly.

And I will give you that here today, that there was many things that were done properly, many things done with the right

intentions. There were many shortcomings as well, as any government would have. But I think to be fair, we articulated very strongly our support for those areas that made Saskatchewan a better place. And I think to be fair today, every member in this House has to acknowledge that \$1.5 million today is \$1.5 million that wasn't there before. Will it answer all the questions? No. Will it provide us with a bit of a road map to get to where we want to be? I'm sure it will.

[21:30]

You know, the member talks about the tobacco issue and the great challenges and the fortitude that was necessary to put that in place. Well I would remind him that that isn't solved today. It's a lot better than it was but we continue to work on it. You know, April 1st saw changes in regulations regarding pharmacies in Saskatchewan, and that work indeed continues to be done. And that's what the job is of governments, to build on governments before them, to take new and fresh ideas. The member asks if I have the spark necessary to do it. Well you bet I do. That spark comes from the leadership that I see, from the opportunity that I've been given to make Saskatchewan a better place, to use my abilities, as limited as they may be, to try to be a voice for northern Saskatchewan.

The method I see in doing that is to invite those to come to this legislature, whether it's for a budget or a Speech from the Throne, or to meet with any one of us. That's what I undertook to do. Many of those leaders took me up on the offer. They came here. Many of them I met with afterwards and were very, very pleased. And this is the area where I disagree vociferously with the member because I feel, and many of them told me, it was the first time that they were invited here, that a minister had wrote to them and asked them to come to hear the budget. Did it answer all their questions? I'm sure not. But did it give them hope for the future? I think it did because I hear that from them. I hear that there's more happening now today, more happening in the last three years than there has been in the past. And I'm sure the member would challenge me on that, but I can tell you in a factual way, that's indeed the message that I'm receiving. If that's not the case, well I invite those that have a differing opinion to very specifically put that forward and we'll address the issues one at a time.

But what we do have here is an opportunity to make northern Saskatchewan a better place. Whether it's fishing, whether it's trapping, whether it's enticing that entrepreneurial spirit that exists in northern Saskatchewan through enterprise regions, it's something that we all have to focus on. And the members have reminded me that it is my responsibility. Well it's my responsibility along with others in this Assembly to work in that fashion, but it's a responsibility that I relish because I can see all factors. I can see the record amount of people coming to Saskatchewan, the record amount of revenues that we have, the enthusiasm from those that want to participate in the economy. And I see a real plan in place — whether it's Advanced Education, whether it's Social Services, whether it's Education — to make that match, to put that plan in place, and to enhance the lives of everyone.

So I don't think we're going to solve that problem today. I very respectfully listened to what the member had to say. I think he's made some very good points. And you know, I would challenge

him back to give this northern action plan an opportunity, to work with senior civil servants that will be out there putting this plan in place, to work with community leaders to ensure that we have an answer to this problem. It's not an answer that just any one of us is going to be able to come up with right, and right. It'll be something that we all have to participate in. We have to put our partisan hats aside for a period of time and to try to make this, you know, the revenues that are dedicated here to do the best it can and to use this as a base for future programs in the future.

I think we have the right people. I think we have the resources to start in this respect, and you know, I look forward to us addressing this concern. And through you, Mr. Chair, thank you to the member for his comments.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Quennell, do you have some questions?

**Mr. Quennell:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. We've had quite a bit of discussion, and appropriately so, about the suicide strategy and whether the funds committed are sufficient. I guess I would like as much detail as the minister and the officials can provide on the nuts and bolts of what's being done and save further discussion about whether the funding is sufficient. But it would help me understand whether we're in the ballpark if I have a better understanding of what the officials proposed to the minister and the minister has proposed to his colleagues and what's in the budget.

So with that comment, what is the strategy? How will the funds be expended? The minister did comment at one point about the difficulty in identifying who's at risk of suicide in the North or other places, but we're discussing the North. So how will these funds — and I think we can agree that \$500,000 a year is not a lot of money and it's a broad geographical area — so how will it be targeted? And to the extent that you can provide detail about what the programming will be, can you also advise as to who will be delivering it? Will it be the ministry delivering it? Will you be engaging CBOs to deliver it? Will you be engaging local government to deliver it? I guess it kind of depends on the nature of the programming, but we haven't discussed that at all, I don't think, this evening.

**Mr. Greschner:** — Thanks. My name is Toby Greschner. I'm the assistant deputy minister with First Nations and Métis Relations, Northern Affairs division.

And I guess the best way to explain how we came up with what we proposed to the minister, and which he very strongly supported, is to start back in June of last year. We called together pretty much an open call to any sort of northern leaders who wanted to come and share their views on how we should proceed. So in June of last year we had a meeting in Prince Albert with approximately, I would say, 70 or 80 people — maybe not 70 or 80, 60 or so — as well as representation from the federal government. And we had a good discussion, a good, heartfelt, open discussion. And we listened, very intently. But at the end of the day we came to the conclusion that any sort of a northern . . . We, I'm saying the group of northern leaders there — First Nations, Métis, and municipalities — came to the conclusion that any plan that goes forward has to be developed by northerners. It has to be a homegrown plan. And then in

order to do that, we needed to keep, to have all leaders and all parties working together.

So out of that group we came to the conclusion that we would set up a northern leaders table which consists of representation from the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, the northern regional directors up there, First Nations primarily, mainly Meadow Lake Tribal Council and Prince Albert Grand Council and representation from New North. Because it became very clear in that discussion that if we didn't work together . . . It was too small of a place. As the minister pointed out, we only have 35,000 people in the North. It's too small for us to be competing against one another as far as First Nations, Métis, and municipalities.

So that table was struck and we started meeting with that group about the end of December. We've now met a couple or three times, three times I believe, and it will be this group now that will largely determine, after they go back and consult with their parent organizations, how we proceed. And we've done that very much so on purpose, that there's no preconceived sort of plan that I put together or my colleague Mark LaRocque's put together. We really want it to be homegrown from the collective of the northern leaders.

Now notionally we started kicking around the idea, in some of our meetings, of the idea of having three sort of community capacity facilitators around the North, but that's still up to discussion with the northern leaders table.

And the other underlying theme in this, besides working together and developing it by northerners, is that we utilize existing resources already in the North. So we're not going to be re-inventing the wheel and, you know, creating new programming or new infrastructures or new bureaucracies to deliver. If it's stuff to deal with, as we go with the four pillars of a healthy people — educated citizens, safe communities, and strong economy — there's already in place a number of organizations in the North that can deliver any sort of programming that will be targeted to those areas. So we will be looking to the health districts and school boards and First Nations education authorities, and so on and so forth.

So I guess to close is that we have some ideas that we've been kicking around with the group of northern leaders, but that will be determined over the next number of weeks, and we plan to meet with them again next week.

**Mr. Quennell:** — So you don't know what the program is going to be yet. How do you arrive at the amount of money needed for it?

**Mr. Greschner:** — The notional, the amount of the 390, I mean 490, generally we were thinking of the three community capacity facilitators, and then some of that additional funding, the remaining funding would be used for things around communications and consultation with northern people.

**Mr. Quennell:** — And what would the community capacity facilitators be doing?

**Mr. Greschner:** — Well in many of the northern communities, just that very basic fundamental ability to even apply for a

grant, programming, that sort of stuff is very limited. So the idea being that we had in Sandy Bay a number of years back, about three years ago, we had tried this in Sandy Bay, tried having a person actually working in the community to help with some of the basics of just keeping the community running. You know, of the folks who could track down those types of programming dollars that already exist that the community could apply for to build that recreation facility or whatever they might be doing. So we're looking at it as a way to build capacity at the community level. It wouldn't be necessarily long term. We wouldn't expect that that person would stay there forever, but to build that at the local level.

**Mr. Quennell:** — Would the three be assigned to specific communities? And how would you select three communities out of, you know, well, more than a dozen, maybe more than two dozen communities in the North?

**Mr. Greschner:** — Yes, there hasn't . . . We haven't gone down that road, and in fact the northern leader's table was quick to point out that very same dilemma. So one of the notions that we were talking about was, could we go with a regional approach where you may have one coordinator working to cover two or three different communities.

**Mr. Quennell:** — Okay. I took to heart the minister's comments about wanting to be in a better place, even two or three years from now, in respect to youth suicide in the North, but the strategy here seems to be . . . I don't want to be any more partisan or critical than the minister was. The strategy here seems to be a rather indirect one to me. There are certainly capacity issues in a number of communities in Saskatchewan and a disproportionate number of them are in the North. I don't think there's any question about that.

So to work with community leaders in the North, so that they can better access funds for recreation or other activities that are funded elsewhere in government, I take it. But nobody in Regina's proactively seeking out opportunities in northern Saskatchewan. You need, by this strategy, by this model, northern leaders to be seeking out, and they need assistance in seeking out those funds and that programming that, for which funds are already available but the local communities aren't accessing. It's hoped that that programming would have some effect on the youth suicide rate. Now is this the strategy or theory of northern leadership or is this the strategy in the leadership of the ministry or is it both?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — I could maybe address the overall sort of global goal of building capacity. And that's something that was very clear by. . . You know, we referenced in previous questions the Northern Mayors Roundtable that I had an opportunity to participate in. And mayor after mayor, leader after leader indicated that that capacity question is something that they feel is one that needs to be immediately addressed and that, you know, they pointed to their administrators, for example, and how much they rely on their administrators and how, when a community loses their administrator, they're lost.

And they very much asked my colleague and myself to focus on capacity issues and to try to leverage the programs that are in place. So this would be one element of this program that would be put in place that would enhance the opportunity for northern

communities to take advantage of what is already there, and to listen to what needs to be in place and what there aren't any programs for that may need to be addressed. So I think the capacity issue is an important one and it's an important question to ask.

[21:45]

**Mr. Quennell:** — I wouldn't want to argue with the minister about that. And as a matter of fact, I think I conceded that in the preamble to my question, that capacity's really an issue for a lot of communities, and disproportionately, communities in the North. It just seems to be a very indirect connection to suicide prevention. And when I started this short series of questions, I was wondering what programming was in that \$490,000 to prevent suicide. And the response, as I understand it, is well we're going to provide some capacity training or assistance to communities and they can access other funding for other programs which don't necessarily have anything to do with suicide prevention. And I just wonder if it's, I don't want to use the word misleading but a little confusing to call a capacity building strategy, as important as that might be for northern leadership, a suicide reduction strategy.

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — To be clear, the reason I answered the question in that specific way, the member asked if that's something we just came up with or if something that we've been drawn towards. And I made the point that that has been articulated very well by northern leaders.

This is one element of the strategy that is very important in leveraging other dollars and other existing programs that are in place, and I'll let Mr. Greschner continue on specifically defining what the immediate action plan will be.

**Mr. Greschner:** — Thanks. I think not only leveraging other existing programs, but fully utilizing might be a better way of addressing it. And I think by having the coordinators in place, what we hope is that communities become more aware of what's out there. And we hear that time and time again from northerners is that, you know, we've got seven different organizations doing stuff around youth engagement; can we somehow get together on that so we more fully utilize the existing programs?

We have more directly in the past year managed to provide funding, direct funding, in answer to your question about what we're doing with regards to suicide prevention — \$125,000 in the past year targeting specifically suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention training.

And just some rough numbers because we don't have the exact details yet, but in the next little while these are programs that already have happened or will be happening in the next number of weeks and months, but we're looking at things like safe talk training, critical incidents response training, assist training, and those types of things that are going directly to train people in northern Saskatchewan. This isn't money that's sort of being soft money. It's directly going to help 30, 40 people at a time attend a workshop. And these are very emotional, intensive workshops and I have to compliment the people who can actually do these. And right now, we're utilizing the health districts and school divisions who have the expertise to deliver

it. So this is just additional funding then in the past few months.

**Mr. Quennell:** — And that would be included in this budget under this general line item?

**Mr. Greschner:** — This is the existing, existing dollars.

**Mr. Quennell:** — Now you said that the program's being delivered by schools, or school districts, certain health regions, and it's understandable that there's . . . if there's something that works in respect to reducing youth suicide, that that would be something that would often be delivered by schools. Who's going to . . . Who's the target? You said 30 to 40 people to a workshop. Who's the target audience? Who are we training here with this \$125,000?

**Mr. Greschner:** — Primarily it's youth. For the most part, I would say 90 per cent are youth, but also people in the community who need help. And they're not being restrictive on who attends. And so they'll take a community, and I'll just use, pick a community as an example. I won't give you the name but I'll just say that I know for a fact that there will, in a community that may have suffered a suicide in the last little while, there's the people who work with the health districts and the school boards. They know the people who are going to be in trouble over the next little while, because it may be their family members or friends.

So what this group . . . And the health district does work with the school board so they have a really good working network there, and I'm proud of them for doing that. They will target a community and almost . . . They'll encourage very strongly that people attend. And they have, because a lot of the program delivery is done by northern people, they have a much more stronger influence of encouraging people to attend. So it is primarily youth and people in, who have been identified as in the greatest need.

**Mr. Quennell:** — Okay. Correct me if this is a misnomer or a misstatement but it sounds almost like peer training. You're directing the training program at the peer group of people who are at risk and train them on . . .

**Mr. Greschner:** — There's a combination of things. Some of it is training trainers so that if, for example, in a community that may have suffered a suicide, that they're not constantly relying on the people to come in from Buffalo Narrows or wherever, where they're based, to deal with it.

What they do is train people in the community so that when some, a tragedy happens, that that can swing into, into effect really quick. And that just recently happened in one of the northern communities where now there is that capacity. So we've got a long ways to go to build a bigger capacity because, as you probably understand, when a tragedy hits a northern community, a lot of times it's those support people in the community who are directly impacted by the tragedy and it may be their family member or something. So the more people we have, the better on the training side. But also then the more people who we have who are dealing with those issues that are driving them to think of the unthinkable, the more that they have access to talk and work their way through their problems the better too.

**Mr. Quennell:** — The trainers, would they be primarily local teachers, local health care, or not necessarily professional people?

**Mr. Greschner:** — That's correct. There would be teachers and health care professionals, but a lot of it is the kohkoms. It's the 50-, 60-year-old moms and dads who know the kids. And so it's to try to build that capacity at the local level. It's not just the professionals.

**Mr. Quennell:** — Okay. So of the \$490,000, it sounds to me like \$125,000 is targeted and focused on the suicide reduction?

**Mr. Greschner:** — Just to clarify, the 125 that I mentioned earlier was from the past year's budget. So that was just something we did quickly to address this response. This year's response, there as of yet hasn't been anything specifically targeted for that type of programming.

**Mr. Quennell:** — Okay.

**Mr. Greschner:** — That'll be . . . Sorry. That'll be when we go through the discussion with the northern leaders table over the next little bit.

**Mr. Quennell:** — All right. So if there is, if there is any funds for suicide reduction in the North in this year's budget, it will come out of the \$490,000?

**Mr. Greschner:** — That's correct. From our budget, from our, FNMR's, perspective. Now there may be other supports in other areas.

**Mr. Quennell:** — All right. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Mr. McCall, do you have some questions?

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I guess it's a bit of a, it's a bit of a harsh transition coming out of what I think has been a good discussion about a very critical topic for this province of ours. And I guess I just want to say off the top a word of thanks to the minister for actually taking this seriously, and to the officials for the hard work that is going on.

And again we may have some differences about the means and the adequacy of resources. But surely to God, if we can't agree upon the absolute tragedy of young people killing themselves, then it doesn't speak very well for us as a province. So I guess I'm thankful to have borne witness to this conversation and the way that it has played out. And I'm sure we'll have more questions and more discussion in the days to come, but I guess I just wanted to say that off the top before resuming some questions about the other areas of your budget, Mr. Minister.

And I guess it's a related subject and again we've had some back and forth on the employment stats, but I guess one of the things that we look at over the past three years of this Sask Party government, that we look on with alarm, is what's happened in First Nations and Métis employment.

And Eric Howe, a respected economist, has done a tremendous amount of work around demographics in this province of ours and has been quoted on occasion by cabinet colleagues of

yours, Mr. Minister, with a great deal of favour as to what Mr. Howe was saying. He says what is happening in this province around First Nations and Métis employment has been a disaster. That's his choice of word, is disaster. He says that over the past three years we have seen years of gains in First Nations and Métis employment reversed by this government or under the watch of this government. And again if you're quoting, you know, if you go so deep into the hole in 2009-10, the percentage increases coming out of that are not hard to portray as positive, but the point that Professor Howe makes is that over the past three years we've seen net reverse in First Nations and Métis employment numbers.

Now last year, Mr. Minister, we sat and tried to discuss this topic with your predecessor and the decision to end the Aboriginal employment development program. And the job numbers are representative of human beings living up to their full potential in this society of ours and the way that that impacts their well-being, the well-being of their families, and the well-being of their communities and the productivity of the province of Saskatchewan. And we were told that Aboriginal employment development was an old, tired program and treated to a fair amount of political cant on the subject. But what we've seen in the intervening months is nothing really to arrest that reversal in First Nations and Métis employment.

And again if we're going to realize the potential that is given to all of the people of this province, employment — and First Nations and Métis employment in particular — is absolutely critical. So I guess that leads me to a number of questions.

One is the First Nations and Métis employment and education task force. There are some measures in there that certainly look good on the top, but what lessons have been learned over the last year in terms of the approach to employment that will reverse what has been happening with First Nations and Métis employment numbers under this government?

[22:00]

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much for the question. And I'll begin by closing out our previous discussion because there's, you know, a couple of things that I wanted to say about the youth suicide topic and just wanted to share with members of what I have learned and, I guess, what's really moved me.

And Mr. Greschner had mentioned sort of the categories, the intervention, and the postvention, the going in and studying a community, a family, an individual, and trying to understand what led up to it, and what can be learned from it.

And the term postvention, you know, is something that was new to me, but I immediately wanted to learn more about it. And I see it as a way to really focus and understand as best we can — I don't think we'll ever understand the full story — what led to this ultimate decision, what are the commonalities that we see, what can be done to address it.

And I think that, you know, any dollars spent in this area, any time put into this very specific focus will serve us well. So that's an area where I look forward to learning more about. You know as deep and as dark as it is and how difficult, I don't envy

those that would be going into that community and asking those very difficult questions and to find those commonalities. But I think it's work that needs to be done and that we will be leading the way in, in many respects. So I look forward to hearing from those and seeing if there is a way to do things better.

As far as First Nations' employment numbers, and I read what Professor Howe had had to say and certainly looked at the time frame that he specifically focused on. And I undertook to learn more about exactly what was happening from the employment situation from officials in Advanced Ed and from the minister himself. We had a good discussion about it.

And certainly, to draw on points made by some of your colleagues, the trend was going in the right direction from 2006-2007. We were seeing some marginal increases in First Nations employment. And when the recession hit — and again, we were very, very fortunate in that it didn't hit our province in the magnitude that it hit various other jurisdictions — we found that those that most recently entered the workforce were the first to feel the brunt. They were the first that were released from their employment. Many of them were First Nations individuals.

So the numbers for '08-09, for '09 to basically January of 2010, were of great concern. And we saw numbers that weren't going in the direction we wanted them to. But the officials within Advanced Ed immediately made that a top priority and focused on how we could reverse that trend.

And what I focus on now are the numbers from that January 1st, 2010, forward. And I had an opportunity to talk to the members, colleagues about it, but I'll just reiterate here that we've seen First Nations and Métis job numbers increase some 1,400 since January of 2010. And it wasn't just an aberration. It's been nine consecutive months of increased employment. And the highlight for me in that was First Nations and Métis youth employment up some 30.6 per cent, some 1,900 jobs. And I know, statistics — if you take them from the low point to the high point and you can talk about magnificent statistics, and really you're only back to where you were before. But this trend is very, very encouraging and it's something that I hope we continue to see so when we're talking about these numbers a year from now, we can talk about a two-year trend not just a one-year trend of increased jobs for First Nations and Métis individuals and a very encouraging First Nations and Métis youth employment number.

There's certainly more work to do. And we know that training, education is the key. And that's why we're focusing increased resources — the \$7 million in funding for initiatives through Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration — to ensure that there are additional resources to address this priority.

So I can assure the member that this will continue to be a priority for First Nations and Métis Relations for the officials in this room today working together with other colleagues of mine. So we know that there still is a gap. That gap has to be closed. We've heard many economists talk about the need to take advantage of that opportunity that we have in First Nations youth coming forward, and I can assure him that that's indeed what this government will focus on doing.

**Mr. McCall:** — I want to thank the minister for his response. And again Eric Howe is an authoritative voice on these issues in the province of Saskatchewan, and I guess I'm glad to hear a bit more recognition and acknowledgement of the alarm that the Professor Howe is sounding for what's happening in this province from the minister because certainly from his colleagues I don't hear that same recognition and what I do hear is . . . You know, we've both made reference to the way that you can dance statistics around. What I've seen is a lot of statistical dancing and not a lot of acknowledgement of that warning that Professor Howe is sounding for us.

So in that regard, Mr. Minister, the \$2 million that have been announced for the task force on employment and education, how many of those dollars come from First Nations-Métis Relations?

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much for the question. And we've got a breakdown here. One point four million dollars of the 2 million came from Advanced Education, Employment, Immigration. Three hundred and thirty three thousand came from First Nations and Métis Relations. And the remainder in excess of 300,000 came from Education so some joint funding towards the \$2 million commitment to the joint task force.

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. What will the task force set out to accomplish that has not been gone over by the different summits that we've seen in the past years around the question of First Nations and Métis education? What new knowledge is hoped to be gained? And how is this different from ground that has been gone over in many ways to date?

**Mr. Crowe:** — It's Ron Crowe, deputy minister, First Nations and Métis Relations. Just in answer to your question, the biggest part of and what we feel will come out of this exercise is the engagement piece, engagement with the First Nation and Métis educators seeking solutions that are necessary to find those long-term solutions to make sure that people — First Nation, Métis youth — stay in school, get the quality education, and leading to other opportunities, skills development, post-secondary education. What we seek to get out of this exercise is to ensure that there's some solutions coming forward from the First Nation, Métis representatives so that we can find those solutions together.

Some of those details we're still negotiating and working out with the partnership with the FSIN to make sure that we have the right people on the task force, that we have the right supports, and that whatever recommendations have some effect within the communities. We don't want to be putting forward a number of recommendations and solutions that aren't attainable. The intent is to make sure that we have the appropriate dialogue with the communities and the representatives so that we can actually find those solutions. We're looking for solutions both on- and off-reserve.

There's a lot of efforts and a lot of work that has to take place in order to find that collaborative effort and meaningful ways to find solutions to keep young people in school to obtain that quality education and move on and move forward into an employment opportunity. So a lot of that work is essentially, in essence, to have the engagement with the leadership, the

educators to make sure that we find the proper solutions, that we're not just coming up with the solutions on our own, that we're actually developing the solutions with First Nation, Métis educators as well.

**Mr. McCall:** — How is this process different than — say — the tripartite MOU [memorandum of understanding] that's been undertaken with the feds, the FSIN, and the province on education?

**Mr. Crowe:** — What I believe it does is it complements the discussions around the tripartite MOU. There are some opportunities where we seek the federal government's involvement, and certainly they have a large role to play as it pertains to education on-reserve, given the authorities from the federal government. And I see opportunities that they will complement each other so that we can actually find those solutions together and find some opportunities where we can build on some success immediately. If there's opportunities where we can actually find some success, whether it be connectivity or other activities, we want to make sure that the two processes are working together and not separate. And I strongly believe that there is some opportunity for some complementary efforts on both sides, both from a tripartite MOU conversation and some of the work that we're doing on the joint task force.

**Mr. McCall:** — I guess in that regard, you rightly point out the role of the federal government in all of this. Before the budget was released, the minister along with a couple of your colleagues, he'd sent a letter to the federal government calling for action on First Nations education and funding thereof and action following up undertakings that had been made by the federal government the year previous. Do you look on the federal budget as a success in that regard, or how do you regard the federal budget? Do you see something in it that I don't for First Nations education?

[22:15]

**Mr. Crowe:** — The federal government has announced, as far as we know, they have announced an expert panel, have announced an expert panel. And it is our hope that some of the work that we do in the joint task force will also inform that process.

Now the expert panel, as we understand, is looking at solutions particularly in the on-reserve and possible changes to the legislation, i.e., the *Indian Act*. What that all entails, we're not certain about right now. We are working with or trying to get as much information as possible from officials. There has been a panel that has been announced, and I believe the names have been announced as well. And we hope that some of the work that we do on our task force, the work that we do on the MOU tripartite agreement will help inform that expert panel as well and hopefully see the kind of solutions and changes that are needed, particularly on-reserve where the federal government has a major role to play in terms of on-reserve education.

**Mr. McCall:** — Correct me if I'm wrong, but hasn't that expert panel been condemned by your partner in the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations?



**Mr. Crowe:** — There has been some conversation going on. I can't speak for the federal government on how they've . . . I don't think any of us can speak on behalf of that. We see the possibility of the linkage. Certainly there is a difference of opinion on how that, how that takes place. Nonetheless we look forward to our, at least, our conversations around the tripartite discussions, what opportunities are available and how that fits in with our joint task force.

**Mr. McCall:** — I guess I make reference to this, Mr. Minister, because obviously this is a fairly complex issue. It's terrain in which the federal government plays a huge role, should play a huge role. And I guess we've seen a different MOUs announced with great fanfare to very little profit and very little progress for the province of Saskatchewan.

So that is part of the . . . As a general principle, any time you can get people around a table talking about what's important and what that common ground is, I think that's fair enough. But the field cries out for action so urgently that it's very difficult to see a task force come forward in the name of the kind of educational and employment needs we've got around First Nations and Métis in this province. It's a fine endeavour and it's the engagement is important, as the deputy minister has pointed out. But the need for action is so great. And I guess we see that alongside, you know, we talked earlier about the exploratory tables that arose out of the duty to consult and accommodate process.

And I was showing my colleague the graph that was used to describe the baseline, trend line information for the 2010-11 plan, where it's a process that enables government to resolve the five outstanding issues from the 2008 round table on First Nations and Métis consultation and accommodation, and it's a blank box. And again I'd ask you what the update is on the exploratory process and the progress or lack thereof to date. And we've gone over that, so please understand our reticence to think that a task force is really what's required at this stage of the game.

But that being said, when is the task force to be announced? What is the composition of that task force? What is the budget for that task force? What's the division between in-kind coming out of the department? What's going to be paid to outside experts? What kind of outside experts are going to be engaged? What is the time line attached to the task force? There are any number of questions that can be asked about what goes forward with this task force, but I guess it still doesn't take away from the fact that we've got a terrible disparity between on-reserve funding in this province and off-reserve funding. We don't have the supply of educational professionals that we need in First Nations and Métis, and that that gap is still existing and that that gap still plays out in the kind of employment situations that the minister was describing.

So if the minister or officials could describe for us what is intended with the task force?

**Mr. Crowe:** — Well very briefly, I can just reiterate that the main intention is to ensure that there's some engagement. Some of the questions that you've asked me have not completely sorted out in terms of who's going to be named, the composition, some of the time frames. We're still in negotiation

with our partners on that. Essentially we are looking at, again, the long-term solutions both on- and off-reserve, and make sure that whatever solutions are being proposed out of the task force have some affect on actual delivery of education.

Again we can't speak for the federal government or what activity that they're undertaking with their expert panel, some of the disappointment around that, that was identified by the current chief. I can't really speak to that because those are engagements that we haven't been part of. But we can say that we are moving forward or attempting to move forward on developing a memorandum of understanding with ourselves, the FSIN, and the federal government in order to try to find some quick win, some immediate solutions, and achieve some of the action that's needed to support First Nations education, First Nations and Métis education where it's possible as well.

**Mr. McCall:** — Okay. Well I guess again there's some dissonance on our side where again we applaud that the minister and his colleagues took the step of asking for redress to matters of glaring inequity as it relates to, particularly in this case, First Nations educational funding. And then after the budget comes out from the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, you have a press release entitled "Federal budget fails to honour commitments to First Nations education and address glaring funding inequities."

And from the Premier, you have headlines like, and I'm quoting from Wednesday, March 23rd, 2011, Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*, "Wall approves of Tory budget." And the article itself, and I'm sure I don't need to . . . You know, look it up yourself. It's a fairly approving article about the Premier's thoughts on the federal budget that again do not address undertakings that have been made around First Nations education. So again we think the action before the budget was good. But when the federal government is so poorly serving what should be a huge priority for this province, I guess we'd expect a bit more.

And again this is not to speak for the federal government. This is what the Premier of this province, the leader of that Executive Council, has said to a budget that First Nations decry as an absolute failure in terms of previous commitments . . . is greeted with approval by the Premier. So I guess in terms of the details being worked out on the task force, there are details to be sorted out with the partners I guess. Could you inform the committee of who the partners are?

**Mr. Crowe:** — It is the FSIN.

**Mr. McCall:** — Is there any involvement . . . I guess there's no involvement from the Métis Nation on this task force. This is specifically focused on First Nations.

**Mr. Crowe:** — There is. We have kept the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan informed of what progress is taking place, and we hope to allow them the opportunity to make representation to the task force as well.

**Mr. McCall:** — So it's a . . . To understand this clearly, right now you're anticipating a task force on First Nations and Métis education and employment that doesn't include representation from the Métis Nation.

**Mr. Crowe:** — They will have opportunity to make representation. We've had conversations with officials from the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan. The other aspect is that the MNS itself doesn't necessarily run schools. They do have institutions delivering post-secondary and technical training. We hope that we'll be able to rely on that expertise that they do have there to make that representation.

endurance as well. We will adjourn this committee meeting now. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 22:30.]

We're not just looking on-reserve. We're also looking off-reserve in trying to find those practical solutions, sustainable solutions in order to address the gaps that exist for First Nations-Métis outcomes in education. So we do look forward to representation to the task force and some opportunity to share in looking at some of the practical long-term solutions as well.

**Mr. McCall:** — Again, so I can have this clear in my mind, Mr. Chair, if you've got a task force on First Nations employment and education and . . . Who sits on the task force is subject to negotiation, but the negotiation is with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations right now, and all other interested parties would be available to contribute in a presenting capacity or some such. Is that correct?

**Mr. Crowe:** — That's correct.

**Mr. McCall:** — I guess — and again given the expertise that has been built up as you rightly point out, just as there's been expertise built up in bodies like the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology or First Nations University of Canada or the band administered schools — certainly you've got a fair amount of expertise built up in bodies like the Gabriel Dumont Institute. I guess if the minister or the deputy minister could describe for me what was the deciding point on not including some kind of official Métis representation in this endeavour.

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Well thank you very much for the question, and I'll jump in here. Certainly our focus is where the gap is the largest and the gap is the widest. And we found from our statistics that it's with First Nations students, and that's where we wanted to direct the bulk of our efforts. Not to exclude Métis individuals, they'll certainly, as the deputy said, be invited to take part. And we're keeping them abreast of discussions that we are having. But indeed our focus here is on where the gap is the widest, and I want to make that clear.

I want to just spend a few seconds here to talk about some of the other questions that the member had put forward. And you know, it's very clear that we see, as a provincial government, the education issue's very similar to . . . And we've been working very closely with the FSIN, and we have articulated that to the federal government. We wish that they sometimes would see things the way the FSIN and the Government of Saskatchewan see them.

But at that opportunity, we've also, I've spoken with the minister, the federal minister, and indicated to him that we will be sharing the information that we receive from him, with him. And we look forward to that opportunity going forward.

**The Chair:** — Well thank you for your comments, Mr. Minister, and thank you for your officials being here tonight. The time being after 10:30, thank you to the committee for your