

8:33 a.m.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Okay, we'll call the meeting to order. We have before us today the Minister of Justice and Attorney General. Before we call him, can we have a motion to approve the agenda as proposed? Sue Olsen. Seconded by Laurie Blakeman. I'm sorry; I don't remember the constituencies.

We have two sets of minutes. We will deal with the minutes of March 10. Does anyone want to move that we adopt the minutes as circulated? LeRoy. Seconded by Dr. Raj Pannu. Agreed? Opposed? Carried.

Then we have the minutes for March 31. Does anyone want to move that we adopt the minutes as proposed? Dr. Pannu. Does anyone want to second this? Sue. All in favour? Opposed? Adopted as submitted.

Minister of Justice and Attorney General, you now have the floor. After you're done, we will be alternating questions between people on the front bench today and those behind there.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. As Minister of Justice and Attorney General I'm pleased to be here today to review with the committee the ministry's financial results related to the '97-98 fiscal year. With me today is our new deputy minister and Deputy Attorney General, Mr. Paul Bourque, to my far left; the executive director of corporate services division and senior financial officer, Mr. Dan Mercer, who's to my immediate right; the director of corporate support services branch, Dr. Randy Petruk, on my far right; and the director of financial services, Mr. Shawkat Sabur, who is to my immediate left.

I will begin by giving you an overview of the ministry's overall operating expenditures. During '97-98 the total voted operating spending for Alberta Justice was \$339.9 million, which was approximately \$1.2 million lower than the authorized budget. The authorized budget of \$341.1 million consisted of \$337.4 million in the approved estimates of the business plan and \$3.7 million in supplementary funding for achievement award payments to employees for meeting '97-98 government debt reduction measures. Within the context of the many spending pressures faced by the ministry during the '97-98 fiscal year, it is indeed commendable that the management and staff of the ministry were able to administer the funds provided to within one-fifth of 1 percent of its authorized operating vote. In the case of statutory spending, the \$26.8 million estimate under the Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Act exceeded expenditures by only \$360,000.

I believe a few words on the operations of each component of Alberta's justice system will assist members in understanding the financial information contained in the ministry's annual report. This information is found on pages 100 to 107 of the report, which I believe you all have a copy of. I'll begin with program 1.

Program 1, the ministry's support services, provides various support functions to the program areas of the ministry. The staff in this area are responsible for providing nonlegal services such as business planning, performance measurement, internal auditing, electronic data processing, human resource programs, management information, financial and administrative services, and communications and media relations. Departmental support services program spending in '97-98 was \$12.3 million, which was less than the authorized budget by \$100,000.

Located under program 2 is our court services division, and that provides administration planning and technical support to all courts in Alberta. There are four courts in the province, all constituted by provincial statute: the Court of Appeal, the Court of Queen's Bench,

the Surrogate Court and the Provincial Court. The department also maintains the registry for the Court of Appeal of the Northwest Territories. These courts maintain all court records and accept a wide variety of documents for filing from the public, lawyers, law enforcement agencies, and other government departments. Employees record all court proceedings, swear in or affirm witnesses and interpreters, mark and ensure the safekeeping of exhibits, process fines and other payments into court, perform searches, and provide general assistance to the public and lawyers. Court services also operates numerous law libraries, which provide legal information to judges, Crown prosecutors, defence counsel and the public. Spending in '97-98 for court services totaled \$63.6 million, which is very close to the budgeted amount.

Included in program 3 under legal services is the Legislative Counsel office, which drafts all government bills, regulations, and orders in council. In order to prepare and compose these documents, staff consult with ministers, deputy ministers, or chairmen and senior government officials in all ministries and agencies of government.

The civil law division, which is also located under program 3, is composed of three branches: civil law, constitutional and aboriginal law, and legal research and analysis. The civil law branch is responsible for providing legal advice and assistance to all government departments and for representing them in matters before the courts and various tribunals. The constitutional and aboriginal law branch provides specialized advice to the government concerning constitutional matters. The primary responsibility of our legal research and analysis branch is to provide legislative policy advice.

Our criminal justice division also falls under program 3. Its principle function is the prosecution of all offences under the Criminal Code, the Young Offenders Act, and provincial statutes in all Alberta courts as well as the Supreme Court of Canada. This division is divided into three branches. The appeals and criminal law policy branch is responsible for criminal appeals to the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada. Special prosecutions is responsible for providing specialized prosecutorial services in areas such as organized crime, significant commercial or corporate crime or crimes against government, while general prosecutions is responsible for all cases apart from those assigned to the other two branches.

The department's maintenance enforcement program is also included under program 3. This program's primary responsibility is to ensure that court orders for child support and spousal maintenance are collected and paid to the appropriate individuals. Altogether actual spending in '97-98 for the legal services program was \$40.5 million. This amount exceeded the authorized budget by \$2.2 million, and this variance essentially resulted from higher than expected contracted legal services in civil and criminal justice, unanticipated computer processing costs, and increased volumes in maintenance enforcement.

Program 4, support for legal aid, falls under this program. Alberta Justice, as you know, provides a grant to the Legal Aid Society of Alberta so that needy individuals have access to legal services they would not otherwise be able to acquire. In '97-98 the grant was \$22.5 million. Statistics show that over the last several years the legal aid caseload has dropped, no doubt a reflection of the decrease in crime. More importantly, the partnership between the Legal Aid Society, the Law Society, and our ministry is committed to ensuring that the most effective legal services are provided to those in need at the most reasonable cost.

Program 5 refers to the Public Trustee's office. This office has three primary roles: it acts as trustee of last resort to dependent adults, it administers the estates of deceased persons, and it acts as official guardian by protecting the assets and financial interests of

missing persons and children under 18 years of age. In '97-98 the Public Trustee's office spent \$6.2 million, which was almost identical to the budgeted amount.

Program 6 refers to fatality inquiries, which includes our medical examiner's office and the Fatality Review Board. The job of the medical examiner's office is to investigate all unexplained natural deaths and all unnatural deaths in Alberta. These investigations determine the identity of the deceased and the cause of death. The findings are typically used to settle estates or are used in court proceedings for both civil and criminal matters. The Fatality Review Board reviews all cases of accidental, unclassified, and undetermined deaths, including any death involving a ward of the court, a person held in custody, and persons institutionalized under the Mental Health Act. Actual spending in '97-98 for this program was \$3.5 million, which was marginally less than the program estimate.

8:43

Program 7. This is the public security division, and it's responsible for administering the Police Act. This act stipulates that an adequate and effective level of policing be maintained throughout Alberta. I know the Member for Edmonton-Norwood is particularly interested in this area in light of yesterday's scintillating debate on her motion. To this end our public security division manages the provincial police service agreement with the federal government for RCMP services and administers numerous aboriginal policing initiatives. This division also delivers crime prevention initiatives, provides court and legislature security and prisoner escort services, and maintains regulatory responsibilities such as licensing and monitoring of private investigators and security guards.

As you can see by reference 7.3 in the public accounts, this division was also responsible for the delivery of administrative services for firearms control. Another responsibility of the public security division is the support for programs and services for victims of crime. The '97-98 fiscal year was a transition year, as victims' programs and services are now provided for under the victims of crime fund. As you'll note, actual spending for '97-98 for program 7 was \$92.4 million, which was less than the budget by one-half million dollars.

Program 8 is the ministry's correctional services division, and it's responsible for administering judicial sanctions for adult and young offenders who are awaiting trial, are on probation or other forms of community disposition, or are sentenced to custodial dispositions. These judicial sanctions are delivered through a variety of community and custodial supervision programs. Actual spending for '97-98 for correctional services was \$98.9 million, which, I'm pleased to say, was under budget by \$2.9 million. This variance resulted from a lower than anticipated inmate population and reduced demands on community residential facilities.

Lastly, turning to the revenue schedule on page 73, the ministry's revenues in '97-98 totaled \$109.6 million, representing an increase of about \$8.4 million from the previous year. You will also note that there was a \$668,000 reduction in federal payments overall. While \$1.5 million less was received in '97-98 as a result of a decline in the number of federal inmates serving time in Alberta's correctional institutions, this was offset by \$1.3 million in new federal funding for child support guideline initiatives.

Finally, revenues from premiums, fees, and licences of \$32.9 million for '97-98 were \$500,000 higher than the previous year, and other revenue increased by \$8.7 million in '97-98, primarily due to the new provincial fine surcharge of \$6.2 million implemented on August 1 of '97. You are all aware that that's the 15 percent surcharge on provincial fines which is added and goes into the victims of crime fund. The remaining increase of \$2.5 million in

other revenue was from volume changes for items such as fines and late payment penalties and subrogated maintenance payments.

Mr. Chairman, Alberta Justice undertook numerous successful initiatives in '97-98, as outlined in our annual report, and I can say without hesitation that our success was due to the hard work and commitment of the ministry staff. Staff achieved these results by astutely managing our resources, identifying innovative savings opportunities and streamlining operations, and as we move forward, we will continue with this strategy as it underscores our commitment to provide Albertans with the most effective and efficient justice system possible.

Now that you've been presented with the financial and operational picture of Alberta Justice for the '97-98 fiscal year, I'd like to invite comments and questions from the members. Certainly if I'm unable to provide specific responses today, I will provide written responses after reviewing today's transcript. I'd also find it helpful, Mr. Chairman, as members are referring to particular line items, if they would give me a moment to find them, as I'm inundated with paper. This is the law department, and as you know, we live by the rule of paper. I will try and answer as best I can any questions you have. Just be patient as I try and find the particular reference you might be using.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Before we invite questions, I'd just like the Auditor General to introduce his guests present here today.

MR. VALENTINE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On my immediate left is Jim Hug, who is the Assistant Auditor General responsible for the portfolio of engagements which includes the Department of Justice, and on my right is Lawrence Taylor, the principal responsible for the work done in the department. In the gallery my colleagues are Bruce Laycock, who is our internal counsel, and Lori Ostafichuk, Ian Sneddon, William Poon, Joanne Knaus, and Sunil Khurana.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Minister of Justice, do you have any other introductions today?

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Although I didn't forget about them -- well, I did forget about them, I guess, because I didn't introduce them -- I have my two EAs in the gallery, Hazel Cail and Jack Janssen.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

We will begin with Ms Olsen.

MS OLSEN: Thank you. I would like to start, and I'll draw the attention of the minister to his annual report, note 9. That's on page 68 of the report. Also, I'll be referring to the Auditor General's report, 164-165.

The Auditor General points out that although "some monitoring of policing is performed on services falling within the Federal/Provincial policing agreement . . . the Department needs to improve the extent of its monitoring." The Auditor General "found little evidence that Justice has evaluated the adequacy and effectiveness of policing, especially for municipal police services." The Auditor General recommended in recommendation no. 34 that "the Department of Justice in collaboration with policing services set measurable performance objectives for service delivery in the Province." My first question to the minister is: what type of monitoring system was in place in the ministry during '97-98 to

monitor the effectiveness of policing services carried out under the federal/provincial policing agreement? If you could enlighten us there, that would be helpful.

MR. HAVELOCK: I'd be delighted to enlighten you. The public security division monitors the adequacy and effectiveness of policing services in terms of the following areas. They review to determine whether there are enough police officers in the community. Do the police officers have an acceptable workload? Can the community afford to meet its policing requirements? Are the citizens satisfied with the policing they receive? Are the police delivering certain provincial programs; for example, domestic violence charges and victim impact statement usage?

The department uses a number of reports when conducting this review. There's the LEMIS report. That's the amount and type of crime and clearance rates. There's a costing review of Alberta police report. That relates to police cost, workload staffing, municipal finances. There's the RCMP annual business plan and priorities. I know the department works very closely with the RCMP in putting that together. A tool that we use constantly is the Alberta Justice public survey, and that indicates satisfaction with police and victimization rates. And certainly police reports of public complaints are used.

As I mentioned, we work closely with the RCMP. Their provincial policing objectives are established through consultation between K Division and public security division. Because of the extremely wide variation in policing needs, individual municipalities set their own annual policing objectives. The public security division monitors their adequacy and effectiveness through the measures which I've just outlined for you.

MS OLSEN: My second question, then, would be to ask the minister what steps the ministry took during '97-98 to work with police services, not just the RCMP, to develop a formal definition of adequate and effective policing services. From the Auditor General's report, he notes that complaint information, police officers per community, and crime stats were not effective performance indicators without a formal definition of adequate and effective policing services.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, unless I'm mistaken, I don't believe we worked up a specific definition of what are adequate or effective policing services. This relates to the discussion we had in the House yesterday, too, because it can vary from community to community. It depends on the crime rate. It depends on the ability of the community to actually support and offset the costs associated with policing. I think it was yesterday when I used the example of St. Albert, in which I believe each police officer was investigating 87 crimes; and in High Prairie, 131 crimes per officer. So while we work as closely as we can, it's very difficult to come up with a definition which would apply provincewide because of the varying needs and circumstances in each community.

8:53

The member has some police experience herself, and if she has any ideas or concepts she would like us to consider in that regard, put them down in writing for me, ship them over, and we'd be happy to take a look at it. I know you're happy.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Okay. We'll have next Mr. Yankowsky, followed by Dr. Pannu.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good morning, everyone. On page 106 of the Alberta Justice '97-98 annual report, program reference 8.2.1, we see that the Edmonton Remand Centre had an operating deficit of \$378,000. My question here is: why did

this deficit occur?

MR. HAVELOCK: I've been advised there were several reasons for the deficit at the Edmonton Remand Centre. We reviewed and tightened the eligibility criteria for the house arrest program in '96-97. That resulted in an increase in the number of weekenders serving time in the centre, and that required additional resources. Secondly, and this is a concern -- again, one that I've worked with the Member for Edmonton-Norwood on -- the centre has experienced higher than expected absenteeism from bargaining unit staff, and this required additional staff to cover the absenteeism. The division is taking this matter seriously, and we're in the process of implementing a positive workplace strategy to try and address this absenteeism plus some other issues there. We're also participating in the governmentwide employee support recovery assistance program which facilitates early as possible return to work for employees on illness leave. So it was those factors which led to our spending a little bit more than we anticipated at the centre.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you.

Again on page 106, program references 8.2.5, 8.2.7, 8.2.9, and 8.2.12, we see that several centres in fact realized surpluses, for which they are probably to be commended. How was this achieved?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, the bottom line, as I indicated in my opening remarks, is that although we have seen a recent upswing, the crime rate has been declining not only in Alberta but in Canada for the past number of years, and that has actually resulted in savings in manpower costs due to the lower than anticipated offender population counts. Also, some staff positions weren't filled. Again the offender population counts had an impact in that area. I don't anticipate this trend continuing. In Alberta we're faced with the unique situation of having had a very strong economy, and unfortunately at times that does generate a little more work for our department through increased levels of crime. So if I'm not mistaken, I think we have seen an upswing just this last year. Whether that will continue or not, I don't know, but we may well see these numbers changing in the near future.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

We'll have Dr. Pannu, followed by Mrs. O'Neill

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I won't ask the question of legal aid -- that won't be my first question -- so I may disappoint the hon. minister.

Mr. Minister, I want to take you to pages 19 and 20 of your department's report. My question has to do with the first measure for goal 1: "public satisfaction with the justice system in Alberta." On page 20 I notice the graph there. It appears that over the three-year period for which the graph reports the information, the level of satisfaction grows minimally. Perhaps it might not be unfair to say it's relatively stagnant. From 49 to 52: you know, there is some change, but minor. And the percentages reported there of course, lumped together, are "somewhat satisfied" and "very satisfied." So the question arises: what is the composition of this 52 percent? What portion of 52 percent comes from only "somewhat satisfied," and what part comes from "very satisfied"? Related to it is the observation made on that page towards the end of the second paragraph there. The relatively stagnant nature of the satisfaction seems to be explained with reference to lack of information given the fact that the legal system and the justice system is very complex.

I'd like you to respond to my observation on it. You know, more knowledge doesn't necessarily lead to more satisfaction, because more knowledge could also lead to knowing more about the failures

of the system, a system not working. Are there some other factors that you think may also contribute to this lack of growth in satisfaction? If so, what are they?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, what I'd like to indicate, despite the fact it's not shown in here, is that our most recent survey indicates that we've gone up to 61 percent for "satisfied" and "somewhat satisfied." I know I'm venturing outside the parameters of the document, but I think I do have some leeway to do that, unless I'm called to order.

AN HON. MEMBER: Order.

MR. HAVELOCK: Thank you.

I don't have the breakdown that you asked for specifically on "very" as opposed to "somewhat," but we'll get that for you. We've had discussions about this issue in the House before, and it's a difficult thing to measure. Are there other factors which contribute to it? Well, for example, it depends on who you call with respect to the survey. This is done randomly, and you may be getting someone on the line who's had absolutely no involvement with the system and is very happy as opposed to someone who's just been through a civil or criminal trial or another legal matter and they could be very dissatisfied. That's one of the factors which may be impacting this.

The survey itself is not foolproof. But I believe a lot of it is due to the complexity of the system. You, yourself, participated in the justice summit public consultations. Also, we have not done a very good job, I feel -- and the department's trying to do more each year -- at really getting information out to Albertans on what the system's all about: how they can access services, things of that nature. We need to enhance that, and that's one of the reasons we had the justice summit itself: to try and get information out to people so they could better understand what was going on in the system.

I've just been advised that the dissatisfaction which is recorded is primarily related to sentencing and with the federal Young Offenders Act. As you know, of course, the sentencing -- there are certain parameters established by the courts, a range of sentences given, also through some legislative measures. That again is where the education aspect comes in. A sentence may be entirely appropriate. However, due to some of the emotion or the circumstances surrounding the case, the general public may not be pleased with what the end result was.

The Young Offenders Act -- I can recall an Angus Reid survey that, I think, indicated about 15 percent satisfaction with the Alberta public regarding the Young Offenders Act. We've tried to push for some changes. The federal minister has recommended some changes. We don't feel they've gone far enough; nevertheless, they're a good start. So I think those are a couple of the other factors.

There are issues in justice that we can't control. The Criminal Code is within the jurisdiction of Parliament, and we administer the code at the provincial level. That's where a lot of the dissatisfaction seems to stem from on the criminal side. It's an area where we can't have significant impact. Nevertheless, we need to do a better job in explaining to the public how it works.

9:03

DR. PANNU: Supplemental, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I'm pleased that you recognize the nature of the survey instruments. They're blunt instruments, and I think there's a need obviously to find an instrument that will be more sensitive and provide information that's more reliable.

You referred to my participation in the public hearings on justice. As I've indicated so many times, that was a very, very fruitful

experience for me personally and, I know, for Albertans. I've certainly commended you for undertaking this particular measure. What I heard there were two things. Yes, people were concerned about the young offenders, and some source of dissatisfaction does reside in their understanding of how the Young Offenders Act creates problems. The other part that people stated very clearly to us as a contributing factor to their dissatisfaction was the growing delays in the delivery of justice, which has to do with the limits your government has imposed on itself in terms of how much it wants to spend on delivering justice, expediting the delivery of it. I wonder if you want to comment on the second part in particular.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, we have taken a look at our performance with respect to, for example, time to trial, and we'd like to see it improved. Unfortunately, in some areas we're actually moving to the national average, and I'd like to see that reversed. What will have an impact on that and also in the civil areas is our ability to divert people from the formal system into a less formal system; for example, youth justice committees. We have in excess of 70 of them in the province. They work very well, and we provide as much support as we possibly can with our limited resources to those committees.

We have expanded a mediation project into Calgary. We had one in place in Edmonton for some time regarding civil matters. It worked very successfully. I think the success rate was 70 percent plus. If I'm wrong, I'll be corrected at a later date, I'm sure. Calgary we just started up I think a year ago.

The courts are also into case management, where they're trying to ensure that a particular judge is assigned a case to make sure that really the parties are moving it forward through the system.

What we need as a department -- and we've talked about it -- is to come up with something, an alternative dispute-resolution system or mechanism that we quite frankly can really call our own, that can be our own initiative, and we can try and help the system. I've talked to my Deputy Attorney General about that, and that's an area we are looking at.

What you're raising is the access issue, access to justice, and it is a concern for us. It was one of the issues, again, that we raised at the justice summit. It's not necessarily a question of more money. It's in some cases a question of reallocating the dollars that we're spending, let's say, in a particular court to an alternative system. I believe that in Ontario for civil matters they require both parties to participate in mandatory mediation. Is it a \$100 charge per party? Okay. I think there's a fee. Now, it's quite minimal when you compare that to the costs of going through an expensive court process. We're looking at the possibility of that system in Alberta; it's some time away. But it's really reduced the caseload in Ontario; it's been very effective. So we're cognizant of the problem, and we're working as closely as we can with the bar and the bench also to put some more initiatives in place.

Is there anything anyone wants to add? [interjection] Right. There is one thing, and I announced this a little while ago. We have a new ADM for criminal justice, and we are putting more money into the front end of that system with respect to charge screening. I would assume that occurs after the charge but prior to going to court to see if we can handle those matters more expeditiously. That's an area, again, which should reduce some of the workload the courts are presently facing.

In fact in criminal justice, believe it or not, we're trying to make it a little more user friendly or customer friendly. We want the prosecutors to work more closely with victims, for example. As I've just indicated, the charge screening should assist us in that area. Really, justice has to become much more service oriented. We've been working in the maintenance enforcement area with respect to

some initiatives that have come forward. That's where we've been trying to go for the last couple of years, and maybe, just maybe, that's impacted some of the public satisfaction, although I don't know.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mrs. O'Neill, followed by Mr. Sapers.

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Mr. Minister and staff, and Mr. Auditor General and your staff too. I'd like to come back to the purpose of our public accounts, which has to do with looking at your financial reporting, in particular program 8 under correctional services. I note in your report that there is an overexpenditure of \$421,000 -- pardon me, it's on page 106 -- under administration, 8.1.1. My question is: would you explain that overexpenditure as per your projected and actual budget?

MR. HAVELOCK: It's really a brief explanation. It occurred primarily as a result of a midyear transfer of information technology: resources from the Justice corporate business services to the correctional services division. So these moneys were being spent within the department, but it just happened to be in a different area of the department. They were then transferred to correctional services because this was a more appropriate area.

MRS. O'NEILL: Then, Mr. Minister, my supplemental would be: is it noted elsewhere in the area in which they were taken?

MR. HAVELOCK: That they've been shuffled out of? Yes, and the corresponding entry would be -- give us a moment -- it's actually a global amount. What I can do for you, hon. member, is at a later date get a specific reference for you to show where we've offset it.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Sapers, followed by Mr. Johnson.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Mr. Minister and Mr. Auditor General, and welcome to the new deputy. Well, welcome back, but welcome in this role.

I want to ask a couple of questions first of all, Mr. Minister, about the victims of crime fund. I note in your annual report, when you talk about the crime fund and the financial statements -- it's pages 109 through 118. I'm particularly looking at note 6 on page 117, if you want to take just a second to find that. I'm wondering if you can help me understand your response to the Auditor General's recommendation that the \$119,000 in administrative expenses of the victim fund be treated as an expense of the fund. The Auditor General and your department seem to have a difference of opinion on that.

MR. HAVELOCK: Is that the reference on page 167 that you're referring to?

MR. SAPERS: Page 117, note 6.

MR. HAVELOCK: Okay. Fine. Actually there was a reference also on page 167 of the Auditor General's report.

Certain administration costs such as wages and supplies were paid by the public security division from voted operating funds rather than from the victims of crime regulated fund, and that was raised by the Auditor General. This mainly resulted from the implementation and start-up of the Victims of Crime Act in August of '97. Office space, staff, and other supporting resources in some instances were shared during the phasing in of the new act. To the extent practicable now and in the future we're going to have those expenditures reported in the victims of crime fund and have them

charged to the fund. So we'll be making that change.

MR. SAPERS: I assumed in my question that the increase in the administrative cost was also start-up related, so it's the same note.

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. I don't believe we're going to see an increase in administration. Those are primarily start-up costs -- am I right? -- the \$119,000. [interjection] Okay. We'll get you a specific answer on that, but you at least have my commitment that there's no intention to increase administrative expenditures.

9:13

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Minister, thank you. When it comes to the granting history of the fund last year, I note that the budget called for grants in excess of \$4 million. I believe it was \$4.38 million. But the fund only provided grants -- it was far less than a million. In fact I think it was about \$680,000.

MR. HAVELOCK: Could you give me a reference?

MR. SAPERS: In your annual report on page 112.

That is a fairly dramatic difference between what was intended in the first year and what actually happened. With the number of victim services organizations existing in this province who are working hard and are cash strapped, I'm wondering what criteria or terms and conditions of eligibility were used by your department to make the grants and whether your first year's experience has led you to conclude that you might want to make some changes so that more of the money actually flows to the community.

MR. HAVELOCK: Actually we are working with respect to the criteria. I've had discussions with, for example, the chiefs of police from throughout the province. The concern they raise is that quite often you'd have two programs, one, let's say, in Medicine Hat and one in a smaller community, and they would both be receiving a grant of \$15,000 or \$20,000 as opposed to a grant based on, for example, the number of people they're serving or whether the community was able to provide additional resources to support the program. So the criteria: we're working closely with the board which evaluates all the requests for funding to amend the criteria to ensure that each program receives a base amount so that they can continue to operate but also take into account the level of service they're providing and whether the community itself is coming forward with any additional dollars.

Now for the variance itself specifically, I don't want to even hazard a guess as to why that's there. I will get you a specific answer on that, but I don't believe it's because the board was very stringent in the way it was administering the funds. It simply may well be that they didn't receive enough requests to warrant the full expenditure. I don't know, but I'll get you that answer.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Next Mr. Johnson, followed by Ms Blakeman.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Mr. Minister and Auditor General and others. I draw your attention to page 105 of your annual report, program 7, public security. In this particular program there's a substantial overexpenditure of close to half a million dollars in two particular areas. One is listed as 7.2.3, First Nations policing, with an overexpenditure of \$508,000. The other one is 7.4.2, court security and prisoner escort, with an overexpenditure of \$479,000. I'm just wondering if you might explain why we have these overexpenditures.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, on the First Nations policing services you're right. The contractual obligations exceeded the budget allocation by approximately half a million dollars. What we did: a portion of the anticipated surplus from provincial policing was used to offset this shortfall. What this really is is simply a short-term solution. The issue of the funding of First Nations police services was raised by the Member for Athabasca-Wabasca in the review he conducted, and it was also a matter that was looked at at the justice summit within the overall context of aboriginal justice issues. I guess all I can tell you is: yes, they overspent their budget. There was obviously a need to do so. What we're going to be doing is addressing this in the longer term and coming forward with some recommendations in the near future arising from the work the Member for Athabasca-Wabasca did. I don't have a better answer for you other than to say that we're trying to address it as quickly as possible.

We need to also keep in mind that aboriginal and First Nations policing services are faced with very unique situations. They do attempt to typically police a small number of people in a very large geographic area. There are a number of issues which impact the overall policing required, quite typically the economic circumstances of the people that they're attempting to provide service to. So we're sensitive to it. There was a need to spend the money, but we want to ensure that in the future they meet budget requirements. We're also evaluating whether they do need additional resources.

Your 7.4.2, court security and prisoner escorts. That the \$479,000 that's primarily attributable to the purchase cost of firearms, ammunition, and related training costs. The program area initiated a replacement of its obsolete firearms following consultation with another recommendation of the RCMP. Additional costs were also incurred for increased security to the courts and elevated levels of employee illness and absenteeism which required cover-off. Those are the areas which led to some overexpenditure there.

As I indicated earlier, we are bringing in a positive workplace program. It was initially driven by some of the issues we were facing at Edmonton Remand, but it certainly has application to our department as a whole. We hope that in the future that program will also help ensure we don't have any overexpenditure in this area either due to absenteeism.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

I wonder if you might also comment on the, shall I say, lesser overexpenditure on program support services, 7.1.1, of \$123,000.

MR. HAVELOCK: Okay. This related to the cost of co-ordinating the implementation of the department's serious and violent crime initiatives. These resources were temporarily contracted or hired to permit secondment of the needed expertise to effect implementation. But these are not ongoing costs, so we don't anticipate an overexpenditure next year.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Ms Blakeman, followed by Mr. Loughheed.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you. Welcome to the minister and his staff and additional staff joining us in the gallery, to the Auditor General and his staff and additional staff in the gallery. References for you would be page 24 of your report, which is the key measure for goal 5; page 34, which is initiative 9; note 7 on page 68; and vote 3.5.1. This would be maintenance enforcement.

I notice, not with surprise, that for your key measure for goal 5, there's a satisfaction rating with the Alberta maintenance enforcement program of 54.9 percent. Well, we're going to try harder.

What I'm looking for in particular -- and I'm sure you have an answer because I'm sure you were anticipating this -- is what steps did the ministry take in the fiscal year we are examining to establish a target for this performance measurement, and did you make any attempt to compare it to other provincial jurisdictions?

MR. HAVELOCK: With respect to the latter part of the question, I don't believe we've compared it with other jurisdictions. I frankly don't know if other jurisdictions measure satisfaction ratings with the clients that they're attempting to serve, although that's something we'll take a look at. If other jurisdictions do perform such a survey, we may learn something from it and be able to incorporate it in our own measurement process. So we'll take a look at that.

This was the first year, if I'm not mistaken, that this performance measure was actually in place. Therefore, there has not been an opportunity to amend or revise it. You'll see next year whether we've had any impact with respect to some of the changes we've made in maintenance enforcement. I'm just being advised why it will never be very high. That's because, of course, you're serving both creditors and debtors, and the debtors typically don't want to pay and the creditors don't feel they're getting enough in the first place. That's why I indicated at 54.9 percent -- I thought that was higher than we would have actually been getting on the survey. In any event, because it was a first year, we really didn't have a baseline to go from, but we'll look at the jurisdictions.

9:23

As you know, though, we've increased our budget for '99-2000, and there's approximately \$1.5 million which will be in place to implement some new program initiatives. More than half of the increased funds will be directed towards customer service improvements. That goes back to my earlier comments regarding the need to make the system more user friendly. We'll be creating a special investigation unit to deal with those hard-to-handle cases, which should also significantly impact, I believe, employee productivity and morale, because if we can take some of the more difficult cases and put in additional resources, that will relieve some of the stress related with this particular job. We also want to improve client communications and service levels. A portion of the funds will also go towards business process and systems improvements and staff developments.

We are also looking at a new performance measure, which you might recall we discussed during the business planning process, and that is the proportion of funds collected compared to the amount of funds we actually should be collecting, which I think is a much more effective measure of whether or not the program is doing its job.

So that's a kind of long answer to your short question, but I can't tell you what we've done in response to this beyond what I've just indicated with respect to the budget initiatives we have, and those are quite significant impacts. As you can recall, we had a committee review the whole program when I was first appointed minister. That review took approximately a year, and we reacted to it quite quickly.

MS BLAKEMAN: Okay.

This supplementary is specific to what's written under initiative 9 on page 34, and that's around the automation of the federal tracing requests and the garnishment of federal moneys. What results were achieved by this that allowed you to streamline administration and service delivery?

MR. HAVELOCK: I don't have that specific answer for you, but I will get it for you in writing.

I'm just reiterating what's in here. It does state that there has been

some efficiency achieved because we can now communicate directly with Justice Canada. I have to assume that speeds the garnishment process for and on behalf of the creditor. But, again, we'll get back to you with some specifics.

MS BLAKEMAN: If that's the case, then I'd be interested in what it was and what it is now and what you think you might be able to achieve.

MR. HAVELOCK: Sure.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The minister can send that information through the chair, and we'll circulate it as additional information.

MR. HAVELOCK: Thank you. Right.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: And if you need to direct any of your deputies to supplement your answers, that's allowed in this meeting too.

Mr. Lougheed, followed by Ms Olsen.

MR. LOUGHEED: Good morning. I'll be referring to page 98. Under correctional services expenditures that were authorized -- for the Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Centre, of course, out in my constituency, and Calgary Correctional and Calgary Remand -- all the expenditures went elsewhere with the exception of the \$91,000 to Calgary Remand. Is there any particular reason why the expenditures for the most part didn't go to the centres they were intended for?

MR. HAVELOCK: You're thinking of the capital expenditures; right?

MR. LOUGHEED: Right.

MR. HAVELOCK: Okay. Well, the difference between the estimates and the actual costs relates to the prioritizing that occurs within the department on an annual basis and within the division. What we do is conduct regular security audits to determine where the need is, and those capital expenditures were reallocated and made where needed. In '97-98 the expenditures were for security enhancements such as cameras and electronic gates to some areas, upgrading security fencing, and improving locking systems. So despite the fact there is a budget approved for specific centres, when reviewing the system as a whole throughout the year, it was determined there were greater needs in some other facilities.

MR. LOUGHEED: With respect, then, to the adding up of those numbers there, budgeted was \$650,000 and expenditures were \$558,000, so the difference -- could you elaborate on that a little bit, please?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, I guess we just didn't spend it. It wasn't needed in the system. It was determined that our level of security was sufficient, and therefore we didn't expend that. What would it be? About \$100,000 based on the numbers you gave me? And it fluctuates, hon. member, from year to year. What we try and do, to the extent we can, is not spend our budget. We came in, as I indicated earlier, I think, about a million or million and a half lower. But there are often unanticipated expenses too. For example, this past year, in light of the court decision, we had to come forward and ask for a supplementary estimate in excess of, I think, \$4 million or \$5 million to offset those expenditures. So we simply try and

manage within the budget we have and determine what our absolute needs are as opposed to wants.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Ms Olsen, followed by Mr. Stevens.

MS OLSEN: Thank you. I want to refer to the annual report. I can refer the minister to page 27 in that report. My first question is: how did the serious habitual/significant harm offender comprehensive action program, SHOCAP, implemented in 1997 contribute to the Alberta Justice initiative of reducing the level of serious and violent crime in '97-98? What happened?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, I can give you some background on that. I anticipated you asking that question because I believe you asked that question last year. Well, let's call it SHOCAP, because I don't want to try and repeat what you just tried to repeat. It officially commenced on a provincewide basis in April '97, and in order to provide some background information, I can tell you that the program is an integrated approach to the early identification, investigation, prosecution, incarceration, and intensive community supervision of targeted offenders.

SHOCAP offenders are identified to all components of the criminal justice system. It's based on the premise that a relatively small number of offenders commit a disproportionate amount of serious crimes. When the program first began, there were 190 offenders designated on Alberta SHOCAP. Today there are 345 offenders so designated. To reiterate what I said earlier -- and it relates to recidivism -- I can tell you that on average approximately 40 percent of SHOCAP offenders are in custody at any given time. Offenders placed on the program remain on that program as long as their offending behaviour continues. They must remain crime free for a period of one year before being removed from the program.

Now, since the program only commenced in April '97, I can't provide information concerning, for example, previous recidivism, but in terms of assessing the success of the program, I think the fact that the number of offenders identified has risen over two years would indicate that it is successful, although of course I'd prefer to see it going the other way. The police use the program extensively, and all components of the justice system co-operate to ensure that these offenders do not fall through the gaps. I think to date it's been relatively successful, and it's something that, as you know, hon. member, Albertans expect. They expect us to keep track of the serious individual offenders, and that's what the program is doing. It's worked well, primarily too because the police are using it.

MS OLSEN: Thank you. I believe they are doing a good job in that respect.

You talked about recidivism. I note on page 28 of the same report that you were able to work with heads of corrections nationally to do a recidivism study. I'm just wondering when that particular study will see an end if, in fact, that's a longitudinal view following any number of offenders that you've identified, or what exactly can Albertans expect in that regard?

MR. HAVELOCK: Unfortunately I'm advised they I haven't come up with anything as of yet. I can recall that when first being appointed, this was an area I reviewed with department officials. It's quite difficult to come up with a measure relating to recidivism. The provinces, quite frankly, don't keep essentially the same information, but they are continuing to work on it. I guess the difficulty though -- let's assume they establish a measure. Well, that would not necessarily measure that the justice system is failing. It would probably measure that our social safety net is failing as a whole, because of course people reoffend for a number of reasons.

9:33

What we've been trying to do, for example, with young offenders is that when they leave our facilities, we have a couple of programs in place. One is an arts-related program, another a sports program to try to ensure they have some structure. But again, until you have a situation where you can provide other opportunities for all offenders as opposed to going back to the environment in which they offended, you're going to see continued rates of recidivism.

I'm advised that there are a number of major methodological issues associated with this, and there is also a cost. There being a cost, I would have to assume that we haven't figured out who's going to be paying for what as of yet. Is that fair?

DR. PETRUK: Yeah. We want to get a national indicator.

MR. HAVELOCK: Okay. Well, you can speak. Why don't you go ahead and answer some of this, Dr. Petruk.

DR. PETRUK: Recidivism is an important measure, as the member has pointed out. We think it's very important to get national comparisons, and to do that, we have to count the same things the same way across the country. I think there's a consensus that it should be done. It is costly because it would include, if we did it now, retrofitting old systems to do the new way of counting. So we would as a general strategy try to work towards future enhancements of changing the systems into a national standard. It does take some time.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Okay. We'll have Mr. Stevens, followed by Dr. Pannu.

MR. STEVENS: Thank you. Mr. Minister, your department clearly is to be commended for coming in on budget for this particular fiscal year. I find it interesting that so much work is put into the budget process, and in looking at the actuals for the various programs, both for the total program and the various individual components of the programs, there are significant variances: sometimes overexpenditure, sometimes underexpenditure. What I would appreciate a comment on is what your department does throughout the year to deal with those variances and actually at the end come up with a balanced budget.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, what quite often will drive the amount that is expended -- and I'll use organized crime as a good example. It was an item that was not budgeted for, I think, during '97-98, yet there were some expenditures associated with that. I think it was in excess of \$400,000, if I'm not mistaken. Now, am I in the right budget year, or am I in the wrong one? That's the right year? Okay. So what we did there is we had to reallocate from some areas where we were spending less. As I indicated earlier, in correctional services, because the offender population was going down and that impacted overall operating costs, you can within operating budgets shift dollars, and that does happen.

In some other instances, for example, you'll see the cost of outside counsel increase, because you can never predict what's going to happen with a particular lawsuit being filed against government or with a particular court decision. So the department is constantly evaluating where its dollars are going. I believe there's a weekly management meeting. I'm sorry; it's every two weeks. There's a monthly forecast to make sure that we're on track. Any problems that arise, if they're significant problems, are quite often brought to my attention.

The bottom line is that after a number of years -- and we have a

lot of experience here -- they generally have a pretty good idea of what sort of budget they're going to require based on past experience, which is why, for example, next year you may see an increased budget requirement, where we're not saving close to \$3 million in correctional services because of the blip I mentioned earlier with crime rates increasing.

So they're constantly evaluating it. I'm happy to say that they are not at my door every day asking me to review budgetary issues. I like to think I'm there to take forward government policy and ensure that it's enacted while still being there in the event a big problem arises. I can't be any more specific for you other than indicating that they meet biweekly. There's monthly forecasting, and the system in place is pretty good for tracking where the expenditures are.

MR. STEVENS: Thank you.

For my supplemental I have a specific question relating to the annual report at page 103, specifically program 3, legal services, criminal justice division. It's noted there that there's an operating deficit of some \$1.3 million. I was wondering, Mr. Minister, if you could explain how that deficit occurred.

MR. HAVELOCK: That's the criminal justice you're looking at?

MR. STEVENS: Correct.

MR. HAVELOCK: Okay. That's on page 103. Well, a couple of things occurred there. We had to hire extra ad hoc Crown prosecutors, which resulted in additional professional fees to cover Crown vacancies. We had to pay for court-ordered lawyers for the accused. We had to pay for out-of-department lawyers with respect to matters where there was a potential conflict of interest if the Crown acted. There was also the payment of costs awarded against the Crown.

I can specifically mention that Crown vacancies resulted from 20 internal promotions or transfers, 11 staff who pursued outside government opportunities. One retired, two didn't return after a maternity leave, and one was promoted to the Provincial Court of Alberta. Recruitment to most of the new 18 positions -- you can recall we had \$1 million set aside in our budget -- occurred by the end of August of that year. So that generally explains why we had the overexpenditure in the criminal justice division.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Minister, I won't disappoint you; I'll ask you some questions on legal aid. If you'd go back to pages 25, 26 of your departmental report and also to the Attorney General's report, page 166.

MR. HAVELOCK: The Auditor General's report.

DR. PANNU: The Auditor General's. I'm sorry.

MR. HAVELOCK: Although we do look alike.

DR. PANNU: I'm sorry to have mistaken one for the other.

Clearly the Auditor General raises a question of the mismatch between that which is required and that which is allocated by your department. My questions certainly are around that issue but are slightly different questions. Is there an explanation there for why this surplus has been growing? There's a pattern, you know, from '92 onwards. You can see that's happening. The simple answer, of course, is that the need is going down. I understand your department doesn't set the eligibility criteria; someone else does. But would you be able to provide us with some information on whether or not there have been changes in the eligibility criteria which might explain this

growing surplus? That's my first question.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, the eligibility criteria, I believe, had not changed in 1998. I think that change is quite recent, and what they're doing, because they've actually managed their budget quite well and eliminated a significant deficit from a number of years ago, is they've been able to expand the criteria so they can serve more people.

What I could do for you is give you a bit of an explanation on how we budget and what that \$18.5 million includes. What we do on an annual basis is take into account the overall financial circumstances of the legal aid program. They also have to present to us an updated budget submission and business plan. It's through these processes that we establish a level of funding for the society that dealt with previous deficit situations, the changes to financial eligibility that you've just mentioned, and funding for operating and contingency fees. These past achievements, in conjunction with potential future changes to the society's operations, were the basis for determining year-to-year funding.

9:43

Now, I can give you a breakdown on the surplus itself, but let's not -- I just made the same mistake. I don't think we should call it a surplus, because it's not money sitting there that's unaccounted for nor has any legal attachment to it. Rather, I guess the department would prefer to call it a deferred contribution restricted. That's as stated in the Legal Aid Society financial statements. It's allocated as follows: \$12.9 million goes to legal aid operation liability reserve. That's to cover the estimated cost of outstanding certificates; in other words, certificates that have been issued but not presented for payment. As at March 31, '98, there were 22,400 outstanding certificates. So that money is accounted for.

There's a legal aid contingency reserve of \$0.4 million, and that's to cover an unexpected increase in demand for services and also a decrease in other sources of revenue and changes to the tariff, for example.

There's a youth office operations liability reserve, \$2.5 million. That would be the estimated cost of winding up the operations of the youth office, if such a decision were ever made. There's the youth office contingency reserve, \$2.7 million. That's to be used to fund the maximum estimated cost of completing all legal services authorized to March 31 of '98.

You may be aware there's been a request from the Law Society to look at increasing the tariff that lawyers are presently paid. I think it's \$61 per hour incurred. Now, that obviously has a financial impact. If the budget was to stay the same and you increase the tariff, you're likely going to be serving fewer clients. Please correct me if I'm wrong, but we are looking at how we can use some of these dollars, at least for the short term, to perhaps look at that area. The tariff has not increased for quite some time, if I'm not mistaken, so the Law Society probably has a legitimate concern as to the tariff remaining at \$61.

We need a long-term solution. Part of the long-term solution likely is to have some staff counsel, much like we've done with the young offenders, where you have a mixed system as opposed to simply retaining outside or private counsel. There are also some individuals who basically are at a set salary and handle a certain number of cases, and that's worked very well. It's probably a trade-off. It's a bit of a negotiation. If the Law Society wishes to see their tariff increase, that's fine. We'd like to see a pilot project in this area with respect to adult offenders.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Minister, it pleases me to hear that the . . .

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Auditor General would like to supplement.

DR. PANNU: Oh, I'm sorry.

MR. VALENTINE: I want to make sure that the point we are making is understood. The reserves and other contingencies for future events that the minister describes are things that may transpire in the future, and that's not what the financial statements reflect. The financial statements reflect a surplus of 18 and a half million dollars, and my objection is that you're funding this organization in advance of its expenditures. So my point remains.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, Mr. Auditor General, that's a good point. I'm sure that right after this my staff will explain why to me. Unless you'd like to explain it now. No? Okay; fine. We'll talk about it later, and if we have anything for you further to respond to the Auditor General's comments, we'll make sure we get that to the chairman and to the committee.

MR. STEVENS: Could we have the explanation now so that we have it in context?

MR. HAVELOCK: Would you like the explanation now? Okay. I don't know if they have an explanation now.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are you going to give an explanation now or forward it through the chair?

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, if the hon. member would like us to respond now, I think my staff could try.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: At this stage Dr. Pannu has the floor.

DR. PANNU: I would rather see that come in written form perhaps. It would be a more comprehensive answer. I think it gives your staff opportunity to study the matter more closely.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You can proceed, Dr. Pannu.

DR. PANNU: I want to thank the Auditor General for clarifying the issue. I think that's very helpful.

MR. HAVELOCK: Hon. member, I'd just like to emphasize again, though not wishing to be argumentative, that a large portion of this does relate to outstanding certificates, which are a liability. But in any event I'll have the financial guys work through it. I'm not an accountant.

DR. PANNU: Mr. Minister, you did clearly state that in your record saying that that relates to outstanding certificates that already have been issued, so I understand that.

My supplementary is related to the observations made on page 26 where '97-98 shows a 9 percent growth in the number. There is I think a valid point made here that you can't really have some sort of performance measure for this particular item. I understand the nature of your problem, but is there perhaps a proxy measure that one could use? I don't know if there is a discrepancy between the number of people who apply for legal aid and the number of people who are deemed eligible. If the minister either has some information on how these two numbers have been linked to each other in the past -- and any variation in those could probably be seen as one way of making some judgment as to the access to legal aid. You know, some measure of that.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, I know the hon. member is aware that legal aid operates independent of the government. However, of course, they also work closely with us because we do fund them to the tune of \$22 million a year. Whether legal aid keeps those types of statistics, I don't know. But we can see if we can get that for you. There is another thing that legal aid might wish to consider doing, and that is a client satisfaction survey, much like we're doing with maintenance enforcement and some other areas. That's an issue that we can certainly raise with them. I don't believe they do such a survey at this point in time, but we can see if they keep statistics on how many people are actually refused as opposed to those who apply and receive funding, and we'll raise with them the client satisfaction measure too.

MR. DUCHARME: Good morning. I refer the minister to schedule 1, page 73 of the annual report under the heading Transfers from Government of Canada and note that the total amount has decreased from \$26 million to \$25.3 million in one year. I believe in your opening remarks you touched on this somewhat, Mr. Minister, and I was wondering if you could elaborate on what has caused this decrease in federal funding of over \$600,000 in one year and why.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, there are three major components to that. If you look at the federal inmates program, that's decreased by \$1.5 million, and that really tracks the decline in the number of days federal inmates serve sentences in Alberta's correctional institutions. Plus the federal government has added some of its own facilities, such as the women's prisons, and that's reduced the need for Alberta to house federal inmates on a cost recovery basis.

Another area, the child support guidelines. Now, as I mentioned earlier, that's actually offsetting part of the decrease. That represents approximately 25 percent of the \$4.5 million in total funding that we'll be receiving. We anticipate receiving the remaining \$3.2 million from Canada over the next three fiscal years to the expiry of the agreement on March 31 of 2001.

Now, if I understand correctly, that funding was actually supposed to have been provided over a two-year period, but it's been extended to a four-year period for whatever reason. I guess you get more bang for your buck politically when you do it that way.

The federal government reduced funding available to the provinces for the native court worker program in '97-98, and that resulted in reduced revenues for the cost-sharing program. Again, if I'm not mistaken, there is some pressure to further reduce the support in this area. We seem to have a bit of an argument with them on an annual basis, and any assistance which, for example, our opposition colleagues can give in convincing the federal government to continue to support this program would be appreciated, in particular the Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

9:53

The decrease of \$85,000 to the administrative costs recovered under the federal firearms program results from the year-to-year volume changes in acquisition certificates and renewals. Of course, in the future, depending on how the litigation goes, we won't have any expenditures in this area, because we've transferred administration for the new firearms legislation entirely to the federal government.

So that explains the discrepancy, I believe.

MR. DUCHARME: Thank you.

My supplementary, still under Transfers from Government of Canada. What items are included in the \$352,000 amount for other revenue?

MR. HAVELOCK: These result from a combination of the cost recovery arrangements which have been in place for several years. These cost recovery arrangements are dependent on a number of factors, dependent on the number of services provided. There was a decreased demand for services in '97-98 which resulted in the \$119,000 reduction in revenue. For example, interim custody on a per diem basis for persons involved in federal immigration matters amounted to \$194,000 in '98. So it will vary from year to year. I think you'll see a variance from year to year, but certainly rest assured that this ministry will continue to take advantage of any cost contribution initiatives offered by the federal government which are included in this category.

On a not entirely related matter, just recently we've come to an arrangement with the federal government where they will give the Alberta government credit for the moneys it expends presently with respect to some of its aboriginal justice initiatives. Prior to that time we were not given credit, but rather, in order to participate with some of the federal programs, we had to find new money. So if I'm not mistaken, I think we've seen some movement from the federal government in that area.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Given the time of day, this will probably be the last question. Mr. Sapers.

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I wanted to ask you some questions about correctional services since we're there already. On page 33 of your report you mention the correctional services efficiency review initiative. I'm wondering if you can tell the committee about the results that were achieved in '97-98 through the implementation recommendations of this initiative, particularly how they may have related to cost efficiencies.

MR. HAVELOCK: Well, I understand it was around \$2 million that was achieved in savings, but what I'll do is get that specific information to you. If I'm not mistaken, I believe this review committee was driven by some consideration of the government a number of years ago that they may look at privatizing. If I'm not mistaken, the staff came forward and said: well, let's work together and see if we can achieve some efficiencies. I believe they did come forward with approximately \$2 million. Rest assured, I have no intention of pursuing the privatization option, and we'll get you the specifics on what those savings actually related to.

MR. SAPERS: That last comment was so provocative, I wish we had about another hour. Anyway we don't, but I'm glad to hear it.

Keeping with correctional services though. We talked about this during budget estimates as well. One of the performance measures used by your department is the per diem cost of housing an offender. I believe the goal is that it be the lowest in Canada or that it be below the national average. I can't remember which one is the performance measure. We've discussed the validity of that as a measure, but I'm wondering if you can tell me about the \$83.18 per diem that was spent on offenders in '97-98 and how you relate that to other correctional outcomes -- well, recidivism was mentioned, so we don't have to go back there -- such as release at earliest safe date; entry to correctional programming at first eligible opportunity; changes in custody, security, status within the institutions; and participation in community programs, both while in custody and once released into the community through a halfway house or some other kind of release function.

Mr. Minister, I know that's a big question, and the reason I ask is that I guess I would feel a lot more comfortable knowing about the value of the \$83.18 per day other than just an absolute measure, that

that's how much we spend, because whether it's well spent or not really is not related to what the national average may be, but it's related to some of those other factors.

MR. HAVELOCK: That's a fair comment. Briefly, I can advise the member that when you compare our facilities with some of the other provinces', with the exception of a couple that are rather old, we do have very modern facilities, and that helps us in reducing the overall cost per day. I can also give you some assurance that we have extensive programs in place for our guests. But you've asked some very specific questions, so probably not surprisingly I don't have an answer for you, but I will get you some detail. I think it's a legitimate issue. The measure shouldn't be simply: are we spending less than everyone else? What actually does that expenditure entail and incorporate, and how successful are we with respect to, as you mentioned, release at the earliest safe date, et cetera? So I'll get you some further information in that area.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I'd like to thank the Minister of Justice and Attorney General for coming out today along with his staff and also the Auditor General and his staff.

There being no other business, the next meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 21, 1999, at 8:30 a.m., and before this committee will be the Hon. Iris Evans, Minister of Municipal Affairs.

With that, may we have a motion to adjourn the meeting? Mr. Johnson. Agreed? The meeting is adjourned until next Wednesday at 8:30 a.m.

[The committee adjourned at 10:00 a.m.]

