

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, May 7, 1992**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 92/05/07

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Schumacher in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair notices by the clock in the Assembly that it is 8 o'clock, and it's time for the Committee of Supply to come to order.

Before inviting the minister to introduce his estimates, the Chair, on behalf of all members, would like to welcome members of the Forum for Young Albertans who are in the public gallery this evening. Some of us have had an opportunity to meet and greet them and to dine with them this evening, and it is a real pleasure to have them with us in the Assembly.

Just for their information the Committee of Supply will be dealing with the estimates of the Department of Family and Social Services. This is part of the budget process of the government of Alberta. The rules of the House provide that 25 days of not less than two hours are given to the study of the detailed estimates of the government's spending program. This is the 10th day, if I'm not mistaken. As I've said, the Department of Family and Social Services is under scrutiny this evening. The procedure generally is for the minister in charge of the department to make some introductory remarks concerning his estimates. For your information the amount of money that the Committee of Supply is dealing with this evening is \$1,566,920,820. That may sound like a lot of money to be dealt with in approximately a two-hour period, but that's the way it is.

So without any further ado the Chair would invite the Minister of Family and Social Services to introduce these estimates.

head: **Main Estimates 1992-93**

Family and Social Services

MR. OLDRING: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman, colleagues. It's always a pleasure to be able to present estimates to the Legislative Assembly and to hear from my colleagues in the Assembly as it relates to suggestions for the Department of Family and Social Services, and I'm looking forward to the comments and thoughts and suggestions that colleagues might have. If it sounds like it's an awful lot of money, it's because it is an awful lot of money.

I too, though, want to take this opportunity just to welcome the students that are here with the Forum for Young Albertans. I had the pleasure of meeting and speaking with them earlier this week. I can tell you that they're a very bright and enthusiastic group that ask good questions, and they had some good comments to make as well. I'm particularly pleased that they're here to hear some of my comments as it relates to my budget and would welcome any thoughts or suggestions that some of them might have as a result of what they hear this evening.

I'd also like to acknowledge, Mr. Chairman, some senior representatives from my department that are present in the members' gallery, just to say that I and I'm sure all of you in this Assembly appreciate the dedication and commitment that workers throughout the Department of Family and Social Services bring to their jobs day in and day out. They work hard, and they deserve a great deal of thanks from all of us.

Mr. Chairman, this is a budget that reflects the social and economic realities that we face today. Alberta and Albertans are feeling the effects of Canada's national recession. Like other

provinces Alberta has seen increases in the number of citizens who are unemployed and in need of financial assistance from government. This government looks at that assistance as a necessary and vital means to help Albertans make it through these difficult times until they can regain their self-sufficiency and independence. We believe that as part of the economic plan outlined by my hon. colleague the Provincial Treasurer on April 13, the social well-being of our people is key to the success of our provincial economy and competitiveness.

As a province we have much in our favour, Mr. Chairman, strengths that have allowed us to withstand the worst of the current North American recession. We will show positive economic growth, while Canada as a whole will see a decline. Wealth from employment has grown by more than 5 and a half percent. Albertans' tax burden is still the lightest in Canada and less than half that of the highest province, being Quebec. Alberta was one of only two provinces in Canada to see growth in employment, growth that has meant 14,600 more Albertans working this year than last. Despite international and interprovincial pressures our economic diversification efforts continue to show positive successes in almost all sectors.

However, Mr. Chairman, Albertans are cautious about the future, about their future. They have experienced rough times, many for the first time, and they are concerned about what tomorrow holds. They know that there are difficult choices ahead in order to balance priorities with our ability to be able to pay for them. They know that prosperity for all Albertans lies in our ability to be competitive and to create jobs and stability. Finally, they know that sustained economic growth must be built on a foundation in which all Albertans are encouraged to contribute and be self-sufficient.

Caring and Responsibility, the position paper on social policy by the hon. Neil Crawford, outlined the unmistakable link between social and economic well-being, an interconnection which holds that the economy can only be as strong as the people who work in it and fuel it with their imagination and expertise. It states that when families are economically stable, they are better able to cope with the pressures and challenges that they face. When families are strongly united and able to support themselves, they are better able to be productive and independent.

The statement of social policy recognizes and reflects the desire of Albertans to live in a humane, dignified, and independent manner. It recognizes that all Albertans must have choices about their lives, opportunities for them to better their situation and grow stronger and more stable. It provides guidelines for government policies which encourage personal responsibility and individual accountability, and it lays out the basis for working in partnership with others to serve Albertans in the communities in which they live. Mr. Chairman, Caring and Responsibility is about balance, and as a government we believe this year's budget finds that balance and continues a program of careful reform and constant improvement to Alberta's social programs.

Now, Mr. Chairman and hon. members, I direct you to page 193 of the government's estimates, to the summary of voted expenditure. The 1992-93 estimate indicates a 15 percent increase in expenditure requirements, raising the departmental budget to more than \$1.566 billion. I point out that this increase is not about expanding our department. It's about meeting an increased need in our province. It's about stretching our resources to ensure adequate support for those who need it most. We've worked hard to increase efficiency throughout our department. Over the last two years we've eliminated approximately 300 jobs in middle and senior management levels, reallocating them to the front line, where they're needed the most, and we've done it

without compromising our commitment to the people of Alberta or to the services that we provide.

The largest component of this year's budget increase is due to rising cost pressures in vote 2, Mr. Chairman, Income Support to Individuals and Families, through supports for independence, widow's pension, and AISH. Due to exceptional economic strains throughout the country and within our own province, Alberta's supports for independence program has seen its caseload grow dramatically. Again I refer to page 76 of the summary of elements. In response to increased need, overall funding for supports for independence will increase in the 1992-93 fiscal year by 23.7 percent, to just over \$940 million.

8:10

Mr. Chairman, Alberta's old social allowance program was replaced in 1990 by supports for independence, a more active program to help Albertans on their way to self-sufficiency. We looked at the old program, and we saw the need for change, and we got rid of those disincentives. We added new staff and resources and made the program easier to understand. We increased employment support and the number of staff dedicated to help clients prepare for the work force, we made rates more equitable, and we introduced new benefits. We made the program clearer and, yes, tougher about client responsibilities. We introduced four new subprograms: Employment and Training Support, Transitional Support, Supplement to Earnings, and Assured Support, each customized to encourage personal independence. We placed an increased emphasis on ensuring that those who can work are given every encouragement and every opportunity to do so.

In order to meet the needs of Albertans in an adequate way, we had no choice but to increase expenditures for supports for independence this year. However, Mr. Chairman, maintaining this level of support is becoming harder and harder with the fiscal realities of today. Because our economy is performing better than that of other provinces, some 19,000 people moved to Alberta last year, often affecting our caseload if they were unable to find the jobs that they had hoped to in moving here.

Again due to changes in the federal UIC program, it's estimated that over 2,000 families were forced onto the provincial caseload over the last year, loading even more pressures on program expenditures. The federal government has been off-loading their deficit onto the province by capping CAP and unilaterally cutting transfer payments, putting intense pressure on our larger scale social services and in particular child welfare and supports for independence. Projections for 1992-93 show that this erosion of federal transfer payments will cost Albertans over \$850 million. Under these circumstances, the government will continue its process of reform and will further improve Alberta's income support program by optimizing it beyond benefits with further streamlining and simplification and through an increased focus on helping people leave the caseload through employment. In order for us to balance expectations with resources, we're going to continue to set priorities for funding and continue to ensure that resources are allocated to those who need them most.

Mr. Chairman, this focus has also allowed us to better coordinate our interdepartmental efforts. For example, my department is working with the Department of Education to address the school dropout rate, because dropping out of school often means dropping in to SFI. We are working with Career Development and Employment to address the need for skills upgrading and training opportunities for unemployed Albertans, again particularly those in our caseload. Within the department we are working even harder to get people back into the labour force. At the front

line of social services we are adding 115 new SFI staff members to handle the recent caseload increases, including in particular an increase to ECSS staff, bringing the total to 135 staff to help people help themselves back into the work force.

Mr. Chairman, employment and training support serves nearly half of the entire SFI caseload, and nine out of every 10 of these clients require assistance for a very short period of time, many less than three months. By getting Albertans back on their feet when they experience hard times, we ensure that families stay together and stay strong. That increased employment helps fuel our economic recovery, because when people who can work are in our income support caseload, it costs us as a society. We lose out on human potential, and we lose out on resources which are needed elsewhere.

Transitional Support, Mr. Chairman, designed to help people who are out of the labour force temporarily, will receive a 17.8 percent funding increase to cover increased costs associated particularly with supplementary benefits. While a decrease is listed for Supplement to Earnings from estimate to estimate, it represents an adjustment in projection based on the actual demand from last year. In real terms there will be an increase of 5.6 percent to support families who are working but not making enough to meet their family's basic needs. Funding for Assured Support will increase 4.9 percent to cover caseload increases and increased costs per case expected in the 1992-93 fiscal year.

In vote 3, Mr. Chairman, you will find estimates for Services to Persons with Disabilities, which receives a total budget increase of 5 percent. This recognizes that there are still additional Michener Centre residents that are interested in making the transition to living in the community. To support this movement, an additional \$1.3 million will be provided to further strengthen the development of supports within the community.

Clearly, Mr. Chairman, this government has a strong record of support for the family. Family Day, the Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families, and the Family Policy Grid are only three examples of this government's leadership in this area. The family remains the most effective environment for child development and is the preferred option for children in care. Permanency planning, which respects the right and need of the child to have long-term, dependable relationships with caring adults, is the key to how these children are treated. About 7,400 Alberta children are in child protection services today, Mr. Chairman. Over half remain with their parents under supervision; some 2,300 are in foster homes; 875 are in group homes or residential facilities for young offenders.

Children in care today are older and have more severe problems. They require foster parents with behaviour management and life skills expertise, and that means extra training and appropriate remuneration. In element 3.1.5, Mr. Chairman, the Foster Care program receives a total of \$1.26 million in new money for a basic rate increase of 9 percent, a hundred thousand dollars for training of foster parents, funding for recruitment of new homes through public awareness and advertising, and money for four new staff members was allocated to work specifically with the native community to recruit additional native foster families. Our past experience with encouraging native placements has been very positive, often resulting in a decrease in child welfare intervention in certain areas of the province. In particular, the Metis nation has been an active partner in assuring progress in this particular area.

For all foster families basic rates have been increased by almost \$1 million last year and \$1 million this year bringing the total basic budget to approximately \$13 million. This \$13 million, Mr. Chairman, does not include some \$6 million for special rates.

Foster care has received substantial dollar increases over the past two years totaling approximately \$12.3 million, or 51 percent.

Mr. Chairman, early intervention in the avoidance of serious family dysfunction and breakdown is a high priority of my department. Supports for children and families feature earlier involvement through early intervention and in-home support. The government's continuing emphasis on achieving stable, long-term relationships for children and families is evident from the estimates in vote 3. Again in element 3.1.3 In-home Family Support will receive a 15.1 percent funding increase. This increase reflects a realignment of existing staff and other resources away from institutional settings towards in-home support. In element 3.1.7 we have increased Community-based Family Support by 3.4 percent for the provision of early detection in crisis resolution services at the community level.

8:20

Mr. Chairman, permanency planning for children in care is vital, and we emphasize placement in adoptive homes if their natural families are not a viable option. As a reflection of that commitment, the adoptions program will receive additional funding of 18.3 percent. Adoptions will be a departmental priority in the upcoming year. Special emphasis will be given to completing adoption home studies so that more children in care can be moved from the child welfare system into a permanent home.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I would refer hon. members to vote 3.2, Family Support Services. I'd like to first focus on clarifying for members realities behind the decrease shown from estimate to estimate for day care programs. Again, day care is an important component in Alberta's economic and social plan for recovery. The day care programs are demand driven, so projecting expenditure requirements involves the best information available and a lot of projection. The decrease in vote 3.2.2 reflects a realignment of resources which we overestimated for the fiscal year '91-92. The element shows a decrease in funding from estimate to estimate of 2.8 percent due in part to a lower demand for family day homes than was expected. Similarly, day care subsidies were lower than expected as a result of market and economic influences. Thus the blue book shows the '92-93 estimates in relation to actual cost.

Again, Mr. Chairman, because child care is such a critical issue for many Albertans, I have appointed a parent advisory committee to provide me with their views and input. I believe that parents are the most important partners in ensuring high-quality day care, and we need to listen carefully to them about what they want for their children. I'm looking forward to that committee's report, which I am anticipating in the very near future.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that the family and community support services program is one of the most important in Alberta. It is for this reason that I appointed a review committee chaired by the hon. Member for Highwood with a membership that included a wide cross section of Albertans, including municipal council members and representatives from across the province. The panel had the opportunity of meeting with thousands of Albertans through public meetings. In addition, they received hundreds of submissions and presentations. Clearly, it was an opportunity for Albertans to improve a program which has played such a significant role in our province, hopefully making it more in tune with the needs of community boards and agencies and more effective as a frontline support system. The review recommendations are based on input from mayors and council members, local boards and board members, community agency staff, teachers and parents, health and social workers, and hundreds of individual Albertans, and I look forward to responding in more detail to the recommendations again in the very near future.

Mr. Chairman, this year the FCSS program receives a 2 percent increase in overall funding for fiscal '92-93, but this includes provisions for a 2.5 percent average increase in program grants to communities referred to in the Provincial Treasurer's address. On an individual basis many communities will see considerable program increases. The county of Strathcona, for example, receives an increase of 6.2 percent, while the towns of Beaumont and Canmore will receive 9.65 and 9.08 percent respectively. In addition, 1.5 percent was added to the FCSS budget in relation to population growth. Taken together, communities will receive an average of 3.7 percent in funding increases over the '91-92 estimates.

The overall program budget is also, Mr. Chairman, impacted by the administrative reform with the federal government and aboriginal representatives. This ensures that on-reserve treaty Indians are able to access the same services as other Albertans. Taken together with the 1.5 percent that was added to the budget in relation to population growth, again an average of 3.7 percent in funding increases over the '91-92 estimates. I might add that as a result of the administrative reforms and one of the reasons why we're able to provide for that average 3.7 percent increase was the additional \$1.1 million that the federal government will be putting into the on-reserve services that we had been paying for in the past.

Mr. Chairman, 16 and 17 year olds in care are difficult clients to service because of their special needs and almost adult status. Again in response to an increasing need for supports for youth in Edmonton's inner city in particular, my department has allocated some \$474,000 in operational funding for a 20-bed shelter and outreach service to be operated by the City Centre Church Corporation. Along with my hon. colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs a total capital and operational budget of more than \$1.2 million is being focused on this pressing service priority here in the city of Edmonton.

A key priority of this government is responding to the serious problem of family violence in Alberta. Much of the budget for my department is focused on supporting families, whether financially or with services, in their efforts to cope with stress and remain strong and viable. I am pleased again to note that in element 3.2.6, Prevention of Family Violence programs receives a 13 percent increase in funding bringing total estimates for 1992-93 to \$7.7 million. Again, Mr. Chairman, this budget reflects the high priority this government places on responding to family violence.

In conclusion, we are not remaining still in the face of change. We are continuing our efforts to cope with increased demand and are constantly exploring new and innovative ways to be able to respond to that demand within the available means. Mr. Chairman, I thank you and the members of the Assembly for this opportunity to be able to present the '92-93 budget estimates, and I look forward to constructive suggestions from my colleagues on all sides of the House, and I look forward to any questions that you or other members may have.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton-Calder.
[applause]

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, now I suppose they expect me to say some nice things. Well, I don't know.

I appreciate the opportunity this evening to be able to make a few comments on this particular budget and to also raise a few concerns I have with this department. I want to start out by expressing my thanks to this minister, as I did last year, and to

other ministers in the House for their quick responses to concerns that I have raised. I do appreciate that. Now, that's my nice statement for the night. That's all you get.

8:30

Mr. Chairman, we're asked tonight to endorse an approximately \$1.5 billion budget for this particular department. I believe that this department is one of the most crucial departments, because many people depend on this department for their survival. I know that my colleague from Edmonton-Avonmore wants to supplement my remarks tonight, as well as possibly other colleagues.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to start out by just referring to the Budget Address. I know the Treasurer is here, and he'd be disappointed if I didn't refer to this at some point this evening. I want to read into the record a paragraph where the Treasurer stated:

We must continue to restructure our programs to keep them affordable. Changes to benefits under the supports for independence program will be implemented later this year while continuing our commitment to provide a basic level of support to those Albertans most in need.

The reason I flag this particular paragraph is because it has very similar language to the language being used by the federal Conservative government. I believe that they've got basically the same agenda. The minister did refer to some initiatives by the federal government that have, in fact, been detrimental to the province of Alberta, and I just want to quickly mention a few of those as well.

By the Treasurer's own admission and own figures in the Budget Address he admits that Alberta is losing \$850 million this year alone because of the ceiling on transfer payments. The justification so far has been that Alberta can afford it, that we're not as poor as the other provinces. Now, much of this money that is being lost affects the social programs in this province, because a lot of that money could be going to directly support and assist families in need. I think the minister should be outraged that this is happening. I know he expressed in question period a couple of days ago the fact that Alberta had taken the federal government to court. Obviously they weren't successful. I would ask the minister tonight who he is going to vote for in the next federal election. That, to me, will say a lot.

The federal government has eliminated the principle of universality of the family allowance program. Family allowance payments have been paid to all families since World War II, regardless of their income, and now we have seen a program disappear insofar as its universality. I think now, Mr. Chairman, people are asking a very fundamental question. They are asking how a very important program like this will continue in the future. Basically the poor in our society are virtually voiceless, and the federal government now is in a much better position to eventually cut this program. I think that we should have expected more from the public in terms of outrage over the ending of the universality of the family allowance program. We didn't get that. I think as legislators we should be outraged, and we should speak up about this.

The third thing I want to talk about briefly when it comes to the federal government, Mr. Chairman, is the reorganization of child care benefits. We see those being directed now at the poor, but it's coming at the expense of a national child care program. Again, I think that the elimination of a national child care program in Canada will affect Alberta, and we should also be concerned about that. Now, I know that the minister talks about spaces in day cares and that we have a lot of spaces in this province, but I have to stress that spaces do not mean we have quality care in this

province. The two are quite separate. I want to get into that a little bit later in my remarks.

When we're looking at Alberta and the amount of money that we do spend on this particular department, Mr. Chairman, I think we have to ask a few questions. We have to ask ourselves: are there ways to improve the system that is currently being administered in the province? Is the money being spent as wisely and effectively as it could be? I think that the answer is no. We have several levels of management within the department, and I have heard from frontline workers that what they need are more frontline workers. I know the minister alluded to this in his remarks. The fact is that we've got so many levels of management. I think we have to take a look at that and perhaps direct a lot of those levels of management into the front lines. Before changes are made, we have got to consult with the people that the changes will affect, people that are working on the front lines, people that are working within the programs.

I know that the minister has said that before he brought in the changes to the supports for independence program, he had extensive consultation across the province, yet when I put a question on the Order Paper a year ago for him to table in the House exactly who he met with, give us a list, that particular question was rejected. Now, I can only conclude that perhaps he did talk to some people, Mr. Chairman, but we don't know who specifically. I know that I talked to a lot of people who are working on the front lines who say that they were not consulted and that they have some very good suggestions for the minister.

We have just had a report that was produced by the Alberta women's advisory council condemning a lot of the programming that's in place when it comes to supports for independence. So far we've had a minister that simply has denied all of the concerns raised in this particular report. Mr. Chairman, I'm concerned about that. Is he saying, then, that this whole report is right out to lunch, that it's not applicable to what is actually happening in the province? Well, I think not, and I think the minister would do well if he were to take this report very seriously and take a look at the kinds of concerns that are being raised.

I believe that in the report they talk about the fact that there's a very strong financial emphasis on people coming into the system - I'm talking specifically about income security, Mr. Chairman - and that the human face is being removed from social work. Under the old program when a person and their family came into a district office, they were seen by a social worker who assessed all of their needs. Now what is happening is that they come into the office and they see what we call a financial benefit worker. I might add that their caseloads are way over the average of what their caseloads were supposed to be, and that is a concern. We're trying to put these people through the system in the most, I suppose, convenient way we can without really assessing their needs. I think that people coming into the system have to have an opportunity to talk to a qualified social worker when they first get into the office so that all of their needs can be assessed. People coming in who have experienced a crisis in their lives need more than just finances. They may be experiencing other problems, and that should definitely be looked at.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I know that we have the employment client support service workers in the system. At times they're being removed from their portfolios and being told to go and help out the financial benefit workers because their caseloads are so high. This is causing a problem because they have their own caseloads that cannot then be dealt with and are put on hold. I have been told that the resources out there where people are being referred are being cut, they're being reshuffled, and they're being remanded. In other words, when an ECSS worker wants to

refer a client someplace, the resources are shrinking and the options are becoming less and less available to that worker.

8:40

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to talk for just a minute about the reporting card system. We know that it kicked in as of May 1. I also know that the forms are coming in at a very high rate and that they are coming in filled out incorrectly. I don't know how many MLAs in this Assembly have actually taken a look at the reporting card, but I think that they should do so. They would quickly realize how difficult this is to fill out. Now, one of the expectations is that people claim interest on their bonds or their bank account. I have to say that I'm sure that not many people on social assistance would have a very big bank account. But how many people in here know how much interest their bank account makes every month? I would suspect that most of us don't have any idea when it comes to that.

I've also been told that workers in the system cannot accept a card that comes back without "NA" on it. In other words, if there's a line through a space, it will not be accepted. The card is then filled out incorrectly; it will be rejected. They have to put NA, nonapplicable, and nothing else will do. I mean, this seems ridiculous to me.

I'm not saying that we don't need to gather this information, but I think we need to return a human face to social work. Social workers can gather this information face to face on a one on one. I think that the minister is creating a bureaucratic nightmare when it comes to these report cards. I don't think it's going to streamline anything. I again raise the concern: what happens if a card goes missing? And that's happening. It happened in Calgary when this was tried. What happens when a client can't read and cannot fill this out? What happens when a client cannot speak English to fill this out? Again, I raise the concern that clients may lose their benefits if these cards are not filled out, and I really feel that we have to be very sensitive in this whole area.

I believe that on the whole – and statistics will back me up on this Mr. Chairman – people are not out there to rip off the system, and most times people are very willing to share information. I think we have to keep that in mind. If they were given a personal contact to give the information to a trained social worker, I think we would be a lot better off.

Now, I would stress to the minister that instead of getting involved in this bureaucratic nightmare – and I'm sure that's what he'll hear from his district offices – we should be spending money on things that really matter. For example, we are now expecting people in this province who are employable and are on social assistance to go out and look for a job. Now, we're not considering whether or not there happen to be jobs out there or you live in an area where there's high employment. You're still expected to go out and look for a job. Fair enough, I suppose, in some instances. But we don't even give people a bus pass to go and do that. If you're going to be competitive in the job market and you're going to be competitive in trying to secure employment, you've got to be able to have some means of transportation to do that. That's just one area that I raise, because it's been brought to my attention as a serious concern.

We can talk about poverty in the province of Alberta. We heard this afternoon that, of course, poverty in Alberta is not as serious a concern as it is in other places, and I disagree with that. We know, Mr. Chairman, that children from low-income families experience ill health, behaviour problems, low self-esteem, delayed development, a higher dropout rate from school, and they enter the child welfare system at 10 times the rate of other children. We have got to take some action in this area.

The effect that poverty has on children goes far beyond just being hungry. The effects of poverty on a child can define every aspect of a child's life well into that child's adulthood. Mr. Chairman, if children are poor, it means that parents are poor. We're not talking just about the unemployed; we're talking about many working families that are on social assistance and have had to go to the food banks to supplement their food. How has this government responded in the area of poverty as it relates to children? I think we have to ask ourselves this. Families need jobs, and we're still waiting. We've got one of the highest unemployment rates in Alberta than we've ever had in our history. We've got a supports for independence system, with all due respect to the minister – I'm sure he wants it to work as well as it can – that's not working. There are serious concerns out there, and I would ask that he take a look at this.

We have employment programs in place that are not flexible. In other words, many people accessing these programs are single mothers, and they are not allowed to come onto the programs and work part-time. They have to work full-time. There's no flexibility. Now, if a single mother has children at home and she is not able to work full-time, there's no compensation for that. We really need to make our programs more flexible.

Once somebody leaves social assistance and may go into a job-training program of some kind, they really do need a lot of support. I've been told that after two weeks going into that job, things may break down; they may need additional support. Oftentimes employers are not sensitive to that, and the workers involved in these programs are not allowed to follow up. I know that my colleague for Edmonton-Belmont raised this concern in the estimates on Career Development and Employment, and I raise it again because I think a lot more could be done if we're just sensitive to the fact that we need to support people once they're placed in jobs and we need to have more flexible programs.

Another concern, however, is that we lock women into low-paying jobs where there's no mobility upward. We have seen no pay equity legislation in the province. Again, a lot of women who are single parents are working and yet making really, really low wages. Pay equity legislation and initiatives could go a long way in that area.

We have educational opportunities that are extremely difficult to access. In order to access a lot of these educational opportunities, someone on social assistance must get student loans. They're no longer eligible for social assistance.

Then there's a concern, Mr. Chairman, with the whole area of day care and out-of-school care, a serious concern, and I'll get into that in just a minute. The government has got to make changes in this area, I believe.

I know the minister has heard a lot about preschool programs. These preschool programs are wonderful in terms of helping children who need some assistance with their development. But it's not just this Department of Family and Social Services. I know that the health unit in Lethbridge has an excellent preschool program. We're talking about Head Start programs. I'm sure the minister is familiar with those. I also want to stress the fact that good-quality child care can do a lot in this area as well. Someone has got to take the initiative on the government side to really support these kinds of programs if we're really serious about doing something for children who perhaps come from low-income families.

School breakfast and lunch programs. Children cannot learn if they are hungry. I know the minister knows this. Again, he was involved in the conference entitled Missing Pieces, which the ATA put on recently. I know that as a member of the panel on Saturday we were presented with some recommendations from

that conference. I'm just going to run very quickly through four recommendations that they made in the area of social services. These recommendations could be implemented by this government if they had the will to do so.

The first one they talk about: the development of a breakfast or a lunch program. They gave examples of the tremendous successes that these programs have had. There is a real need in the communities to develop these programs further. We see snack programs in the schools, but we're talking specifically about breakfast and lunch programs. The second recommendation, Mr. Chairman, was to provide affordable, high-quality child care. The third one was meaningful and effective consultation between government stakeholder groups and program recipients. Obviously when they're stressing these as recommendations, they're not satisfied with what's being done presently, even though the minister may say there is consultation already. They talk about job creation programs, meaningful work with living wages. The recommendations go on, but those are four that I thought were very crucial in talking about children in this province.

I want to mention just very briefly the concern about the abolishment of the recreational allowance as it affects children on social assistance. It was expressed as a concern in the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues report. Children are not able to participate in school field trips and so on.

8:50

I notice in vote 2 there's Supplement to Earnings, which is being decreased, and I'm just wondering if in the minister's remarks later he could tell us what effect that will have on families that working, or what exactly the implications are?

Just moving really quickly, Mr. Chairman, into the area of child welfare, there is a narrowing mandate of child welfare in the province of Alberta. Only if your child has status with the department can your family receive services, and then there's no guarantee of services. I've heard, too, that people on the front lines in child welfare are getting little notes of congratulations if they happen to spend the least amount of money on services in that particular department. This is not the kind of message that we want to get out to child welfare workers. We want them to do a good job. In order to do a good job, they have to access services for these children.

There's still a concern about the department wanting to go after PGOs after two years of a child accessing services within the department, even though that particular child may not be in need of protection but might just have an emotional problem or suffer mental illness and the family cannot take care of them. These parents are losing custody of these children, and this is a real concern and should really be halted.

The minister talked about prevention and early intervention. I know of a lot of instances where families are in need of help, and they're not getting that help.

Mr. Chairman, when we're talking about foster care, there have been a couple of very serious incidents that have occurred within this province. I know that perhaps both cases are before the courts and that the minister's hands are tied in terms of getting information out to the public, but I do believe that the public has a right to some answers in these particular cases. Also we have to be sensitive to the confidentiality involved, but there are some very serious questions that have been raised over what has happened. I know the minister knows the two cases I'm talking about. We know that there have been investigations done, and I would ask the minister if he intends, at some point in time, to make those investigations public. I do believe the public needs some answers.

They need to have their faith restored in the whole system, to at least know that if there were problems, they are being corrected.

Mr. Chairman, I just want to raise one serious concern that I have with the system of foster care. This is one concern; I don't have time this evening to go through all of them. I'd like to put a question to the minister in terms of how we approve foster homes. I'm going to give him an example of a situation that I'm very familiar with. I would like to ask him: how does a family become approved as a foster home when the mother is caring for four very young children, they have been suspected of child abuse in the past, and they get foster children to care for on top of their own natural children? I could go on about this particular case, but I'd just like to ask the minister: is he not concerned with the screening process, and is he taking any initiatives to tighten up on those foster homes that are being approved?

I'd just like to talk about child care briefly, Mr. Chairman. The minister talked about spaces – I mentioned this earlier – but anyone can create spaces. The reason why we have so many spaces in the province of Alberta is that a few years back I think the most lucrative business you could get into in the province of Alberta was in the area of child care. That's why we have a higher percentage of commercial day cares than any other province. We need quality, we need accessibility, and we need affordability, whether we're talking about day care for families or out-of-school care.

We know that standards are not being enforced in the province. We know the situation that occurred in Calgary, and I know the minister is familiar with that. We know that there is an appeal board in place in the province that is comprised of Tories. We know that the minister intervened in some charges that were supposed to be laid against a day care, and they continued to operate. I also know that since this whole incident happened in Calgary in the fall, money being collected from day cares that were supposedly collecting money that they shouldn't have been has not been collected. So I would just like to get comments on that from the minister.

There was a day care program review done by the department where they explicitly said that children are at risk in the system because standards are not being implemented. They developed an enforcement system, but where is it? I raised that in question period, and I'd ask the minister again.

There was a recent Canadian survey that indicated that Alberta pays almost the lowest wages to child care workers in all of the country. We have the highest turnover rate in staff. This affects the quality of care for children in the system. We have got to start valuing the kind of work that these workers do. Whether you're caring for children in the home or you're caring for them during the day at a day care centre, it doesn't matter. We have to value the work that they do. They need to be paid decent wages. One of the concerns that I have is in the white paper, Mr. Chairman. Now, the minister is bringing in training through the white paper, but he did not address the issue of wages. It was bound to become a problem sooner or later. We're not talking about parents paying higher fees, because many parents cannot afford to pay higher fees. What we need are some initiatives by the government to ensure that child care workers are making a decent wage in the province of Alberta.

If I talk about choices for parents, I know for a fact that parents don't have choices currently. What you have to do more often than not is place your child in an out-of-school care facility or day care close to where you live, in your community, and oftentimes those may not necessarily be quality day care spaces. Parents don't have the choices. I know the minister talked about parents and how important they are, and I agree, but they're not even

receiving the information that they need to make wise choices, if in fact they do have choices.

Mr. Chairman, moving into the area of people with disabilities – I know there are a number of areas within this department to get through tonight, and it's difficult to talk about every one – I think that we need to take a look at making this more flexible, especially the AISH program. If people move out into the work force, if they're lucky enough to be able to do some kind of work, they often lose their medical benefits, and this is a real disincentive for people to even take some risks. So I would appreciate the minister taking a look at that. When it comes to the Canada pension plan disability benefit, or any pensions for that matter, we're still deducting dollar for dollar off the AISH cheques, and people are still concerned about that. They don't feel that this government should be taking that money.

In terms of the handicapped children's services review hearings there was a concern raised to me that many families in Alberta did not get an invitation to attend the hearings, and they did not have an opportunity to participate, although I do know of a family that wanted to participate and contacted people involved in the hearings and were in fact accommodated. The minister did not invite me to those hearings. I made my own arrangements to go, by the way, but there was a snowstorm that day, and I didn't get there. I talked to some parents that had been there the day before, and they filled me in in terms of what was happening. There is a lot of concern. I know that the minister says that nothing has been concluded and that I'm being presumptuous, but the document that was handed out specifically talks about proposed directions for handicapped children's services. They talk about cost sharing with parents being required – it's not voluntary – and so on.

I look forward to my colleague's comments, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the minister for his opening remarks. I only have a few comments in general, and then I have a lot of questions specific to the votes.

Mr. Chairman, I would just like at the outset to tell the minister that his staff are very helpful to my constituency office and to the people in our legislative office. When we need help, we can get it. They are very supportive, and I thank the minister for that. I also know, Mr. Minister, that it's not always as easy for clients to reach your staff as it is for my office to reach them, and that's a worry for me. I believe that they are overworked and often overworried. I'm sure you know that, and hopefully we can work to alleviate that, but they are, I find, very dedicated people, and I want to thank you for that.

9:00

Mr. Chairman, I have some comments about the reorganization of the department and the supports for independence. On the supports for independence, I know that on paper and in theory this seems right. My difficulty is that I don't know how I'm supposed to know if it's working. The minister has answered a number of questions during question period about this program, but as yet I have had no evidence, and I have little confidence in the fact that there are good tracking methods in place to determine whether or not this system is succeeding.

Now, the minister has told us within the last few days that there are 10,000 people coming off social assistance every month in this province. He's also told us that, to his sorrow and ours, the absolute numbers on social assistance are growing. He's also told

us that this last year 14,000 new jobs were created in Alberta. Now, I'm not a rocket scientist, but if there are 10,000 people coming off assistance every month and getting into something, one would assume that even if half of those people got permanent jobs in the province, still the 14,000 new jobs wouldn't even come close to serving them. Mr. Chairman, I don't know where those people are going, and I don't know if the minister knows whether they are getting permanent jobs, whether they are getting temporary jobs, or whether they are simply getting off assistance for a month and coming back on again. I need to know, and I believe the public in Alberta needs to know whether or not this new program has in fact in place a research and tracking component that tells us whether we're getting value, whether the system is working to create new jobs, whether people are finding jobs, whether they are simply being disqualified, moving on out of the province. Where are they? Or are they coming back into the system again? Is there a tracking system? Is it there? We have no way of knowing that.

Mr. Chairman, the training programs. I again need to know whether or not we're training people for jobs that don't exist, because that is still my concern. I think the study done by the advisory council on women bears that out, that we are perhaps training people, with the very best of intentions, for jobs that no longer are there. If that's the case, then we'd better quit and rearrange what we're doing there, because we're not spending our money wisely in doing it. I do know that with the federal job strategy programs that we get some of our people into, in a number of cases those people have come to us and said: "I would like very much to get the retraining, but I can't afford to go into that program. As soon as I go into that program, my benefits end. I can't afford to get into that federal job retraining program and get off welfare because I have kids to support. I'd like to get the training, but I can't afford that."

Mr. Chairman, the evidence from food banks and other sources is that the social assistance rates certainly don't reflect the real cost of living, particularly when it comes to housing. In decent shelter, people are using too much of their income for shelter and are robbing their food budget to do so. [interjections]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. [interjections] Order.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In other words, there's really very little empirical data that I have seen at this point in time that show that supports for independence is in fact creating any independence. I think we have a right to ask that question.

The waiting list, as I understand it, for determination for categories for AISH and SALLD is growing and is long, creating a lot of anxiety for people. Now, I expect that's because there are many demands and perhaps not enough workers. Mr. Chairman, clients are forced to line up at their local office. Sometimes they have to wait for some days before they get to see a worker.

The report cards. Once again I would like some idea from the minister whether or not the report cards are being researched, if there is a tracking system there to see if in fact they are a practical system for accounting for the individual or if in fact they are more trouble and more expensive than they are worth.

[Mr. Moore in the Chair]

To go on, Mr. Chairman, to the reorganization, I realize the minister and his department have been in the business of reorganization for some time now. One of the reports that we had as a result of Mr. Saddlemeyer's and Mr. Page's review indicated that

there were a number of deficiencies in the department. The report says, and I quote:

The department is also struggling with certain environmental factors.

Social. Caseloads are rising.

Economic. How do we reconcile . . . demands with reduced . . .

Reduced, Mr. Minister.

. . . financial and human resources?

Political. Relationships with other governments and advocacy groups are changing.

Physical. How do we offer consistent services . . . in a province with a wide range of geographies and demographic characteristics?

Technological. We need skilled staff.

And so on.

Then the report goes on to suggest that there are three potential alternative management structures: one, maintain the status quo; two, reorganize ourselves along the lines of what we do – that is, along programs; and three, reorganize ourselves along the lines of where we do it, according to physical or geographical lines. Now, we know the department's reorganizing. Perhaps the minister would be kind enough to tell us if any one of those alternatives was chosen and if so, which one, or is it some combination of those, which I suspect you are working at, Mr. Minister, and also if those other factors have been dealt with – the social, economic, political, physical, and technological – and if so, how.

Mr. Chairman, we all suffered through a very uncomfortable strike a year or so ago, and part of the problem there was caseloads. Now, I have no evidence that caseloads are substantively smaller or easier to manage. I realize that we now have income workers and client support workers. I've had concerns expressed to me about the relative training of those two groups of people, and perhaps the minister can help me there with better information. I realize that the department is being centralized. I have expressed concern about how cheques were processed and so on. I'm a patient person; I'm willing to wait if it's simply a matter of automation, but I would think that where we have people's lives at stake, transitional plans ought to be in place before we make some of those changes.

Mr. Minister, I'd also like to know if in your reorganization you have calculated backup units. I was concerned when the child welfare consultation unit was disbanded. I know you said you put the people back on the front line, and I appreciate that need, but I would have liked to see the unit maintained and the people go back on the front line in addition to that. I think they need it, and their work demands it.

Mr. Chairman, I want to go directly to the votes, if I may now. One other comment to the minister, perhaps before I forget, on family and community support services. The Throne speech indicated that the recommendations were to be applied, were to be put into place. My information from the most recent press release does not indicate that. Now, the 2 percent brings the city up to 13-something and other smaller municipalities up to 14-something per capita. That's not even close to what that committee recommended, and perhaps the minister can update us on what the difference is between what was said in the Throne speech about the recommendations being implemented and what in fact the reality of that situation is.

9:10

To go directly to the votes, in vote 1.0.1, Minister's Office, a very modest increase. Last year it was a rather more elaborate one. The total comes to about 15 percent. I wonder if the minister can perhaps just briefly comment on why it needed to be 15 percent over two years. Perhaps that relates to the reorganization of the department.

Vote 1.0.3, Appeal and Advisory Secretariat. Here, Mr. Chairman, my question is: have the appeals leveled off? Is that reduction in the budget, Mr. Minister, because there are fewer appeals? If that's the case, then, is that good news, that people are more satisfied with the new system and appealing less? Perhaps you can tell us how many appeals have been heard and if in fact that means that people are more satisfied and are appealing less.

I have some questions here about Handicapped Children's Services . . .

MR. OLDRING: Mr. Chairman, I'm having a hard time hearing. I'm sorry.

MRS. HEWES: Can I go on, Mr. Chairman? Thank you.

. . . because a number of people have indicated to me that they have appeals in that regard, Mr. Minister. Perhaps a breakdown of that budget might be helpful.

Resource Management Services. Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, there are some changes in the recording of the budget this year to last year that make it a little difficult to follow exactly what's happening. We no longer see a breakdown of Assistant Deputy Minister: Regional Operations or Assistant Deputy Minister: Program Policy Development or resource management. I don't know really what's happened here. Financial Services is also gone from this year's subvote, and some new votes are in the program: social support, Personnel Services, income support, and so on. Perhaps the minister would give us some explanation on why these were changed.

If I can go to vote 2, which is a more important one in many ways, Mr. Chairman, Income Support to Individuals and Families, this total vote has been increased by 20 percent. Last year the increase was 7.2. That's a 28 percent increase over the last two years. It would be helpful, I think, when we see these changes, Mr. Minister, if we could know the numbers of people and whether or not that has changed dramatically as well as has the income level to these people gone up and in what categories they appear. Once again, the number of cases and the size of the caseload relative to the types of cases that they're dealing with.

In Supports for Independence a 23 percent increase gives it 32 percent over two years. Mr. Chairman, I have quite a few questions about this particular one. I wonder if the minister would undertake to change the regulations that refuse to provide a woman leaving an abusive situation with assistance to purchase household furniture. We've had some concerns expressed about that, and it seems to me that that isn't a very difficult one to deal with. Again a question about a tracking system and whether or not the minister will hold annual reviews of the assistance rates to make sure that they are relevant to the current cost of living. Will the minister consider dropping the spouse in the house rule, which I believe could cause a Charter challenge? Will the minister change policy for single parents under 18 wanting to complete their grade 12 at a regular high school? Currently that's not allowed. What is the minister doing or planning to do about the women's advisory council report?

Mr. Chairman, I just want to hesitate there and raise my eyes shyly for a minute and say how very much I appreciated that report from the advisory council, and I hope the minister and his department did as well. It seems to me that they're doing the research that I expect his department should be doing. I would like to see some action on that immediately, and I would hope the minister would respond by telling members of the Assembly what it is he intends to do with the recommendations, very sensible and practical ones, in that report.

Mr. Chairman, the minister perhaps could respond to the threats – maybe that's too strong a word, but I saw them as threats – made by the Provincial Treasurer that would force newcomers to wait a certain time before applying. Is that going to happen? Would we need to make changes to the Social Development Act if we were going to move in that direction?

The minister has also hinted about other reforms that could be coming down the road, and I would like to know what they are. I think we need some lead time if he plans to make any other changes here.

A more specific one, Mr. Minister: the Fairview social services office was closed, centralized into Peace River, causing a real burden mainly on the satellite shelter. I'm grateful that there is a satellite shelter in Fairview, but they've had to pick up the slack because there no longer is an office on site in Fairview and the shelter has become the only place to which people can turn when they really need help and information. I'd like his comments on that. Perhaps that office can be reopened or a better system of supporting the town and the neighbourhood of Fairview can be put into place.

Another question I've been asked, Mr. Minister, is about housing incentives for social workers in the north. They get an extra \$160 a month, but the housing is not there for them, causing a real problem in areas like High Level and that part of the province.

Mr. Chairman, can I go on – oh, dear; my time is going – to vote 2.1.1: a 13 percent increase again this year. I'd like the minister to tell us where this money in Program Administration is going to be spent. What is the requirement? We now have \$66.6 million tied up in administration. Is this once again a reflection of the new reforms? Have new staff had to be taken on in administration? It was my understanding that it had been reduced, but perhaps I have been in error there.

Employment and Training Support, 2.1.2, has increased 55.9 percent. Again, what kind of tracking? I would like to know what kind of training programs are being used. Perhaps I should put that question on the Order Paper, Mr. Minister. It would be helpful, I think, to know where your people are going for training. How many of them – I've asked this one before – do receive long-term employment? Do the jobs exist for which we are training people? The women's research indicated that in many cases they don't. It's a dead end, the jobs are low paying, and often only temporary. Is there a mandate for that training, and if so, if there's a written one, perhaps that could be shared with members. Is it training on how to find work? Is there ongoing training involved after work is found? Are benefits continued beyond the point when the person finds a job, and if so, for how long? Are the training centres commercial or nonprofit or both? What happens to individuals who drop out of training or if they don't get a job in the required length of time? Will the minister give us regular status reports on the number of clients who do or do not find jobs as a result of that training program?

9:20

Vote 2.1.4, Supplement to Earnings, has been reduced by almost 8 percent this year. Mr. Chairman, I know the minister mentioned this in his opening remarks, but I'm not sure I understand whether that means that there has been that great a reduction in the need. It occurred to me that this program would have required more if the supports for independence is working as I anticipate, but it doesn't appear to be working that way – and perhaps what data he had to justify that kind of cut, because it would seem that there are fewer people, then, who are working part-time or on low

income and who don't need these kinds of supplements to boost their earnings.

Vote 2.1.5, Assured Support, has increased. Last year it received a much higher increase. My questions are the increased waiting lists, Mr. Minister, the length of the wait of the application process, and the frustration and difficulties experienced by people. We do have a great number of enquiries in our constituency offices about this problem of waiting. They point out that the program really doesn't seem to be meeting the needs. Now, I recognize that many of the people who are applying for this kind of support are very anxious in the first place, and perhaps we don't manage their questions all that well.

Income Benefits, 2.2, an increase. Program Administration up modestly. Last year it received a huge increase. Does that mean, Mr. Minister, that all the systems are now in place for the changes? Of course, it has also taken out the assured income plan for seniors, and perhaps that's what has occasioned that difference.

Widows' Pension. Is the minister reconsidering the discriminatory factor in this program, that it does not deal with single and divorced women? We've pointed that out any number of times.

Assured Income for Severely Handicapped, up only 6.3 percent. Does that reflect any increases to the AISH payment, or is it a reflection of greater numbers who need it? Does the minister do an annual review of the AISH payment to make sure it is related to the cost of living?

Vote 3, Mr. Chairman, Social Support to Individuals and Families, the minister said was very important to him, and I agree. The total vote increased 3.3 percent. It seems to me a minor increase when we think about the serious, critical situations that many families are in with unemployment and underemployment and restriction to unemployment benefits. Perhaps the minister can justify that to us and how it relates to the new family grid and the commitment to families.

Child Welfare Services, up 4.7 percent. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to ask the minister about the pilot project to privatize child welfare services in the Calgary region. From my information it appears to be well under way. Perhaps the minister would respond to a question regarding what his plans are for the timing of this particular program in the Calgary region. Is it a pilot project if it goes in this year? Does he intend to duplicate it in other parts of the province? Is he developing and is there a strategy for privatizing other areas of the department – for example, social assistance – or is this the only one that's on the drawing board? I would like to know. It would help me if there was a written statement about the objective of privatizing child welfare, what the minister hopes to achieve in the Calgary region. I also need to know if he plans to reinstate the child welfare consultation unit.

In vote 3.1.1 a small increase this year but last year a large increase. I'd like to know where the money was spent in Program Administration. Were new staff hired? If so, where did they go?

I'd like to know in vote 3.1.2, Intake and Investigations, what that money is going to buy.

In-Home Family Support is up 15 percent. The budget, it seems to me, in many cases, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister – we've seen a large increase this year and a small one last year or vice versa – seems inconsistent and to waver greatly. I wonder if that indicates some consternation in the department's planning.

Let me see. I'd better hustle, Mr. Chairman, or I'm going to run out of time here. Foster Care, 3.1.5, again only an increase of 7 percent where last year it was 41.2 percent. Perhaps the minister will tell us what is the status of the therapeutic foster care program. The level of care, it seems to me, is increasing, yet we have not as yet seen any real definitive plan from the government about foster care, about foster parents. They seem to be begging

for more direction, yet it hasn't been forthcoming. Why hasn't the department implemented the recommendations of the Thomlison report? I realize there's an investigation by the Ombudsman on foster care, and by the advocate. I'd like to know if we can have a status report on that and when we will see it. I'm anticipating that the minister plans to make that public as well.

The Children's Advocate, Mr. Chairman, is up only 2.7 percent. I expect, from the annual report of the advocate, that his work is leveling off. The demands are leveling if not decreasing. I would like to know from the minister about the absence of his public support for the advocate in the case and the issues surrounding the CASA house discussions of earlier this year. It seemed to me that the advocate was asking for something and this was not forthcoming from the CASA house organization and that the minister didn't back him up. Perhaps there's a perfectly good reason for it, but I'd like to know what it is.

Let me see. Community-Based Family Support, 3.1.7: what are the details here? Where has this subvote been in the past, and what is this one buying?

Again, Residential Care, 3.1.8, was not listed in last year's subvote. Also missing in this year's vote is Group Homes and Institutions. Perhaps it's all part of your rearrangement, Mr. Minister, and maybe a written note will clarify that for me.

Family Support Services: no change in funding there. In Program Administration, 3.2.1, yes, it's gone back, and I'm glad to see that Mr. Minister.

Day Care Programs. As the minister knows, I've had some serious concerns about the removal of the regional manager of day care in Calgary, Ilona Boyce, and how this was done. It seems to me there was a lack of monitoring in enforcement of regulations. I don't like to use the term "scapegoat," but I was concerned about the processes that were used around that situation and why on earth the minister did not proceed or withdraw the court case related to the Smurfville Daycare centre. I'd like to ask the minister if there's been an Ombudsman inquiry related to Ilona Boyce, and if in fact there have been any results, or whether there was an investigation by the Human Rights Commission.

Mr. Chairman, where is the provincial enforcement system that was promised that we saw in all of the reports that happened around those circumstances in Calgary, that was promised at the exit conference? I believe that's one critical element we need to put in place in our day cares. The minutes of that conference also mention a tremendous number of persistent noncompliances that were not followed. These included deficiencies for the safety of persons in care where at risk.

Mr. Chairman, thank you. I have a number of other questions which I would like to have an opportunity to ask the minister or write to him at another time. Thank you.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

9:30

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I, too, am pleased to rise today to speak on the '92-93 budget estimates of Family and Social Services. I'd like to thank the minister for his continued support on many innovative changes in the department and also thank his staff for being out there in the forefront and making and delivering the necessary changes to make the program more positive.

I was very interested listening to the Member for Edmonton-Calder and also the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. I think they're living in a different world completely, because where I come from, my constituents in northern Alberta continue telling me that the welfare system is not needed. People want an

alternative. There is no one out there that I know that wants welfare. Everybody that I know wants to go training, get off welfare, and take on a full-time job. All I heard the last half hour from the two members is that we need more welfare, we need bus tickets, we need furniture, we need more workers, we need more dollars. Now, they have to be in a different world, because that is very, very negative, and I'll tell you why.

For example, prior to 1950, prior to the time the welfare system was introduced, the native people in northern Alberta where I come from, in my community, were completely self-sufficient. People lived off the land. They hunted, trapped, fished, worked in the small sawmills out there, and no one was on welfare. People used their own medical system in that area. In the '50s the welfare system was introduced – and I think with good intentions, no doubt – but by 1968 about 90 percent of the people in my community were completely dependent on the welfare system. You know, along with that came alcoholism, family breakdowns, marriage breakups, poor health, poor attendance – children didn't attend school – the health care had deteriorated. That's what welfare does. Within 15 years that's what more welfare dollars did to our northern communities.

So I challenge both of those members to reconsider when they criticize our government for not providing enough dollars for welfare, because that is not the answer. What we need to do is utilize the dollars that are out there better than we have in the past. I would hope they'd support me on that.

In the '70s, of course, and into the '80s the government spent a considerable amount of dollars, infrastructure dollars, trying to change the situation in northern Alberta. Water systems were put in, improved schools were in place with local involvement, the Alberta Vocational Centre had expanded projects into northern communities for academic upgrading, other job training programs, a road network, more involvement by people in municipal councils: in general, a positive move towards changing the life-style of native people. In the '80s and '90s we saw a lot of changes: better housing in there, people had better education, children were attending school a lot better, their health was a lot better, they had hot lunch programs. But even then the unemployment was high. Even with all these changes the unemployment still remained 80, 90 percent, and underemployment also in those northern communities.

In the '90s, of course, our government moved on a number of major changes, because what we heard from the people was that they didn't want more welfare like those two members would indicate. People wanted an alternative to the welfare system. Our government, of course, introduced a number of initiatives to work towards changing that and improving the situation, initiatives like the Metis framework agreement, which we spent a lot of dollars on to assist the Metis people deliver the programs. One point two five million acres of land was transferred along with dollars to the Metis settlements, and they would work towards self-government and self-sufficiency again.

In addition to that, we have other programs. The Native Counselling Services continues to get funding both from the federal government and the province. The Metis children's services operates here in Edmonton, and they do a fine job in their area. The Northland School Division continues to operate with their 24 to 25 schools in northern Alberta, and the majority of the school board members are native people trying to run their own educational programs.

Native caucus. This government probably has one of the first native caucuses where aboriginal people are actually involved as elected MLAs to deal with any and all native issues in Alberta.

This government also assigned an aboriginal cabinet minister to deal with native issues in Alberta.

Land claims. I think Alberta has taken the leading role under an existing Premier in dealing with land claims issues.

Of course, the most positive one is our diversification plan. Our economic diversification plan in Alberta is the alternative the people have been asking for in northern Alberta. At present we have over \$20 billion of projects either planned, under construction, or just completed, employing thousands of Albertans. An example of this would be a project like the Alberta-Pacific project in my constituency. That particular project did not happen by accident. This government planned and selected a specific site to build that project where it was most socially and economically depressed. They put it in the county of Athabasca, and they would employ people in the Lac La Biche region, which had the highest rate per capita on welfare, people in Calling Lake, Wabasca, Conklin, and all those northern communities. The project today is employing over a thousand people. There are 288 local people who work there; 90 of those are native people. By July of this year Alberta-Pacific will have 2,200 employees on-site, and I would hope that we can continue to put a high percentage of local people in that. They'll be spending \$1 million per day to the Alberta economy in that specific project. It's a project I had to fight with the leader of the Liberals and leader of the NDP. They were against these projects. What they wanted always was more welfare.

[Mr. Schumacher in the Chair]

I have a press release here: Alberta Liberal Opposition News, January 29, 1991. It says, "Al-Pac Mystery a Tired Old Game, says Decore". Now, you look at Al-Pac today, look at how many they're employing. I can go on. There's another press release, January 28, 1991, Alberta Liberal Opposition Background: "The government is on the hook for \$1.3 billion in new forestry projects."

Now, without these projects today, what do you think Alberta would be like? It'd probably be like Ontario.

AN HON. MEMBER: Eight percent sales tax.

MR. CARDINAL: That's right.

Daishowa, Weldwood, Alberta Newsprint, Millar Western, Alberta Energy, Alberta-Pacific: projects like that both those leaders fought as much as they could, not because the projects were poor but because they thought at the time it was politically convenient environmentally to fight these forestry projects. They got on the bandwagon thinking they were doing the right thing, but now they know they weren't doing the right thing.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: That's real nation building.

MR. CARDINAL: That's right. That's nation building all right.

These particular economic initiatives again are a part of our overall plan of dealing with the poverty and unemployment in northern Alberta, and I'll tell you, our government is also doing other initiatives that aren't announced yet but operating as pilots. For an example, we have a pilot project operating from one office in Athabasca that's jointly delivering in co-ordination with Family and Social Services, career development, and Employment and Immigration programs and doing a swell job at it. A second one is being set up in Lac La Biche and will be opening up in a matter of a few months. They've only been operating since last October, and to date they've come in contact with over 1,800 individuals.

They've placed over a hundred people in jobs directly and over 40 people in training programs.

Some of the things these offices do, for example, are: assessment counseling, employability assessment, career planning, job search assistance. Individual action plans are developed; when a person walks in the office, an action plan is developed as to how they're going to get themselves off welfare with assistance and is facilitated by people working there. Financial support while they're training or while they're employed to get the people off welfare. Group workshops, career planning, search, life management, and the works. Employment support, identification, and referral to local employers. Also follow-up and financial support while these people are placed on jobs. This office also deals with UI applications, social insurance number applications, job orders, information on training programs. They also provide employer services: consulting services re human resource planning and training and recruitment for employers, program application, apprenticeship information, and programs for employers. I could go on.

9:40

These programs really work well, and it's because our government has the foresight and is innovative enough, along with our diversification plan, to look at these programs that will provide an alternative to the welfare system.

Now, in addition to that, of course, even in small native communities like Calling Lake, for example, there is a program called community employment model which is very similar to the project in Athabasca. This again involves the native community itself running community employment which will be doing very similar things to the pilot projects in Athabasca and Lac La Biche, but in addition to doing assessment, they will also be doing direct placement jointly with Alberta-Pacific and maintaining a labour force inventory of their community training needs. That project, again, is successful, so successful in fact that it's sponsored not only by the provincial government; the federal government is also participating in that project. Also, Alberta-Pacific is putting in money, Weyerhaeuser is putting in money, ID 17 is putting money into that particular project. It's a very positive move in how we are going to provide an alternative to our people up north and get people off welfare like they want to be off welfare.

The next phase of the project, of course, is that even with all these economic initiatives out there that are working, it seems that there are never enough jobs for all of the employees that are looking over there. So what I am encouraging the government to do with the motion that I'm introducing this spring, Motion 240, is to look at ways of taking more of those dollars – of the \$950 million that is allocated to the supports for independence – and using the same dollars, possibly transfer them through municipalities and agencies and employ people that are unemployed or underemployed or people that are on UIC. It's something I know I have strong support for from my colleagues. The municipalities I know support it, and most of all, the people on welfare support the concept.

I feel that our government is heading in the right direction, but again I would ask the minister to consider that recommendation to transfer more of those dollars to municipalities, agencies for job creation and placement.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Avonmore.

MS M. LAING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would just like to make a few comments in regard to these estimates.

I would like to comment on the minister's statement about his commitment to families, to choices, to personal responsibility. I think that these are laudable statements. I think, however, we have to look beyond them to see what that means, what that means at this time in our province, what it means in the context of the economic situation and social situation that we face now, and that our commitment to families and personal responsibility must take into account that if people are to have responsibility for their lives and their families, they need to have power and opportunities to fulfill those responsibilities, and that they need support in some cases. Particularly at a time when we face an 11 or 12 percent unemployment rate, when we face a movement to part-time contract work, creation of jobs that do not pay much above the minimum wage, I think we have to see that individuals wanting to take responsibility for their own lives don't have a context and the kinds of opportunities that make that possible. When we try to move people from a place of dependency, for whatever reason that they are dependent, into a more independent position, a position where they can take care of themselves, I think that we are always balancing opportunities and support with demands in such a way that we make it possible for people to move forward and not be overwhelmed by the challenges and the struggles that they face.

I think of a single mother, say, with a number of children who wants to upgrade her education. To require her, say, to take care of her children, to be full-time in an educational institution without adequate child care support or possibly without a possibility of part-time education, may mean that we overwhelm her and make it impossible for her to move out of a place of dependency. So I think that is a balance that we always have to strike.

How do we give people enough support with opportunities so they can move forward, that we don't put the demands on them that make them feel they can never succeed? I think in a time when we demand that people get jobs and there's 11 percent unemployment, we'd better be understanding that applying for 500 jobs and always getting turned down may not necessarily be their fault, but it sure robs them of any initiative or belief that they can move forward. I think that's one of the things we have to look at.

I have heard much about Family Day and the council on the family and the family grid out of our commitment to families, but again, what does that mean? I think of the policies that are applied to single mothers. We say it's very important that mothers be able to mother their children, unless you're a single mother, and then, by God, if your youngest child is over two, you'd better be out working and your child needs to be in day care. I have to ask about the economic wisdom of that. If you have two or three children, you have to be working. You're not being paid very well, and the government has to subsidize your child care. Maybe you as a mother would prefer to be at home with your children, and your children would be better off if you were at home to mother them. I don't see any economic sense in those kinds of policies. So I think when we look at commitment to families, it had better be a whole range of families, and it had better be a similar level of commitment to choices and to being able to care for our children.

We heard earlier that the task force report from the advisory council talks about supports for independence and how that program fails many, many women. We hear about the lack of quality child care and the kind of stress that means for women. It's not good enough to have child care spaces where children are at risk or where children's developmental needs are not being met. I think that was a focus of the Auditor General's report. Are our child care spaces meeting the developmental, the emotional, the intellectual, the physical needs of children, and are there enough care givers in those situations to meet those needs? If we don't

meet the needs of children in the first five years of life, we will pay as a society for the rest of their lives. We have to recognize that a mother leaving a child in an inferior child care setting is not going to be the best worker that she could be. I have heard of women having to hitchhike with their children to a job placement or to an education placement because there was no child care available to them and they had no transportation allowances. So we have to be committed to families, and we better be committed to all families.

9:50

The task force talks about the kind of education and employment opportunities that limit women to job ghettos and mean that they and their children will live lives in poverty, that there are barriers to their escaping lives of poverty. We have to look very carefully at that. Other areas that the task force says create barriers to women being able to fully participate are: not addressing the issue of illiteracy; not addressing the issue of mental illness and dysfunction that may arise out of histories of poverty and abuse; not addressing the cultural imperatives that immigrant women live under, such as maybe not being able to go into a place and work with men. I think we have to look also at some of the requirements that people on welfare have to divest themselves of all their assets even though it may be a short-term period on social assistance, if they've had to give up their home, say. Wouldn't it be better to allow them to keep their home so they would have some stability in their lives and in the lives of their children? So again I think we have to be more realistic and more in touch with how people live their lives.

I would also think that we have to be concerned about the issue of violence. I hear that there's a 25 percent increase in the budget to deal with violence in the family. I don't see that in the Minister of Family and Social Services' budget. If it is, I don't know where it is. I see only a 13 percent increase, so I would have to say: where is it?

I have concern about transition housing needing to be funded and grave concern about the failure to provide treatment services for children who do not have status with the department. Mothers may face a painful choice of either choosing to stay with the offender so their child will be apprehended and get treatment or leaving the offender, the perpetrator, and not being able to access treatment for their children. Often when they leave the offender, they are plunged into poverty and cannot afford treatment, so I think we have to look at that. If we do not deal with the pain and suffering of abused children, again we know as a society that we will pay for the rest of their lives.

Rix Rogers, in the report from the federal department of health and welfare, said that if we continue on the way we are, up to 20 percent of our children will grow into dysfunctional adults because of the violence and poverty they live with. Early intervention is extremely important; we've heard that from the minister. I would suggest that social assistance allowance workers are front line to pick up on families that are in trouble. To have clerical staff doing that work means that we miss a really important opportunity. The least intrusive measures may mean that children remain unnecessarily in situations of abuse. So although I support the commitment to keeping families, let's make sure that we don't abandon children in doing that.

I would raise just a couple more issues. The spouse in the house rule, which applies only to women, treats women in some sense like prostitutes. If they had sex with a different man every night, we would call them prostitutes. If they have sex with the same man every night, then we cut off their social assistance. I would suggest that saying that the men who live with them or

sleep with them are expected to support them is not unlike saying that they have to pay for sex. Because it only applies to women, I would suggest it violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I think we need to track people who are deinstitutionalized and see what happens after they're deinstitutionalized. We have to track people who are on supports for independence and see where they are a year down the road. We have to do an objective assessment of these programs.

The final issue I would raise would be the widows' pension. It is discriminatory, I would suggest, on the basis of marital status, again against the Charter of Rights and against our Individual's Rights Protection Act. It was a main concern of the Council on Aging. It is one of the major issues that has been raised. Again, it fails to recognize that people who have never married or are divorced face the same economic conditions as people who are married and then widowed.

Given the time, I will sit down and await the minister's response.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Family and Social Services.

MR. OLDRING: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. I want to begin by thanking my colleagues in the Assembly this evening on both sides of the House for participating in such a helpful and constructive way. I do want to take a little bit of time to quickly respond, perhaps in a broad sense, to some of the issues that were raised this evening and want to assure members that I will respond in a very specific way following the meeting here this evening. I should say to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar in particular, who indicated that she had a number of other questions and concerns that she'd like to raise, that I would be happy to make arrangements to meet with her and review those additional questions and concerns as well, because I think it's very important for all of us to have a clear understanding of the changes that we're going through in this particular department.

Mr. Chairman, I'd want to say that I think we all agree first of all that this department and the votes that we're discussing this evening have had a very substantive increase this year. At a time of fiscal restraint we see this government responding in a very meaningful way as it relates to Family and Social Services.

A number of questions now, Mr. Chairman, as it relates to specific programs around our supports for independence. I think what the members need to understand is that we are going through very significant changes within this department. The supports for independence program is still being implemented. The implementation hasn't even been finalized at this point, so we are going through significant changes there.

A number of questions around some of the subprograms as it relates to specific allocations. Why did some go up so much? Why did some drop a little bit? Mr. Chairman, what it really reflects is more accurate information based on the implementation that began last year and is being completed this year. The numbers that we see reflect what we learned last year. They also reflect the increased caseload and other changes that I mentioned in my opening comments.

I want to go now, Mr. Chairman, to some of the specific issues raised by the Member for Edmonton-Calder. First of all, it was interesting, the time we spent on the federal side as opposed to the Alberta side. Again, I can only reiterate that obviously we're concerned about the impact of capping. Obviously, it makes our job a lot more difficult. But we as a government have said all along that we are not going to allow it to compromise the integrity of the programs and supports that are required here in the

province of Alberta, and this budget reflects that commitment. On the other hand, we're going to continue, along with representation from all of the provinces – I should say that all of the provinces, not just the provinces affected, have taken exception to the federal government capping and penalizing three individual provinces in our country today.

In listening to the member's comments as it relates to supports for independence, I think it's fair to say that some of the comments are somewhat dated. That is to say, you talked about too many levels of management. The restructuring, Mr. Chairman, addresses that. I pointed out in my introductory comments that we have taken some 300 individuals out of those levels the member talked about and reallocated them to the front lines. That's a very, very significant change. It reflects again a priority of myself as minister and we as a government, and that is to focus those resources in an effective and efficient way. I think the restructuring reflects that, and obviously, as I say, 300 positions reassigned to the front lines is pretty significant.

10:00

There were some concerns related around the client reporting card system, a request for flexibility. Mr. Chairman, I want to assure the member that we are being very compassionate and very flexible as we introduce the changes there, but again we feel that it's important information for us to have to be able to administer the programs in a fair and consistent and efficient way. I think it's fair to say that clients are actually adjusting to it fairly quickly, based on the experiences that we've had to date.

The member raised the issue of poverty. Let me make it very clear, Mr. Chairman. The member suggested that we aren't concerned about poverty. We are concerned about poverty. This government, in a very cohesive, very focused, and very substantive way, has done a lot in the last five or six years to address poverty. I think the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche did a very effective job of outlining some of the initiatives that we've brought forward on this side of the House to help address poverty.

Another program that was raised, Mr. Chairman, was the day care program. Again, substantive changes that we're going through, substantive changes that are being implemented. I want to say a number of things there. First of all, let me say that standards are being enforced. I wouldn't want to leave this Assembly or Albertans with any doubt about that or, as the member has suggested, with any fear that changes in Calgary have left us in a position of not enforcing standards and of not collecting dollars that are due this government. I can only say that a number of day cares have subsequently been charged since those changes have been made. We continue to enforce our policies in a very substantive way, and we're going to continue to do that.

As it relates to the quality of day care in this province, I want to say again, Mr. Chairman, as I've said many times in this Assembly, that we have exceptionally good day care for the most part. I keep hearing about children at risk. I keep hearing about day cares that shouldn't be open. Again, I constantly invite the members to bring forward day cares that they'd like to see closed. I invite them to bring forward specifics of children being at risk, because I would assure the members that if they can show me that children are at risk, I will step forward in a very significant, a very forceful, and a very meaningful way. I have absolutely no intentions of allowing children to be put at risk in this province in a knowing way. Again, we make substantive efforts to make sure that isn't happening. We have our Social Care Facilities Review Committee, chaired by one of my hon. colleagues, and they're out on a daily basis. They're watching, and they're quick to report if there are any concerns that I should be aware of.

To the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, again some good questions, some questions that deserve answers around our supports for independence program. She raised a concern about looks good on paper and seems right in theory, but is it? I can only reiterate that we are only implementing the program. We are encouraged by some of the early signs that we see. I have mentioned the 10,000 that have left our program on an ongoing basis, and that is an increase compared to what has occurred in the past.

Are we training people for jobs that don't exist? A fair question. I think that perhaps we've been guilty of that in the past, I think to a lesser extent now. The minister responsible for Career Development and Employment is probably in a better position to answer that than I am. I would say that as recently as last week I had the opportunity of visiting the Columbia Institute, which works through Career Development and Employment to provide training opportunities for a number of our cases, and I was really encouraged by what I saw there. I had a chance to meet firsthand with people that through training are making that transition from our program into the community, some very positive, firsthand success stories from a number of individuals but in particular single-parent mothers. Perhaps the one disappointment I had this evening is that sometimes – and it's hard not to – we dwell too much on the failures and not enough on the successes, and there are many successes out there.

The Member for Edmonton-Calder mentioned the recent conference on poverty by the ATA. I was really encouraged when I saw a single mother at that session stand up after I spoke to say how well the system has served her and how, through the supports offered under SFI, she was able to get back into the mainstream of society again, that she was working full-time, she was providing for her two children, and that the program does work. So there are the successes out there. We are receiving some very positive feedback from time to time. Perhaps we need to find a way to build more on the successes and develop as a result of the successes that are there.

The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar referenced reorganization and the Saddlemyer report. Again I would want to respond by saying that the Saddlemyer report did reflect a number of the issues that I raised when we called for Mr. Saddlemyer to come in and help us restructure, help us develop a process that would allow us to focus the resources that we had in a more effective and efficient way. Yes, we did choose a combination of the alternatives that Mr. Saddlemyer brought forward. We did it in consultation with Mr. Saddlemyer and our executive committee and workers throughout the department.

We're just in the process of completing that restructuring. It's allowed us to be more streamlined, more efficient, more effective. I think probably from my perspective – and I want to make this very clear – it's not centralization. We're continuing to build on our decentralization. What I'm really pleased about is that the restructuring is going to allow frontline workers, I think, to be more effective in influencing future changes to our particular programs as they're needed. The channel of communications from frontline workers right up to our deputy minister is much cleaner now, Mr. Chairman. I think that once we have it fully implemented, we're going to see some real dividends as a result of those changes.

The other significant part about it is that it is going to allow, I think, better opportunity for the community to be involved. Again I was disappointed to not hear as much as I would like to have heard about the need for all of us to be working in partnership to respond to some of these needs. The issue of poverty is one that we as a government are not going to be able to legislate an end

to. We're not going to find the solutions alone. We're going to find them in partnership. We're going to find them by working together with all levels of government and working with communities. The restructuring is going to allow us to do that in a lot more focused and a lot more effective way.

The member again referenced the strike and asked about caseloads. I want to assure the member that our caseloads have dropped significantly in terms of workload by individuals even though our caseloads are up overall, particularly on the SFI side. But, again, the model that we are implementing is allowing us to address that in a very significant way. I want to mention that I'm really encouraged by the response that I've been getting back from frontline workers. I was just in some of our offices in Calgary. I get into the offices in Red Deer on a fairly frequent basis. I receive correspondence from workers across the province, and they all tell me that it's working, that they haven't seen a system like this in place in the years that they've been in the department, and how much it's helping them with their job.

10:10

Requests around the FCSS report and reference to the Throne speech. Yes, the Throne speech did say that we would be implementing recommendations from that report, Mr. Chairman, and we will be implementing recommendations from that report. I'll be responding, hopefully in the not too distant future. Some 39 recommendations, as I recall, and they involve a number of ministries throughout government. I'm working with my colleagues to be able to respond as quickly as we can. Something very unique about this particular report is that it was given to me and before the ink was even dry, I made sure that it was released because I was very anxious to be able to share it with Albertans and have some of their initial responses as well. So I look forward to getting on with the recommendations within that report, and we will be responding in terms of our intentions in the not too distant future.

One other issue, just quickly going through. I might say that I took about 20 pages of copious notes, Mr. Chairman, and as I said, I will respond in a more substantive way once we have a chance of going through that. To the Member for Edmonton-Avonmore, I want to say that I think we agree in terms of your comments. You talked about empowering individuals. You talked about making sure that there were opportunities for individuals within the community, that they need support to be able to fulfill those opportunities. They need ongoing support, and they need help to be able to move forward. I think the changes that we've made to SFI help to do that. The changes are about empowering individuals. They are about offering more support in a more meaningful and significant way. They are about opportunities for retraining and new training, and they are about helping people move forward. Again, in terms of the other side, as the member quite rightly pointed out, there need to be jobs. It's not good enough to have training without jobs, and we've worked hard these last six years to create those opportunities that relate to jobs. Comparatively speaking, you know, in a province like Alberta, in spite of what's happened to our agricultural community in the last five or six years as a result of the international commodities market, in spite of what's happened to our energy sector, we have still created some 122,000 additional jobs in this province today.

There were also a number of specific instances raised, and it's always difficult to respond to specific situations of single mothers hitchhiking with children. Obviously, I'd be concerned about that. That's not something any of us would want to see. The member did reference, though, the issue of family violence and the commitment to a 25 percent increase in reference to a 13

percent increase in this budget. The 25 percent increase is a commitment involving not just this department, because the member knows full well that the issue of family violence needs to be addressed by many departments in our government today. We will be releasing additional information there in the cohesive response that we're bringing together within a number of ministries.

Mr. Chairman, it is getting late, and so I want to take this opportunity to move that the committee rise, report progress, and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. SCHUMACHER: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions of the Department

of Family and Social Services, reports progress thereon, and begs leave to sit again.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the report, those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried.
Deputy Deputy Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. OLDRING: That must be me. Mr. Speaker, business tomorrow will be Committee of Supply, department of tourism.

[At 10:16 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Friday at 10 a.m.]

