

Title: Friday, March 11, 1994 Designated Subcommittee
 Date: 1994/03/11
 [Chairman: Mr. Lund]
 Time: 8:05 a.m.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the subcommittee studying the 1994-95 budget of the Department of Family and Social Services. I'll just briefly outline the way we would like to proceed this morning. Of course, we're not anxious to make it too formal but just formal enough to keep the meeting moving. I will ask for the minister to introduce his staff that are with us this morning. We will then proceed to the '94-95 budget, and the way I would propose to handle it is that we go through each program, and we will alternate from one side to the other in the questioning: a main question and two supplementaries. I will continue to work on at your pleasure, but we will stick to each program and go through them and spend as much time as is necessary on them. The only thing I caution is that of course there are five main programs and then the sixth one, so if we spend too much time on any one, we may not get to another. If the committee agrees to that.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate your comment about keeping it relatively informal. Just two observations. I may be one of the few people that wasn't on this committee last time, and when I went through *Hansard*, two things occurred to me. The first one is: most people went through this session last year, and I'm wondering this time, instead of spending time after introducing his deputies and so on at the beginning, if we could give the minister 15 or 20 minutes at the end of a session – we dedicate that to allow the minister to come back if there are any areas that we hadn't already gotten to or things that he thinks would require clarification. I thought that might be a bit more effective way of doing it.

The second thing I was going to suggest, Mr. Chairman, is because I looked last time and I saw the amount – there is a sort of rush at the end if there are some programs you haven't got to. My suggestion was going to be that we alternate, that the opposition can pick a program area they'd like to start questioning in and everybody has at it in that program area, and then the government can pick a program. That way we go right to the areas that maybe are of most interest, and it's fair in the sense that each side has an opportunity to sort of identify a particular program area they want to get into. So those two suggestions . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: The only problem: I don't want to be jumping from, say, program 1 and then two questioners later jump back. Once we leave a program, that's it for that program unless we have time at the end.

MR. DICKSON: Exactly, Mr. Chairman. And my thought would be that we alternate identifying an area we want to get into, and then once we're in that area, it's wide open so all members have a chance to ask questions about votes and issues related to that program and so on.

MR. CARDINAL: Now, if you're short of time, if you're going to discuss processes here for 15 minutes, you're using up the time I should be using. Mr. Chairman, I think it's only fair that I as minister do a brief outline of my department, because that's why we're here. After a brief review, I may answer a lot of the questions you're going to ask, instead of waiting till the end when – you know, it doesn't make sense.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. I'm sorry that I did not include that.

MR. CARDINAL: If you keep discussing processes here, we will be running out of time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. The minister will start with an overview. I don't have a problem if we start with program 1. It's fairly broad ranged. Then if someone wants to go to program 3 as opposed to 2, I don't have a problem with doing that, but we won't be jumping from – once we leave one, then that's it.

Roy, you have a comment?

MR. BRASSARD: No. Just that I wanted to make sure we didn't usurp the overview at the start, because that does answer a lot of questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, no. And I apologize for not mentioning that, because that certainly will be an important one. Also, when we have 10 minutes left, Mike, I will ask if you care to make any comments and if that is agreed to.

MR. CARDINAL: Sure. That's no problem.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The other thing. We don't have to make a decision now, but some do want to have a 10-minute break about midway, and the chair is perfectly open on that one.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Chairman, do I take it, then, that there's a consensus we can do that program thing where each side will be able to identify a program we want to get into so we can cover the areas of most importance?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. We will start with program 1, and then you folks can decide which one you want to do next, and then the government side will decide the next one. Because program 1 is the broadened . . .

Okay. Mr. Minister, do you care to proceed with your introductions and then opening comments?

MR. CARDINAL: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for giving me the opportunity to appear before this committee to explain and give answers regarding the ministry's '94-95 budget. We found that the process we had in the '93-94 budget was good. We had a good opportunity to exchange questions and answers.

I'd like to introduce the people I have here: Don Fleming, deputy minister; Cliff Supernault, chief executive officer of aboriginal affairs; Frank Wilson, executive director of resource management services; Dave Banick, executive director of personnel services; and Duncan Campbell, director of budget and finance analysis. We also have in the back there Bob Scott and Donna Ballard, my executive assistants, and Bonnie McMillan, a director of the department.

I would just like to make a few comments on the overall budget. For '94-95 the government will be spending over \$1.4 billion, primarily in a number of areas: supports for independence, services for children, which include child welfare, day care, handicapped children services, and services for handicapped adults. As a number of you are aware no doubt, the department will employ over 5,100 full-time equivalent staff in the provision of services in '94-95, and that's just a very minor reduction from last year's staffing component. Our manpower complement will be reduced by only 107 full-time positions this year. However, these reductions will be accomplished through attrition and redeployment. So there are really no layoffs.

Finally, I would like to advise you that when Jack Ady and I met with the Hon. Mr. Axworthy, the federal Minister of Human Resources Development, there was general support taken in the welfare reforms and retraining programs that our department is in, and the federal government is interested in looking at a couple of co-sponsored pilot projects in Alberta. So we are working on that in that area.

I would like to make some comments now specific to some programs, and I'll start with supports for independence. The '94-95 supports for independence budget is based on an average monthly caseload of 68,100. Given the success we have had in controlling the '93-94, this is a realistic caseload number. Most of the savings that occur in '94-95 are a result of reductions in benefits and implementation of training and employment initiatives that were introduced in the '93-94 budget year. In fact, approximately \$80 million of the \$138 million budget reductions are a result of benefit reductions implemented during the '93-94 budget.

The department will continue to place a large emphasis on training and employment initiatives. Approximately \$9.2 million will be provided to Advanced Education and Career Development, enabling that department to help supports for independence clients in the areas of employment preparation, training on the job, job placement, and expanding the number of training spaces available for those clients.

My department is also directly funding employment opportunities for SFI clients in northern Alberta through the northern Alberta job corp, and I believe we have 13 sites across the north. As well, more funding is being added to the Alberta community employment program to encourage creation of temporary jobs for SFI clients. These two programs along with the employment skills program, which is an older program that's been around quite a while, will be expending a total of \$31 million this year.

Our experience with these programs in past years indicates that our clients gain experience and prove to be potential employees, that they are capable and willing to work. They then move from these temporary work experience programs to jobs in the private sector, hopefully in the public sector, or continue with various forms of training programs.

8:15

In the area of children's services, as I indicated in my opening comments, this department provides a significant amount of funding. In 1994-95 we will spend almost \$250 million in the area of child welfare, day care, handicapped children's services.

Before proceeding further, I want to update you on Alberta's allocation from the federal community action plan of the Brighter Futures initiatives. I understand members are very interested in that. The program designed to address health and development needs of high-risk children has a \$1.7 million allocation for Alberta this budget year. There have been 10 major projects already approved across the province. We expect to be able to provide more specific details about these when the federal minister announces the budget allocations in the near future, and there will be a joint announcement done on that. These projects are of a preventative nature and should assist in containing future costs in the child welfare program.

The '94-95 budgets in child welfare and handicapped children's services have been increased to meet future demands for these services. I would like to point out that the budget amounts for child welfare and handicapped children's services as detailed in the budget document include manpower costs associated with these programs. Therefore, considering there has been a 5 percent manpower cost saving in the program dollars that have

been made available for these programs in '94-95, they have actually increased by \$4.8 million.

As you are aware, the department has decreased the rates for the day care operating allowance and family day home administrative fees by \$10 and \$8 a month respectively. However, funding for low-income Albertans through subsidized programs will remain as they were before. So there are no changes in that.

A subsidy program with a budget of \$33.8 million is an important support for our welfare reforms as it enables clients to enroll in education and training programs and accept employment. These are the dollars that are transferred to advanced education's student finance, and we have over 8,500 people attending various programs through that area.

In the area of handicapped adults, almost \$410 million has been budgeted for services and support for handicapped adults, and that's a very high percentage of our budget. These programs include assured income for the severely handicapped at \$165 million and \$57.3 million for personal support services and \$41 million for basic benefits with the SFI program and community-based and institutional services for the handicapped, with a total funding of \$146.1 million.

When the 5 percent manpower cost saving has been factored out of the services to persons with disabilities areas, it is obvious that the government has provided additional funding of \$10.4 million to support those individuals who require our support and assistance. The challenge facing the department in this area will be to develop strategies in consultation with the community that will contain costs in these programs at the '94-95 budget levels.

I would like now to make some comments on the budgets of other areas of my department. You may have noticed that the budgets for the Alberta assured income plan for seniors and the widows' pension have been reduced by \$44 million. However, it should be noted that these funds have been transferred to Community Development and will still be distributed to these clients. In other words, it does not represent a reduction in funding to needy Albertans.

Funding for the prevention of family violence has been increased to reflect the government's continued support for this important area.

The aboriginal affairs program funding has also remained the same as '93-94 at \$4.8 million even though there has been a 5 percent manpower cost savings. The increased program funding reflects the government's commitment to enhancing the province's relationship with the aboriginal community and the aboriginal people.

Although the Metis Settlements Transition Commission budget has been decreased by 4.7 percent as part of the government's overall deficit reduction plan, grants to the Metis settlements will be maintained at current levels. The savings will be achieved through 5 percent manpower cost savings and administrative efficiencies. That's within the commission.

Finally, you will note that my capital investment vote has increased only slightly over the '93-94 estimates to reflect the purchase of replacement EDP equipment, and you will also note that the '93-94 forecast is \$1 million lower than the '94-95 estimate. This reflects the department's decision to delay purchases during the past year wherever possible in order to help the government remain within the '93-94 budget.

In conclusion, I would just like to indicate that we will try and answer as many questions as possible here today. I guess the ones we can't answer or don't have accurate information for we will provide you, possibly in writing, immediately after the meeting. That's all we have.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mike, for that overview. One thing I erred in not mentioning earlier: it is not the mandate of this committee to deal with policy or get into philosophical discussions. We're dealing with the budget for '94-95.

On program 1 . . .

MR. DICKSON: I've got something to say to that, Mr. Chairman, if you're finished commenting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. Okay.

MR. DICKSON: I read *Hansard* last time, and I understood the concern about not getting into a long philosophical discussion, but I hope you're not suggesting we can't talk about the policies that are driven by the budget.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We can discuss the policy and how that is carried out.

MR. DICKSON: And the three-year plan? I mean, that's all part of the package.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Not the three-year business plans. In the three-year business plans, if there is something that relates to what's happening in '94-95 in this budget, so be it, but we're not going to get into a discussion on what's going to happen in '95-96, '96-97.

MRS. HEWES: Well, why not?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Because this committee was set up to study the budgets of '94-95, and that's where we're going to go.

MR. CARDINAL: We still go back to the Legislature to do a presentation, so maybe at that time you'd have more time to do that. I still go up to do my estimates, besides this.

MRS. HEWES: Well, Mr. Chairman, I thought the whole notion of these subcommittees was that we could in fact discuss in more detail and have some kind of open dialogue between ourselves as members and the minister and his staff that would be helpful to both groups. It was my thought that that was the whole intent. If we are simply restricted to going line by line one at a time and, you know, one question, two supplementaries, I don't think it's going to be that useful a process, with respect. I think we need to have an opportunity really, as Gary has suggested, to find out what's underlying those numbers, and hopefully we can do that.

MR. BRASSARD: Well, I certainly don't want to stifle debate, but I would like to bring it back to the fact that we're here discussing this year's budget, period. That's it. That is what estimates are all about. We can wax philosophical if we wish, but I would challenge the members to stick to the facts. We're here to discuss the 1994-95 budget estimates, and I think we can wander off on a whole lot of philosophical discussion here and really not deal with what we're here for. I would ask you to rule anytime you see us straying off it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just before I recognize Gary and Peter, I want to refer you to the designated supply subcommittees. On page 32 it says: "Debate must be strictly relevant to the proposed grant under consideration." We currently have the '94-95 budget under consideration. You've heard me say that if there

are things in the business plan for '94-95 that relate to the expenditures, that's part of the discussion.

MR. DICKSON: I was just going to say, Mr. Chairman, that I think you just deal with it on a case-by-case basis. I just was concerned with your comments because they were sweeping, but if it's understood that there's some elasticity to it, then my suggestion is: let's get into it.

8:25

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. SEKULIC: I was going to make the same comments, that we don't have any less flexibility than is entertained in the Assembly by the committees not designated.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, sometimes in the Assembly I've seen it strained beyond what I would entertain here, but I certainly will accept Gary Dickson's recommendation that we deal with it case by case. But I can assure you that we will not be straying willy-nilly into '95-96, '96-97. Did one of you folks want to lead off on program 1?

Alice Hanson.

MS HANSON: Okay; sure. I have a question, Mr. Chairman, about community support services. I wonder if the minister could tell us what is involved in that program, 1.0.5.

MR. CARDINAL: Yeah; I'll give you a description of that. It integrates the department's planning, communications, and quality assurance activities, as well as being responsible for family supports and aboriginal relations. Now, Don, I wonder if you want to expand further on that particular one. I don't know if you'd want me to explain some of the changes that are proposed in that. I could explain why there's an adjustment in the budget, no doubt. Basically, of course, part of it involves the 5 percent reduction in salaries; part of it is transfer out of the library and fiscal relations unit. Administrative spending reductions is another one. Consolidation of quality improvement, provisions for association grants from program 3, and dollars budgeted under community support services in '93-94 that should have been allocated to program policy, personnel services, and regional operations. That's why there is that reduction in that particular year.

Don, you may want to expand, or one of the other members.

MR. FLEMING: Well, just perhaps a little. When we reorganized the department when the minister took over, we brought this particular component in to support community initiatives. We have our program policy design area and the finance and personnel areas that support the line delivery of the department. This particular part of the organization is to support community initiatives that we hope to develop as we move toward more community involvement in the delivery of services.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Supplementary, Alice.

MS HANSON: Okay; thank you. No supplementary.

MR. CARDINAL: Okay. Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Gary Friedel.

MR. FRIEDEL: Yes, a general question. The budget in every other case is generally reduced, but I noticed the capital investment, the capital expenditure, I guess, is increasing in this program by about a quarter of a million dollars. It's maybe not big relative to the entire budget, but can you tell us . . .

MR. CARDINAL: Could you identify the number you're talking about?

MR. FRIEDEL: This is the overall capital investment.

MR. CARDINAL: The overall capital. Oh, okay.

MR. FRIEDEL: It's going up not quite a quarter of a million, and as I say, relative to the entire budget it's maybe not that big, but why would capital expenditures be increasing?

MR. FLEMING: Mr. Minister, if I might respond to that one.

MR. CARDINAL: Sure.

MR. FLEMING: That's where we had put off purchasing a lot of EDP equipment . . .

MR. CARDINAL: Yeah, and I explained that in my opening remarks. But go ahead, Don.

MR. FLEMING: . . . so that we could keep our budget in line last year. This year we've put that back in, and we will be spending that. It's electronic services that will help us to manage the approximately billion dollars we put out in payments to individuals over the course of a year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Supplementary, Gary?

MR. FRIEDEL: This is primarily, then, office electronic equipment, not capital buildings and things like that.

MR. FLEMING: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Final supplementary?

MR. SEKULIC: To the minister. This year the government introduced net budgeting in its 1994-95 estimates, and the estimates document indicates that "net budgeting provides an alternative basis of authorizing spending." My question is: what implications does net budgeting have on the Family and Social Services Department, and will it encompass CAP funding in any way?

MR. WILSON: I guess the concept of net budgeting is that if departments can come up with a proposal that will generate revenue, then they can offset the cost of that service with the revenue obtained.

Questions were asked about the Canada assistance plan. The advice we had back from Treasury was that they're not prepared at this point in time to use federal transfer payments as a revenue generator against which we can offset the cost of collecting that money. So it will not affect the Canada assistance plan.

MR. SEKULIC: For the department?

MR. WILSON: For the department.

MR. SEKULIC: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Supplementary?

MR. SEKULIC: In the Auditor General's report he indicated that there was a concern with cost sharing that we had under-claimed in previous fiscal years. My question is: what has been done to remedy this, and what is the current status, this past year's status, as to have we billed accordingly?

MR. WILSON: Yes. What it was: it was in the area of the cost-sharing arrangement because certain data was omitted from the application forms. What has happened right now: we went through all the Auditor General's working papers. He'd estimated about \$3 million, and we have agreed to a settlement of about \$1.8 million with the federal government, because there were certain errors in the Auditor General's working papers. That has now been resolved, and we will be collecting the money.

MR. SEKULIC: My final supplemental is with regards to cost sharing with the federal government. The most recent changes, particularly in FCSS being transferred to Municipal Affairs: What are the implications under CAP?

MR. WILSON: If the municipalities choose to claim that portion of the unconditional grant under the FCSS rules and regulations, then cost sharing will continue. There is every indication from a lot of the municipalities that they are prepared to do this to ensure that the province does not lose any revenue. They're still prepared to break out that portion of the grant.

MR. CARDINAL: Only 17 percent of the FCSS budget is cost shared, or \$8.8 million.

MR. WILSON: Yes. It's approximately \$8 million.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. BRASSARD: I notice in vote 1.0.6 and 1.0.7 that regional operations are up just under \$200,000 and personnel services are down almost the same amount. Is there a trend here? I notice also that you seem to be giving local managers much more autonomy. Is this what we're seeing in a switch like this?

MR. CARDINAL: Okay. That's 1.0.6 and 1.0.7. Yeah. Both of the regional operations and resource management services budgets were, of course, reduced by a 5 percent manpower saving cost. However, the reduction is offset by two factors. First, there was some reorganization of budgets that were previously provided for in programs 2 and 3 but are more appropriately budgeted in program 1. An example is an accounts payable unit that was budgeted in program 2 but, because it also processes child welfare accounts, is more correctly placed in program 1. The second factor is that increases in these budgets relate to some decisions made when the '93-94 budget was being finalized, and at the time it was decided to delay the purchase of some of the EDP equipment I mentioned earlier and other supplies. These amounts have now been added back into the budget as they can no longer be delayed. We have to purchase them this coming year. A bigger portion of the EDP equipment is used to support the calculation and processes close to a billion dollars' worth of benefits.

8:35

MR. BRASSARD: Supplementary, Mr. Chairman. Can you give me an idea where you are with your EDP program throughout the department?

MR. CARDINAL: Okay. Maybe one of the department staff can explain that. Don, just briefly.

MR. BRASSARD: Just what stage you're at, because I know it's quite an aggressive . . .

MR. FLEMING: Yeah. We have a number of large systems. We have our income support information system that's out there. That's a large system that helps us to look after the payments and tracking of benefits to income support clients. We have another large system for our child welfare information program. That one is still in the process of being finalized, and some new equipment and so forth is required for that. We're in pretty good shape actually. We've got, I think, first-class systems in both of those major areas. What we need now is just to get the remaining equipment and lines and so forth in place to make sure that they work to the greatest efficiency that they can. Frank, I don't know if you wanted . . .

MR. WILSON: No, I think that was satisfactory.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.
Bettie Hewes.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Minister, for your overview and your opening comments. I have trouble integrating all of it as quickly as I should. I have a couple of questions, and I don't know whether they belong in program 1 or not, but if they don't, I'm not sure where they would go. Mr. Minister, the federal government is making some rapid moves in social policy reform, and I know that they're intending on doing some action research projects across the country. I'm sure that you've been involved in discussions with them. Where is that kind of thing reflected in this budget? Can we know the projects that are being contemplated in Alberta that would affect your program and SFI and so on?

MR. CARDINAL: It depends on what part of the program it falls under. It could come in a number of areas, and maybe I'll get the budget notes to expand on it. Some of the examples would be the Athabasca project, where we are already co-located with employment and immigration, Advanced Education and Career Development, and Family and Social Services. That's one project. We have another one in Lac La Biche, very similar, and one just opened up in Westlock the other day, again with employment and immigration, our department, and Advanced Education and Career Development. We are looking at a number of other projects, I believe about seven this coming year, and some will be in Edmonton. This is just one example of some of the possibilities that exist.

When we met with Mr. Axworthy and the other ministers from across Canada, there was a general support that the concept of change was required. You know, we're spending \$17 billion annually on unemployment insurance alone, and of course each jurisdiction has their own welfare dollars to spend too. I think everybody there realized that we had to work together, and the federal government is very anxious to look at a couple of pilot projects, I believe one in Edmonton. Don, you may want to

expand on that. At the deputy level, of course, the administrative stuff has commenced, and Don may want to expand on it a bit. Don.

MR. FLEMING: Yeah. We just met as late as Wednesday with our federal counterparts. What we're looking at, as the minister is indicating, is moving in the direction that we've already started in this province. We are talking with the feds about getting Alberta designated for one of the pilots, and using some of the money that would be freed up for pilot projects would get us away from the CAP restrictions.

Basically, what we're looking at is sort of a three-phase process where we would look to co-ordinating efforts initially; secondly, to integrating service; and then thirdly, some innovative new way of redistributing the resources; in other words, taking the career development benefits that are going to clients, the welfare premiums and the UI that go to clients, putting that money in a pot and coming up with some new way of addressing needs more effectively and efficiently so that we cut out some of the administrative costs in here.

MR. CARDINAL: As far as funding – you asked the vote – it would come under supports for independence, 2.2.1, program delivery, and we're estimating \$41,312,000 on that particular one. So that's where some of that would fall under. Now, depending on how fast you'll move and what direction we need to go, we may have to move dollars as required to accommodate those pilot projects.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Supplementary.

MRS. HEWES: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, thank you. They seem to be on a pretty fast track; they seem to be moving quickly. I need to know: are they pumping a fair amount of money into provinces? Do we have to match those? I'll just ask the next question now, and then the minister can answer them all. Can we, Mr. Minister, have descriptions of those projects that are already functioning that you mentioned? I'd really like to know what the sort of general objectives are of the one in Athabasca and the one in Westlock, what your sort of measurements are as you go along in them, and what the interaction is with the other various departments that you've mentioned. One, is there federal money coming in here, and where is that reflected in this for projects? Two, can we have a description of them?

MR. CARDINAL: Okay. I don't know if you'd want it here now.

MRS. HEWES: No, no. I'd just like to see it.

MR. CARDINAL: I can provide it here, you know, but we can provide it in writing to you also, if you want, on those specific projects.

As far as time lines, when we met with Axworthy, because we had a number of projects already active in Alberta, he felt that he was very interested in moving forward without consulting other jurisdictions. He felt that Alberta was ready to go, and he said that there's no reason why we can't move on it immediately, because we've been running some of these pilot projects for four or five years in some cases. Don, I don't know if you want to expand on it. If they want to move fast, we're ready to move.

As far as dollars, of course I think they want to do the same as we do: look at the SFI dollars, or my budget dollars for an example, and redirect some of those dollars for employment and

training purposes. I suspect in their case they're planning on doing the same thing, utilizing, for an example, UIC dollars for maybe employment training or co-ordinated services. So it would not mean necessarily new dollars but probably reallocation of existing dollars.

Just a brief description on the Athabasca project, for an example. The way that one is designed – and it was designed with the assistance of the clientele and the community in that area. It wasn't our department only that facilitated the process. What the community and the clients asked for is, number one, that they didn't want to go to welfare offices, that we need to change how these offices are looked at. So we said, "Okay; we'll look at a more employment/career development oriented office." The main part of the office, of course, is where a person walks in. In the office the first thing they see is a career counselor, who sits down and develops a plan of how they may get themselves off welfare and actually get into, you know, training programs or direct placement into a job. Family and Social Services and the social assistance program only provide a backup to assist those families move through the process. That was basically one design that seemed to work, because, I think, it involved the client in design of the process.

Also, there is a community interest group, private business, and some town officials that are set up as a committee to oversee the project, so there's community involvement. Then they in turn deal with the chamber of commerce, for an example, to hire people that need assistance. It works well.

Now, I don't how you'd model one in Edmonton. Don, maybe you want to expand on the one that's being talked about in Edmonton.

8:45

MR. FLEMING: Well, that's just the thing: it is being talked about. No one has a corner on the market, so to speak, in terms of where we're going into the future. I think the feds are much like us; they're looking for something that is going to be more effective and efficient. They've identified a pot of money – I believe it's about \$800 million – that will be earmarked for pilot projects. So this won't be new money, but what they're doing is that by putting it into a pilot project pot, they can get away from some of the CAP restrictions so they can try some of these new and innovative things. Ultimately, we won't be exceeding our budgets, but we will be able to use that money in a different way as we experiment with some other things.

As the minister suggests, I think the big thing here is more the psychological impact in many ways. We want to get away from us going for unemployment insurance. We want to get away from us going to get our welfare premium. What we want to do is we want to go into an office that will help us to find employment. So putting the emphasis on employment and reconfiguring, I guess, our resources in such a way that that stigma and barrier is not as it is today.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, I have some more questions in that regard.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah. Well, in the next round.

MRS. FORSYTH: Mr. Minister, I just want to follow up on something Roy had said and I guess maybe just a little bit of a clarification. I'd like you to explain, so I have it clear in my mind, why the regional operations and resource management services budgets are increased while all the other elements in program 1 have been decreased. I would expect that with the 5

percent manpower cost savings, all the elements in the program would have decreased.

MR. WILSON: I think the minister dealt with that fairly well. There are some adjustments. We've moved certain costs, including manpower, out of the other programs because they're more appropriately placed in program 1, certain contract dollars for the payment of medical benefits.

MRS. FORSYTH: For payments of?

MR. WILSON: Medical benefits. We contract with Blue Cross and the Alberta Dental Association, but these services are provided across all the programs, not just to our welfare clients. They're provided to handicapped children; they're provided to child welfare. So we've decided that it's not logical to allocate all these costs onto the supports for independence program. Also, where staff are providing services to more than one program, such as the accounts payable, then they also should be in program 1. They're not a cost that you can strictly align. It's around that, but certainly the manpower reduction or cost saving has been implemented for all areas in the department.

MRS. FORSYTH: Okay. I just wanted a clarification.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Alice Hanson.

MS HANSON: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, this is program 1.0.9, the commissioner of services for children. I noticed that the budget for this item has increased, and I understood this was a temporary position. I was just wondering if that's become full-time.

MR. CARDINAL: No, it isn't. The position is for an 18-month period, and basically it will continue this coming year. Of course, the commissioner will be adding some more support staff during this critical process of finalizing the review of existing programs and meetings with aboriginal groups and other interested agencies. That's basically what the costs are for. I don't know if you want to expand on it, Don.

MR. FLEMING: I guess what the difference is between the \$73,000 and the \$400,000, if you will, is the annualization. Last year we only had him in that portfolio for a short time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A supplementary?

MS HANSON: My supplementary. I'm curious about how the commissioner will work in relation to the Children's Advocate. You know, does one have more authority than the other, or do they work together? How's that going to work?

MR. CARDINAL: They'll work together as a team wherever possible and necessary. They all know they're not doing the same job. The Children's Advocate is a children's advocate along with the 12 other advocates that are under that department. There's a total of 21 staff. That department, of course, will continue doing their job. The commissioner's sole mandate is to look at the whole issue of child welfare in Alberta and children's services, and he will be coming up with a plan along with implementation time lines and budget implications, which are separate. But we will be, no doubt Don will be, working as a team with Ray's department.

MS HANSON: So they will be working together.

MR. CARDINAL: They will be, yeah. Definitely.

MS HANSON: Okay. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Final supplementary.

MS HANSON: Yeah. Thank you. I was wondering what the status is of the commissioner's review. You know, how far along is it?

MR. CARDINAL: Of course, he has organized committees set up to work with, and I can provide in the near future possibly a progress report on where he's at with the process. The process is going well. Because a high percentage of the children in care under that particular program are aboriginal, we're trying to involve the aboriginal community as much as possible as to how we may deal with that particular issue more effectively and more efficiently. It's going to take a bit of time. We're going to be very careful and involve these communities as much as possible, and we can, you know, provide you with that information that Don has. I don't see any problem with that.

MS HANSON: Yeah, but actually I was wondering if your committee is formed and is working now.

MR. FLEMING: Yeah. To my knowledge – and it changes daily – he is fast-tracking, as you suggest. He is plugging into a number of existing committees and using that as a feedback loop wherever he can. There's the project on co-ordination of services to kids that involves four departments, so he's using that as one mechanism. He's plugged into the advisory group and working group that we have that works with myself as a department. He's literally contacting everybody and everyone who's interested. He's been traveling around the province a fair bit. He's now setting up six regional groups. I think they've identified a number of individuals in the six areas that would be interested, and they'll be coming together in the next week or so to commence their work. I believe in the area of the aboriginal group – Mr. Minister, I'm not sure whether he's run this by you or not – he was looking at bringing in a group on a conference. Because there were so many different groupings, we felt it would be best to bring in the aboriginal group to one set-up.

MR. CARDINAL: And there are ongoing meetings with myself to do an informal progress report. We do involve the chief executive officer of aboriginal affairs also, to make sure that component is fully utilized.

MS HANSON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Moe Amery.

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will start off with a general question, but perhaps we can get into more specific questions later on. Mr. Minister, I would like if you could explain in some details how the department will meet its commitment to reduce full-time employment equivalents by 107 this year.

MR. CARDINAL: Okay. Of course, I mentioned in my opening speech that we were fortunate because some of the concerns that have been discussed in the past were that caseloads were too high for our staffing, and in this particular case, the department's plan is not to lay off any at this time but basically to do the process through attrition. We have a hiring freeze on since last Septem-

ber also, and we will continue with that. Of course, we will be redeploying existing staff to any critical vacant positions that need to be filled. In addition, the department expects a number of employees to take advantage of the voluntary separation program. That's there, and people continue to utilize that. For '94-95, the department's complement is 5,128.3 full-time equivalents with a budget of \$204.4 million. We intend to continue with that as much as possible, since you're giving us an opportunity to provide more staffing for the critical and high-needs areas. We want to see what happens this coming year with that.

8:55

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you have a supplementary?

MR. AMERY: Yes, a short one. Actually, when I see reduction in employment – I'm coming from a very, very high-needs constituency and my constituents depend heavily on social assistance – is it going to affect the services provided to clients in any way, shape, or form? I know the caseload is going down, but it's going to increase some caseloads in some particular constituencies, such as mine.

MR. CARDINAL: Actually, in probably all the constituencies, including yours, we'll see increased time from our staff, because we've reduced the caseload from 94,000 last April. We had the same number of staff, or almost the same number of staff, and we've reduced the caseload by 30,000 cases or 63,000 individuals. We have reduced very few positions, so I think we will be increasing, in fact, the concentration as far as work to clientele, rather than decreasing. It's positive.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Final supplemental.

MR. AMERY: That's fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Betty Hewes.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to pursue my earlier questions, Mr. Minister. When there's a joint venture, which you've described to us, do the other departments share in that cost? That is, are they committed? The Department of Health, and you've already spoken about the money transfers to advanced education, and so on. How does that work? When there is a project that is employment centred or employment education/training centred, how is that cost worked out? What's that relationship?

MR. CARDINAL: As far as the agreements, because they're pilot projects, they're generally informal agreements at the local level, set up by the local managers. For example, office space is looked after by public works, and therefore each department doesn't have to have their own administration. Public works does that, for example, for Family and Social Services and advanced education; that's the general issue. In relation to costs, the budget, the manpower component along with administration costs at the department level: the federal government and provincial departments would do that and basically allocate existing human resources to specific projects. Each department would contribute that part from their existing operations and budgets.

MRS. HEWES: Okay. Then, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, we would have one functioning unit with somebody from your department, possibly somebody from Health, possibly somebody

from Education. Do they then all relate to one supervisory system and is that yours, or do they each relate to their own department?

MR. CARDINAL: It depends on the area. In Athabasca, for example, that's one that's been going on for a number of years because it involves Family and Social Services I guess as the leading department. The supervisor from that area oversees the project, along with the community interest groups that work with that project. That's generally how it works, because it involves only Family and Social Services, Advanced Ed and Career Development, and employment and immigration. We don't have a project where we've involved Health or Education yet in those particular pilots, but there's nothing to say that in the future other departments can't be added as required. Home economics, for an example: that type of activity could no doubt be added in some areas if that is a high need for part of the training. If that is a high-needs area, then that component would be brought in as part of that pilot project.

MRS. HEWES: So the key is flexibility.

MR. CARDINAL: Yes. You have to be innovative and flexible according to local needs, and that's the direction we want to go.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to ask the minister then: what kind of feedback are we getting from the staff and from the consumers?

MR. CARDINAL: On each particular program?

MRS. HEWES: Yeah.

MR. CARDINAL: Very positive. In fact, the project at Lac La Biche, the Athabasca one – and the one, of course, in Westlock just commenced, but the feedback is very positive. Of course, it ties in with other parts of welfare reform too. I'll give you an example, and that's the \$38 million we've transferred to students' finance to provide support for some of the people that go through these particular offices and then are placed in, say, academic upgrading programs or other training programs at a vocational centre. What we do with that, of course, is instead of being on social assistance, they get a student grant. For example, a single student that's under that right now would get 30 percent more than what they would get even from the old social services rate. So it's considerably higher. I believe a single person would get about \$655 a month attending a training program and a single parent with one child would get \$1,150. The welfare rate, of course, for a single parent with one child is \$766. So it's considerably higher. Therefore, the clients that are going through this process are really happy with the way the supports are provided. Of course, we continue monitoring this because there are a lot of those new, innovative ways of making changes to make it more positive, and it will have to be monitored very closely and adjusted as the needs change.

MRS. HEWES: I have some further questions when I have a chance.

MR. CARDINAL: Sure.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.
Pearl Calahasen.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. A question that I have, Mr. Minister, is on departmental support services. When you look at the operating expenditure of each one of the subprograms as a breakdown, 1.0.4, program policy seems to be the least hit. Could you tell me why that would be at a time when we're deregulating and coming away from any kind of rules and regulations?

MR. CARDINAL: Which one is that, Pearl?

MS CALAHASEN: The summary by element, page 39, 1.0.4. When you look at the operating expenditure, \$2,928,000, and compare it with the '93-94, \$3,080,000 – and it's only operating expenditures. When you look at the rest, if you look at community support services' operating expenditure – \$2,003,000 and \$2,964,000 – and regional operations, everything seems to be hit a lot more than program policy; of course, other than resource management services. The question is: why would that be?

MR. CARDINAL: Go ahead, Frank.

MR. WILSON: I think the actual reduction, although it doesn't look large, is approximately 4 percent. We have taken out the manpower reduction of 5 percent, but that doesn't reflect all the way through because manpower isn't the total base. There are other programs and they're under dollars for supplies and travel and other operating expenses. So the 5 percent is out of manpower, but when you look at the total base, it reduces to 4 percent. Also, we did a little bit of a realignment of staffing, again on the reorganization. We've moved people out of program 2. Because we felt we couldn't properly charge them there, we have moved a few staff into program 1, into that area.

9:05

MS CALAHASEN: Could you indicate to me then: under program policy and personnel services, would there be staffing in each area?

MR. WILSON: In all those areas in program 1 all those elements may have staff involved, including the minister's office. There is a portion of manpower.

MS CALAHASEN: Third supplementary, if I may, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah, final supplementary.

MS CALAHASEN: In any of these could you tell me what the numbers of staffing reduction would be, total, from '93-94 to '94-95?

MR. WILSON: In program 1 the approximate reduction of 30 full-time equivalents. Of the 107 that we are reducing, 30 are out of program 1, and they're primarily out of personnel services and resource management services.

MS CALAHASEN: Not program policy?

MR. WILSON: Not program policy. There were major reductions in program policy for '93-94, and there wasn't the need seen to streamline that further in '94-95.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Peter Sekulic.

MR. SEKULIC: Yes. To the minister. Mr. Minister, Bernd Walter had completed the Children's Advocate report, and it was a very popular one. Since that time you've appointed a commissioner. My question is: will this commissioner be completing an analysis under your direction of the Children's Advocate report, and will that analysis be made public?

MR. CARDINAL: I haven't thought of it as – you know, we hired the Children's Advocate to do the job of a Children's Advocate, and a lot of times people don't realize that there are 12 Children's Advocates out there, and they have a total of 21 staff. So they do have a department to operate. No doubt this person will, of course, review the report. I intend to meet with this individual along with the deputy minister at least two times per month to review and co-ordinate work activities within the department. No doubt that particular issue will be dealt with in one of our first meetings.

Now, Don, I don't know if you have anything else to add on that or not.

MR. FLEMING: Well, maybe just to elaborate a little bit. I think you're probably aware of this, Peter. Reshaping Child Welfare is basically a two-pronged effort. One is the commissioner, and he is doing a broad review of the whole delivery of children's services. You described a bit of what he was doing. Within the department we have identified in the Reshaping document 32 different areas that the minister felt were important for us to pursue, some of them, in fact, flowing from material from the advocate's report. So we are working on that within the department at this point in time.

I've got a working group drawn together that's representative of all the regions in the province, many of the advocacy groups. We meet on a monthly basis. I would involve them as well in providing us with feedback and instruction and comment relative to those 32 different areas we're looking into. So, yes, we're not letting the advocate's report gather dust per se. We have, I think, taken the key areas that we feel we need to address in the interim. In the longer term as the commissioner continues his review, and ultimately recommends a different delivery system hopefully, some of the other areas that we've identified in there will be taken care of as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
Supplementary?

MR. SEKULIC: Yes. As I see it, the commissioner and the advocate play distinctly different roles in that the commissioner is geared towards future policy in the area of children's services and the advocate is truly an advocate. My question follows in that line: has the minister advised or is he reviewing the potential to make the Children's Advocate an independent body similar to the Auditor General, the Ombudsman, the Ethics Commissioner, the Chief Electoral Officer because of the nature of that work that it can't be tied into the political system or the department's ongoing business?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That question's getting very close to the policy area, so I'll leave it to the discretion of the minister whether in fact he wants to answer.

MR. CARDINAL: I can quickly answer it. When you're looking at restructuring, you know, programs and departments to try and bring the services closer to the community, better services and possibly more involvement at the community level, we have

to be very innovative and open. Just because that particular department is set up the way it is now – it may be that the commissioner's process within the 18-month period could identify that as a recommended change. If that is the case, then of course we'll look at it very seriously. Our ultimate goal is to provide the service parents and children want from the advocate. If it's not working as well as it should be under the existing system, then of course we're open. Definitely it is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Final supplementary?

MR. SEKULIC: Yes. My final question follows on Mr. Amery's earlier questions regarding full-time equivalence. I'd like to know: what formula does the department use in determining the staffing needs? I guess one way of looking at it would be staff-to-client ratio: what is appropriate, and what sort of variables are you using to determine what is the appropriate ratio?

MR. CARDINAL: Okay; we'll ask the personnel department to address that one. Then I'll expand on it, of course.

MR. BANICK: Both within the SFI program as well as within the child welfare delivery system we have developed models that look at the activities performed by staff, especially in the child welfare area – the activities, the time taken, and so on – and that's translated into a range in terms of the caseload number, in terms of how many cases staff covering those ranges of activities normally would be able to handle. That is then translated into a determination in terms of how many full-time equivalents are required to carry out that load. So the system is set up to the child welfare information system so that there's certainly a tracking of the actual caseloads and the activities carried out by staff. Then that's monitored against the actual budget situation in terms of how many staff.

The income support program is not quite as formal in terms of time but certainly the same principle in terms of numbers of cases. It translates into an average, if I recall correctly – and you may want to correct me, Frank – I think it's nine or 10 staff for every . . .

MR. WILSON: Yeah. Eleven point three.

MR. BANICK: Eleven point three staff for every thousand cases. So again the same kind of principle in terms of trying to look at the number of cases or activities being carried out, some consideration in terms of the time taken to do that. Those are the models. The other areas, we aren't as formal yet. Certainly there's a process with the advisory committee set up with AUPE in terms of the local 6 to look at those kinds of issues as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Bettie Hewes.

MRS. HEWES: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I go a long way back. I was involved in the urban project that tried to do what your new projects are working at now. That was the one called West 10. I don't know if you remember that or your deputy will remember it. It failed. Maybe that's too strong a word. But it was discontinued. Would that be fairer?

MR. FLEMING: I think it failed.

MRS. HEWES: Okay; it failed. It failed for a variety of reasons. I'd like to know from you, Mr. Minister, or from your staff – I'm pleased that we're working along these collaborative

lines, and I'm pleased that we're taking advantage of the federal funds to do so and the federal government's input. I'm an urban member, and a lot of the problems I see relate to exactly this absence of a collaborative pattern in the cities. Can you help me with that? Having seen the West 10 failure, have we got some things on the go now? Are we working towards this kind of collaborative pattern in the urban centres as well?

9:15

MR. CARDINAL: Some of the pilots, of course, Don, we're targeting are Edmonton and Calgary. We sure need them here. They could be modeled after the existing pilot projects, but they don't necessarily have to be the same. I think a number of things. You know, situations have changed. I think the timing is right for making innovative changes in relation to UIC dollars and the welfare dollars. You know, the welfare system itself has been around since the early '50s, reasonably active, and it hasn't changed. Although the intentions were good, I believe, it basically trapped too many individuals in the system and didn't really allow people to be innovative as to how to get off the system.

The reason I say that timing is right: I think it took that long for people to realize that that is not a way to live, and most people want to get off assistance or supports and be independent. As long as we keep involving the clientele, the consumer, and the communities in how we design projects for that specific community – and that could be Edmonton – then I think we will be successful.

There are a number of pilots we're looking at, and Don may want to expand on that a bit more. Hopefully we can involve the federal government also and the community agencies in the process. The key is involving people at the local level. If you can involve the client to design a program for that area, you're much better off, because how the other programs have been designed is involving the community, the clientele, and the front-line workers and supervisors in those particular departments rather than government designing of programs. We just facilitate the process and fund the staff components – and the dollars, yes.

MR. FLEMING: If I might, going back to West 10. I think West 10 was a good idea but before its time. I think the concept wasn't that different from what we're talking about today, but I think there's been a maturing of minds and attitudes since that project was initiated back in the early '70s. The failure of that particular project I think was around the turf issue of the various departments. It was a co-ordination as opposed to an integration as opposed to a full redeveloping of a service. What tended to happen in those days as we entered the money era, as I will refer to it, is that we kept throwing bucks at the problem. Each department would put forward their requests, and they'd get approval of cabinet for X number of dollars to grow, grow, grow and build better and bigger services. So there was no incentive for the departments to work together. They all wanted to maintain their own little kingdoms, if you will. The mood is different out there today. Money, of course, drives it. I think that's one of the positives of where we find ourselves today, that the money isn't there, and when there isn't money, then innovative ideas have to start to come together. There's a willingness on the part of both the provincial and the federal governments to change the way we're doing things. We've realized that we can't afford it. So that would be my rationale for why I think what we're doing now has a much better chance of succeeding than what West 10 did.

MR. CARDINAL: The clients will not accept what we're doing; they're not happy with the old systems of just providing the dollars.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, I asked before about – and part of the failure of West 10, I think, was exactly what the deputy's speaking to. It wasn't ever clear who was in charge or who answered to whom. If we're going to have these new collaborative arrangements, then I think that has to be cleared up – who's paying, and who's in charge – because you can't have all those different bosses.

Mr. Chairman, I need to know then: what is the role of the municipality both in driving this and in paying for it?

MR. CARDINAL: Again, I indicated the programs are normally designed involving the clientele, the front-line workers, the supervisors, and the local community. We have so far funded all the money that has been spent on the project because what we're doing is utilizing existing dollars.

Where the municipality can be involved, of course, is in taking advantage of the Alberta community employment program and creating jobs through there doing municipal work, and hiring the people that go through our system. Of course, it doesn't cost the municipalities any money other than maybe some capital items at times, but very little. The majority of the costs are the department's responsibilities today, because it's not new dollars, and we feel it's not necessary to seek new dollars. All we're doing – and I think the federal government is looking at the same with the unemployment insurance dollars and other supports like that – is redirecting existing dollars for training and employment. So there are really no charges to the municipalities other than that. The more we involve the municipalities at the local level the more successful the program will be because it will be designed according to local needs. We found that very positive.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Final supplementary.

MRS. HEWES: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. So, Mr. Minister, then it would be your intention that if, for instance, there were a project in Edmonton or Calgary or Medicine Hat, there would not be downloading to the property taxpayer in the municipality to drive it, but there would be involvement of the municipal department of social services. Most of the cities have those kinds of departments, and there are funds in there as well. So they'd be involved, but the taxpayer wouldn't be hit once again.

MR. CARDINAL: No. What should happen should be the opposite. The normal projects – for example, the seedlings that were planted here in Edmonton through the Mennonite Central Committee took advantage of the Alberta community employment program. If you're going to do that of course through the city, they would have to go buy the seedlings themselves and hire the labour force to do that project. What happened here is that we provided the labour force; the Mennonite Central Committee provided the supervision. It didn't cost the taxpayer any money through the city as far as municipal taxes. No doubt, of course, it cost through provincial dollars. It seems to work well. That is the plan. That is the direction we hope to continue going.

MRS. HEWES: I think that is an excellent project.

MR. CARDINAL: Yeah. It will continue.

MRS. HEWES: Municipalities need to know that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. I don't have anyone left on the speakers list for program 1. Does anyone else have any questions? If not, earlier I agreed that we would allow for the

designation of the next program by the loyal opposition. Do you want to decide which program we move to?

MRS. HEWES: How about 3?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Program 3? Okay; program 3.
Since we led off with the opposition the first time, Moe Amery.

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Program 3, social support to individuals and families. I submit to you that the budget has funding for agencies providing services in the area of child welfare, services to persons with disabilities, prevention of family violence. Is your department planning any further reduction to agency funding over the 3 percent imposed in 1993-94?

9:25

MR. CARDINAL: That particular area, of course, the budget for contracted agencies, was \$140 million in '93-94 and included a 3 percent reduction. The department is currently determining the appropriateness of further reductions in these contracts and we'll continue reviewing. However, rather than across-the-board reductions in the regions – and we do have a number of regions across Alberta – we'll be meeting with their agencies to determine how best to accommodate if there are required decreases in the funding and if it can be done and still provide a high quality of service.

This reflects our commitment to consult with communities to determine how resources can best be managed at the local level. We find that when you sit down with a community group, they can easily identify needs and prioritize the needs in the area, and if there are adjustments that need to be made in the budgets, they can do them a lot better than us saying, you know, to reduce a certain amount across the board. We may find even that some regions have higher needs; therefore, maybe those regions can stand less adjustments than other regions. So we need to be innovative and flexible in that particular area, and that's what we plan to do.

MR. AMERY: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Supplementary, Moe?

MR. AMERY: No, thank you.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Minister, Mr. Justice Mason of the Court of Queen's Bench delivered a judgment in June of 1993 in the baby boy M case. He did an unusual thing: he specifically urged the government to address and to address immediately some of the issues and problems that surfaced in that baby boy M case. My question to you is: what steps have you taken since June of 1993 to address the problems with private adoptions that were evident in that particular court case?

MR. FLEMING: I think the whole area of adoptions . . .

MR. BRASSARD: Pardon me. I'm having a little trouble, wandering around with this a little bit. What has that got to do with the estimates?

MR. DICKSON: It does fall into 3.2.4.

MR. BRASSARD: I realize that, but is that specifically related to these budgets, or are we getting off in a philosophical direction?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. No. I think we have an understanding that if the minister feels it's getting into an area that is in policy, he will raise that issue. It certainly does relate to 3.2.4, so I will allow the question to continue.

MR. CARDINAL: Don.

MR. FLEMING: I think the whole area of adoption is one that is being looked at. There is a consultation process that's being undertaken to look at the opening of the adoption process, turn it from a passive system to an active system. Part of that whole process will be looking at, I think, the very thing you're talking about: the appropriateness of current practice. So I think in that sense we would be addressing it in that way.

MR. CARDINAL: We hope to finalize the process and introduce legislation. If we can't do it this spring, we will for sure do it early in the next sitting, which is in the fall, and should deal with the issue.

MR. DICKSON: Given the fact, Mr. Minister, that the Children's Advocate also identified in his report that this is a matter requiring immediate action, I want to ask you: what are you doing about the fact that unlicensed intermediaries are still able to operate in this province at a time when they cannot in most other provinces in the area of private adoptions? These are lawyers, other people who are not required now to meet the same kind of licensing requirements we have for the very reputable and responsible private agencies.

MR. CARDINAL: What we're doing is what the deputy mentioned earlier. That part of the review will include that process and hopefully come up with legislation by early fall, I would say, at the latest.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Final supplementary.

MR. DICKSON: My final supplementary then: is this review also encompassing the other ongoing and long-standing problem of notice to biological fathers in case of adoption, private or public?

MR. FLEMING: I think there are a number of issues – and I respect where you're coming from – that need to be looked at, and we felt that rather than opening the legislation to deal with one at a time, we would wait until we did the consultation. That is one area that has been identified that needs to be addressed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pearl Calahasen.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. My question is relative to the 3.2 area, child welfare services that are actually in the subprogram 3.2.2, intake and investigations. When you look at the operating expenditures for '93-94, there is a substantial drop, and I wanted to know what percentage would be the intake versus the investigation component.

MR. WILSON: It's not something that I think is a readily separated stat.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're having real difficulty hearing you down here.

MR. WILSON: Sorry. I said there's no real distinction between intake and investigation in terms of funding. Most of the budget

there is for manpower, for staff to undertake investigations and intake. Some investigations will end as an investigation, and then some will involve the intake portion, but it's not a statistic that we readily separate.

MS CALAHASEN: You are saying that you don't know what the difference is between the intake and the investigation. Is it so commingled?

MR. WILSON: No, no. Sorry. I thought you wanted it separated on who was doing what.

MS CALAHASEN: Well, there's an intake and there's an investigation component, is there not?

MR. WILSON: Yeah, but the investigation precedes . . .

MS CALAHASEN: Investigations in the fraudulent area? Or what?

MR. WILSON: Well, no.

MS CALAHASEN: That would be a different one?

MR. FLEMING: These are child protection, and they are intermingled so closely that we wouldn't want to . . .

MS CALAHASEN: You can't even tell the difference, eh?

MR. FLEMING: Well, you get a phone call. You go out and investigate a situation.

MS CALAHASEN: And then you intake.

MR. FLEMING: Or you may . . .

MS CALAHASEN: Vice versa. Okay.

MR. WILSON: The investigation would normally precede the intake just as a need to bring the child into care.

MS CALAHASEN: Supplementary, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Final supplementary.

MS CALAHASEN: The child welfare budget has increased \$1.5 million, which is after the 5 percent manpower cost. Could you please indicate what additional services the department expects to obtain from this increase?

MR. CARDINAL: Yes. You know, the actual increase in the child welfare program is \$2.8 million. The increase is for more in-home support. That's the direction our department would like to go, to try and enable the children and the families to stay together at home as long as possible, if possible, as a first priority, because I believe that when you remove a child, the problem sometimes continues. What we're hoping to do with this new home support process is to try and deal with the problem issue if possible while providing that support at home.

At the same time, I guess the department is expecting that a number of children requiring foster care will continue to grow but at a slower rate. I think it's proven already. In the northeast area we have in-home support, and apprehensions of course are less over there. It seems to be working well. The commissioner,

of course, will be reviewing these particular processes that are in place and that will be part of his report after he's completed it within the 18-month time frame.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Minister, you were asked a question by a member of your caucus on October 4, '93, about support and counseling for children at risk of prosecution. At that time, you talked about: you had programs available out of the then \$160 million for child welfare. Can you tell me specifically what programs you have and provide currently for those children at risk of teenage prostitution? I'm particularly interested in Edmonton and Calgary but obviously the wider scope as well, sir.

9:35

MR. FLEMING: I can't recall all of the services, but I know that certainly both the two large urban areas have considerable resources in that area. In Edmonton I know we fund several halfway homes for prostitutes, young juvenile prostitutes, to try to help them make that transition back into a normal life-style. The same with Calgary. There is what they call the exit program down there, where they actually go around every night with vans.

MR. CARDINAL: Wood's Homes in Calgary.

MR. FLEMING: Then following that, flowing from that, there are resources where they take these young ladies, very young ladies, back into different programs and the life skills educational upgrading, et cetera.

MR. CARDINAL: The other one in Edmonton is the Edmonton City Centre Church Corporation for the Crossroads program, and I've personally toured that. That's what they do, and of course Wood's Homes in Calgary. There's a city youth housing project in Edmonton also. We're funding \$474,000, basically, to develop spaces again to get kids off the streets.

There are recent changes, of course, to the 16- and 17-year-olds to focus more on parental involvement. When we do come in contact with an individual at that age, we will contact the parent to make sure they're involved in joint interviews and make sure the parent is aware, if possible, of what's happening.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A supplementary?

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Minister, I appreciate the information, and I've talked to people involved with exit and so on. My concern, though, is that the problem is growing. My question to you is: what change are we seeing in resources to address a problem that seems to be increasing significantly and is a major concern to people in Calgary and I think in Edmonton too?

MR. FLEMING: Well, I don't think I need to tell you that there's no easy answer to that particular question. I think what is happening collectively, though, in the way that we're looking at rejigging our services, where we're looking at a lot more of an integrated approach to it, will help to address some of that stuff. What tends to happen is that you get a fragmented service. You get one service being offered here, one there, one somewhere else, and the individuals that need the service may start one program and then they get disillusioned in trying to get the other pieces, so you've got them going back onto the street. I would hope that when the commissioner gets through doing his review and looks at that whole integrated child welfare service delivery process, we can start to tighten up some of these things and get a better grip on the problem.

Let's face it. A lot of it boils down to parental accountability, and we need to continue to put the emphasis on families and communities to do something about it. It's not just something that a government can do. It's something that we've got to do collectively.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A final supplementary.

MR. DICKSON: Well, my final question, then, I guess. We acknowledge the problem is getting worse, but as I understand it, your position, Mr. Minister, and your department's position is simply ongoing maintenance in the fashion we've seen before for support with frontline agencies and anything else is really contingent and dependent on specific recommendations from the commissioner.

MR. FLEMING: That's probably part of it. You know these things aren't in isolation. It's a supply and demand situation as well, and that's a whole element that we've not addressed to any great degree, although there are some things happening in this society in terms of the johns. If there's no uptake on it, then of course there's no point of getting into the business. It's not just a child welfare matter. It's a societal matter, and it's one that stretches far beyond our department or the Justice department. It's a societal thing, I think, that we've all got to take responsibility for.

MR. FRIEDEL: You touched on it very briefly in one of the other questions, but in 3.2.5, foster care, why is there such a dramatic increase in that particular program?

MR. CARDINAL: What we were doing was movement of dollars from the community support services, basically. That's what's happening in that particular area.

MR. WILSON: It's also a movement away from residential care and trying to put the child in a family setting as opposed to a group home or an institution. That's the focus of the department and the other focus being to keep them at home as well, but foster care is seen as a better solution than institutional care. So we have taken money out of institutional care to supplement the needs in foster care.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A supplementary.

MR. FRIEDEL: Yes. Program 3.2.3 is in-home family support and 3.2.7 is residential care. Can you explain to me the difference between those two?

MR. FLEMING: What was the first?

MR. FRIEDEL: In-home family support, 3.2.3, and 3.2.7 is residential care. What is the difference between those two?

MR. FLEMING: Well, the difference is that one is institutional care that we provide either in our large institutions, such as YYC, or youth assessment centres or group homes. The other is an in-home support service that we plug right into the home on an earlier basis to try and be preventive and proactive.

MR. FRIEDEL: So residential there means institution of residents.

MR. FLEMING: Yeah, and we've been moving away from residential care for probably the last three to four years, recogniz-

ing that the effectiveness of that type of care in relation to cost is not letting us have what we need. All we do in many instances is remove a child from their own community, put them in an institution, and deal with their situation, which may in many cases stem from the family dynamics in the first place. The support wasn't happening in the home community, and then we try to effectively link the child back to their home community. So it seemed to make better sense to us and to all the other professionals that we try and get at the problem a little earlier and deal with it as a home environmental situation as opposed to an isolation of the problem to the child.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Final supplementary.

MR. FRIEDEL: Okay. So the reduction in 3.2.7, residential care, relates, then, fairly directly to my first question about foster care. That's where the internal transfer, so to speak, would be taking place then.

MR. FLEMING: That's correct.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Bettie Hewes.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On the same subject of in-home support, I'm assuming, Mr. Minister, that someplace when the original investigation happens, a decision is taken that in-home support is the primary move, that you're going to do it. At that point as well somebody decides what kind of in-home support it is that's required, whether it's a behaviour problem or whatever. I'd like to know more about how that then is contracted. Do you have people on your own staff who move into the home to do that, or do you contract with commercial or private nonprofit agents? I'll let you answer that one and then we can go on.

9:45

MR. CARDINAL: Don, do you want to do that quick?

MR. FLEMING: We've done it two ways. We've accomplished it through contracts with agencies on a large scale basis, with agencies like Catholic Social Services, McMan, and some of those. We've also done it on a pay-for-service basis with individuals in the community. We're finding that the best way is to utilize the agency that has the better network of support. So we're moving basically out in that direction.

MRS. HEWES: Well, Mr. Chairman, then is it working? How do we know if it worked?

MR. FLEMING: Well, for two reasons. One, the child remains in the home and doesn't end up in an institution. Two, we do have some reviews and evaluations that a Calgary process – Hull home has done considerable work around home support and its value. We've also got the one in the northeast region that's being evaluated, and we've got an evaluation team made up of individuals both from the department and the university.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Final supplementary.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, the public are curious about this, I think perhaps as a result of that one case in Edmonton where the youngster was driving the car and got picked up and so on. There was in-home support there. It had been there for a year or something like that. It seemed as though we were

simply placing someone, a homemaker, in the home to give the parents a chance to have a holiday, and maybe that was legitimate. Mr. Minister, I think the public needs to know: what is the relative cost of this? Are we getting not only value in the sense of helping the child and the family, but are we going to be spending a lot more money in this methodology rather than removing the child? I'd be interested in seeing some of the comparisons, and I'm sure the department has.

MR. CARDINAL: We do have, yeah.
Don.

MR. FLEMING: Well, a couple of things. One, you know, this is always the case, and I suppose our media helps us in that respect. We tend to focus on one case gone wrong and not the thousands that go well.

MRS. HEWES: Of course.

MR. FLEMING: I think the other thing there's a misconception about is that we don't leave kids in abusive homes unless we can ensure that we're protecting them in accordance with the Act, so another misconception. If there is a problem, and we can't be sure, that's where, you know, your qualified staff have to make an assessment. But if we can't be sure that a child's life or health is not going to be put in jeopardy, then we'll apprehend the child, go through the courts, and move the child into a foster home or whatever type of home they need.

However, what we're also doing is that when we do take that very engaging step, I guess, we also look very quickly to how soon we can get the child back in, because ultimately our goal is to remove the child from danger but to work with the parent towards a return. The quicker we can do that, the less time gets spent in inappropriate types of placements. We don't let the family drift off, and we don't let the child drift away from the family. So we're doing that. I think for the most part, in terms of going back to your cost issue, it's pretty much cost neutral with foster care. It's not that it's that much cheaper; we feel that it's much more effective.

MR. CARDINAL: There are over 150 agencies we contract with. Some of the examples would be: Heritage Consulting providing foster care, Native Counselling Services, Metis children's services, Lesser Slave Lake tribal council, Boys and Girls Club of Edmonton support independent living, Big Sisters of Edmonton, Boyle Street, and I can go on. There are a lot of agencies we contract with.

MRS. HEWES: I have further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.
Heather Forsyth.

MRS. FORSYTH: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My first question refers to 3.2.7, residential care. Residential care has a budget reduction of over \$6.6 million or almost 13 percent. What is the reasoning supporting a reduction of this size?

MR. FLEMING: I think it's primarily for the reasons that we've just cited, where we're moving money out of the residential areas to fund treatment foster care, which is less inclusive. It's in the home community, and again it's into some of that in-home support type of stuff.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Supplementary?

MRS. FORSYTH: Yes. My second question refers to 3.4.5, which is the prevention of family violence, and I'm encouraged to see that we've got an increase on that. How exactly does that work? Is it I guess dealing with counseling within the home if there's a family violence situation, a treatment?

MR. FLEMING: That particular case reflects two things. One, a group from the rural family violence met with the minister and me back a number a months ago, indicating that they needed an increased dollar value for the services they're providing in the rural family violence centres. I think it was roughly – what? – \$700,000 that . . .

MR. CARDINAL: That's what it is, \$700,000.

MR. FLEMING: . . . was put into that area, and the other part of the increase was to fund the native women's shelter in Calgary for about \$300,000.

MRS. FORSYTH: Good. My third question is on 3.4.3, and that's on the shelter for homeless adults. I notice that there's an increase there of about \$148,000. I guess my question is: how does that work? Like, are there homes for these people? I'm not familiar with that.

MR. CARDINAL: Actually, the '93-94 allocation reflected a reduction of more than 3 percent for agency contracts, which was in there and did not occur. The department is now correcting this, and that is why you'll see reductions. But you wanted to know how it worked, I guess.

MRS. FORSYTH: Well, there's an increase on 3.4.3.

MR. FLEMING: That's just an accounting error. Accountants never make errors, but in this case they did. In actuality, there was a decrease of 3 percent attributed to those particular agencies. Those are groups like the Salvation Army who provide hostels and that kind of thing.

MRS. FORSYTH: Okay. That's what I was trying to get clear in my mind. I wasn't aware that we had shelters for homeless adults.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Minister, 3.4.5. What I see here is that you're increasing funding for this rural model, you're giving support to a native women's shelter, but you're then projecting eliminating funding for other demonstration projects, which I assume are in the cities. I assume you've seen the safer cities report from the city of Edmonton. Pages 46 through 48 have probably a dozen recommendations for the provincial government in general and for your department specifically. You don't have to do it now, but I wonder if you can give me a written response as to each of the recommendations that came from the safer cities report and tell me whether you accept them or reject them, and if you accept them, what you're prepared to do about them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, just a minute. Aren't we getting into some policy decisions here?

MR. FLEMING: Number one, we're into our three-year plan, and we're a year ahead of ourselves. Number two, I don't think that we would want to make a commitment to respond in detail to that particular report.

MR. CARDINAL: It's outside of this budget.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm having some problem in the preamble as you started, Gary, and you lost me. Are you into the '95-96, '96-97 projections? Now we're talking about recommendations, and I'm having trouble understanding how that relates to the '94-95 budget.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Chairman, I'm happy to explain, as long as it doesn't mean I lose my supplementary questions.

9:55

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I'm asking you the questions.

MR. DICKSON: Great. I'm specifically interested in '94-95. We've got an office for the prevention of family violence. I see only two initiatives mentioned specifically, and I know that all members recognize how big this problem is with family and community violence. I want to know what other things are going to be supported in this immediate fiscal year that address the recommendations of the safer cities report from Edmonton and the Calgary Mayor's Task Force on Family and Community Violence report. That's current. That's not future; that's immediate. It's got everything to do with this budget, I hope.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The first part of your question, to do with what the department is doing in 1994-95 relative to family violence, we'll accept, but I don't think we want to get into questions about how the minister is responding to this number of other reports. So with that, go ahead.

MR. CARDINAL: Don, just specifically in terms of our budget.

MR. FLEMING: Well, in terms of the projects that you're referring to, those will be funded in the '94-95 budget year, the demonstration projects.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you want to expand on that, Don, please?

MR. FLEMING: There are a number of different initiatives under way that we make available to communities. I think there are 20 communities, and we give them \$200,000 just to try different things and experiment with different ways of addressing the problem. That money will continue throughout this fiscal year. I would see I guess a dovetailing of some of that stuff with the commissioner of children's services. Some of the things that are identified there I think can be addressed by looking at interdepartmental integration. We'll have to see. I can't prejudge it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Supplementary?

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Minister, we know what they're doing in the London family court model, which most people appreciate is, I think, the best in the country. We know what they're doing in Duluth, Minnesota. In each of those cases, either provincial or state governments played a big role in terms of getting those things going and harnessing and co-ordinating all of those services: prosecutors, child welfare, family courts. Why aren't we doing that in Alberta now?

MR. CARDINAL: I'm not sure how to respond to that. Don?

MR. FLEMING: Well, I think it's really not within our mandate at this point. It's more a justice issue when matters come before the courts. Some of that is done through the mediation programs

that we have here in Alberta, but a lot of it I think is more appropriately directed to Justice.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Final supplementary.

MR. DICKSON: Well, I guess that begs a question then. On page 46 of the Edmonton report one of the things that was identified was confusion over where the leadership comes from in this government on family violence. My supplementary question to the minister, Mr. Chairman, following up exactly on these other things I've asked, would be: has the government resolved a single ministry, a single department, that has the lead role to deal with family and community violence in the province?

MR. CARDINAL: Well, we try and work together. Right now we have a co-ordination of services team set up where the assistant deputy ministers are working with Education, Health, Justice, and our department specifically looking at a number of pilot projects across Alberta, including Edmonton and Calgary. Hopefully some of that stuff may be dealt with through there.

Don, I don't know if you want to expand on it.

MR. FLEMING: Well, certainly we have our role, but again it's one of these interdepartmental ones, and I don't know that we can effectively address your question. It's certainly a relevant question, but on our part we're working with other departments to the extent we can. Justice and our staff have a group meeting periodically, looking at ways we can improve the linkage between the two systems.

Again, the only thing that will be meaningful, as far as I can see, in the interim will be when the commissioner gets through his report. I think a lot of that kind of stuff is going to come to the fore in terms of why we have children in protection services: is it a result, perhaps, of some of the ways we're addressing it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Roy Brassard.

MR. BRASSARD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to get back to the estimates that deal with day care, 3.4.2. A number of years ago we primarily funded day care through an operating allowance. It was a general application to all day care operators based on attendance and so on and so forth. Your department made a shift in policy about two years ago, as I recall, to change the day care operating allowance to a direct subsidy for people . . .

MR. CARDINAL: Occupied spaces.

MR. BRASSARD: Yes, based on a need assessment. As I understand it, this has got stopped partway. We had a change in that program. You've reduced the funding \$5 million on 3.4.2. I'd like to know just whether or not there's a retraction, or is the demand down? Is this direct subsidy to those in need working? Why has the reduction happened?

MR. CARDINAL: Well, actually, as I indicated in my opening remarks, part of the three-year plan is to reduce budgets. This year's reduction, of course, is \$4.9 million, but the reduction is \$10 per occupied space in day care and \$8 in day homes starting April 1. This will result in dollars spent on day care being directed to those parents who need the assistance most, and we'll continue to subsidize people who are on assistance.

MR. BRASSARD: Then the subsidy, as I understand it, has been shifted directly from an operating allowance, where it was paid

irrespective of need to the operator, to one more consumer oriented, based on need. Do I understand that?

MR. CARDINAL: Yes, that's what it is. You know, in the day care area we have about 32,000 spaces in Alberta, and I believe about 70 percent of the day cares are for profit. We have a high vacancy rate, 34 percent, so the spaces are out there in day care, and we just have to make some adjustments.

MR. BRASSARD: Can you tell me: of the \$65 million that you're putting into day care now, how much of that goes into day home care as opposed to day care centres? Is this a trend, more towards day homes where perhaps your involvement may be less than what it is currently in day care centres? Is there a radical shift to these homes?

MR. WILSON: Not a major swing. Most of the money that we're spending now is going on the day care subsidy, approximately half of that. This funds children who are low income or the parents are on welfare, and we pay the subsidy if a child is in a family day home or if the child is in a formal day care. We don't distinguish in terms of the subsidy. In the cuts the minister referenced, we are reducing what is basically a universal subsidy, the operating allowance. This is provided to all children irrespective of the ability of the parents to pay. So we're not touching the money for the low-income families. We're just saying that we're not prepared to continue the universal subsidy, so over the three-year plan we will reduce it by \$20.

MR. BRASSARD: Okay. My question was: is there a move towards day home care as opposed to day care centres?

MR. FLEMING: No. It's a matter of choice, and I think you've got a variety of services out there. I think, as the minister indicated, there's roughly 40 percent vacancy in day cares right now, which would indicate that certainly, in terms of supply and demand, there's sufficient on the market.

MR. BRASSARD: That's not being created by day homes? I guess that's my final question.

MR. FLEMING: No, that's run pretty well parallel.

10:05

MR. CARDINAL: In some parts of rural Alberta where, you know, families are set up and do babysit children, there is a move out there for parents to utilize those services. In my particular area, in Athabasca, for example, there is one small day care. A lot of parents work, and they do use a lot of farm families for babysitting. Some are licensed and some are not. There seems to be a move by parents to want to make a choice in selecting who they want to look after their children during the periods of time they work. It's something we're monitoring quite closely in rural Alberta to see if there are required changes in the direction of our policy and in the way they're set up.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Alice Hanson.

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to ask some questions about adoption, Mr. Minister. I notice that the budget is up about 12 percent. Sorry; I didn't look up the line. It is 3.2.4. The first one is just a simple question, but I wonder if we could have the information about how many adoptions are handled on a monthly average, if you don't mind.

MR. CARDINAL: Yeah, we probably have it. Don.

MR. FLEMING: I think roughly we do about 200 adoptions a year. Have we got that stat handy here?

MS HANSON: Two hundred a year?

MR. FLEMING: Yeah. We have quite a waiting list for placement. We put a particular emphasis on this program in this particular year because what we're looking at is trying to get permanent placements for some of the kids that have been sitting in foster homes for lengthy periods. We know that we've got a demand out there in the way of parents who want to adopt on a permanent basis, so we put additional money in there to look at the home studies, home assessments, and placement.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Supplemental.

MS HANSON: Okay. So is there anything happening in the way of adoption regulations? Are there changes in the regulations? Are you updating any of that stuff? You mentioned home studies.

MR. CARDINAL: Of course, we're reviewing that whole process, and that will be part of it, no doubt. If changes are required, following legislation no doubt would deal with that.

MS HANSON: But there are no changes yet that you can tell us about.

MR. CARDINAL: Not right now, no, but no doubt we will have in the next six months, you know.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Final supplemental.

MS HANSON: Yes. I just wanted to ask about the postadoption registry. You know, there was public consultation, and I wonder if you could give us information about the results of that.

MR. CARDINAL: Don, you may want to give the results, but part of that process is of course that we're going to continue consulting with Albertans on that. As I've indicated before in the House during question period, I hope I will be introducing legislation in the fall, at the latest, on that particular project.

MS HANSON: I was just curious about any information you would have now as a result of the public consultation.

MR. CARDINAL: Oh, you don't have to explain.

MR. FLEMING: I don't know how far you want to go into this at this point in time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I think we can't get into it too far. I thought you had pretty well answered it before. The minister has indicated that he is going to bring forward legislation in the fall, and the consultation is continuing.

Briefly, Don, if you've got something else to add.

MS HANSON: I just thought there might be something that stands out.

MR. FLEMING: I guess the way the process would work, Alice, is that we go out and do a public consultation. We go

back and present that to standing policy. They have a look at it, and if they feel we need to look at something further, they will direct us to do so and in fact have. We're now looking at some other areas that we could look at.

MR. CARDINAL: Then we'll come back through the process again.

MR. FLEMING: So when it comes down ultimately through standing policy and gets sign off there, then it will go forward. The minister will ask us to take it forward in terms of the legislation. But essentially there are a number of things that need to be looked at, and that is the passive versus the active part of it.

MS HANSON: Okay. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. We are slightly over halfway through. Do you want to take a 10-minute recess, committee members? Okay. We'll recess for 10 minutes or so.

[The committee adjourned from 10:10 a.m. to 10:22 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Maybe we could get under way again then. The next questioner is Moe Amery.

MR. AMERY: Well, maybe you can skip me, Mr. Chairman, because my question has been answered. It was on the shelters for homeless adults, and it has been answered.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, okay.
So then Bettie Hewes.

MRS. HEWES: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I'm tempted to go back to the family violence question, Mr. Minister, because it seems to me, just an editorial comment, that maybe this is an item where we need to have an infusion of money or resources. Maybe my colleague Gary will ask some more questions, or you might anticipate some in the House when this one comes up again.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before you continue, Bettie, I want to also make mention of a motion that's coming up – I think it's coming up next Tuesday – dealing with this whole issue of family violence. So I think we're going to have to ask you to stick fairly close to the budget and how this programming is being administered in the '94-95 fiscal year.

MRS. HEWES: Well, what I started out to say, Mr. Chairman, was that I'm tempted, but I'm not going to yield to that.

I'm going to go back to in-home family support. To the minister or the deputy. Mr. Deputy Minister, you said in your last answers to me: we feel it is more effective. I acknowledge and accept that sometimes we don't have the kind of empirical data or measurements that we'd like, but I'd like you to tell me how you monitor how effective that program is.

I want to ask some other questions, Mr. Chairman, and perhaps the deputy can address them all, so I'll go through all three of them. I want to ask about the qualifications of the people who are providing the service, about how this whole operation is monitored and supervised. I'd like some information, if you can give it to us, about the size and shape of the caseload and the costs that would be attached to it, average length of stay, that kind of data.

MR. CARDINAL: Okay. Don will expand on the details of it, but generally I guess the reason we like to go that direction is

from past experience in northern Alberta, and that's just a model I could use to explain what's happened there. We'd go in, and if there was a problem, we'd apprehend the child. In my own community – because it's a small community, it's very visible – I see children who are in foster homes, in some cases non-native foster homes, in most cases actually, that end up there possibly for 15 to 16 years. Of course, there was a problem at home and the child was apprehended, but we really never dealt with the problem other than removing the child. The problem would have continued for 15 years and costing, of course, taxpayers a lot of money while that continues, and then we're paying foster care besides. In a lot of cases, in fact a high percentage of cases, the child at 15 or 16 returns to the original family. So the problem hasn't changed. The problem continues. We walk into, in some cases, second generations with the same problem. We really haven't dealt with it.

What I think looking back now is that if we'd had full support workers in a situation like that and dealt with – because the problem really was dealing with poverty, unemployment, and the need for counseling and maybe a better education. We didn't provide that. We took the child away. That is why I feel as a minister that we need to provide those training supports at home wherever possible to the family and hopefully the child. You know, rather than waiting 15 years and making that whole circle, we try and deal with it at home as much as possible.

Don, in relation to qualifications maybe you can use the example of the 26 workers we have in the northeast area: how the recruitment process took place, the supervision, and types of people we looked for, because a lot of the homes were native homes.

MR. FLEMING: It varies from community to community, and it's set up that way so it can be flexible and meet community need. There are a range of qualifications that we have. Some are child care counsellors. Some have some social work, either a degree or perhaps a college diploma. Some are just women, quite frankly, who raise their families and have life skills. All the in-home support programs are not the same. Some of them are a little more professional in nature. Some of them try to change behaviours. Others just provide support so that the child's safety can be maintained. I think the easiest way to accommodate some of your questions is to send you some detail on, say, what's happening in the Calgary model, what's happening in some of the Edmonton models, what's happening in the northeast. They do vary considerably.

We don't want a cookie cutter approach. As the minister indicated, in the aboriginal communities, if we went to all social work people, we would probably, number one, have difficulty in getting that and, number two, maybe not even meet the needs. So it is pretty flexible. In terms of the qualifications of the individuals that oversee them, again those vary so dramatically that I would hate to pin myself down to any one particular answer.

We feel that the cost item, as I suggested earlier, is pretty much cost neutral. We do have an evaluation process. There have been evaluations of the Calgary one out of home. I think we can probably get that kind of material for you. In our three-year plan we're committed to some checks and balances, some monitoring. So we will be doing some things along there as well.

MRS. HEWES: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. If he could send me the material, I'd like that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Gary Dickson.

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, in 3.4.4, mediation, I'm trying to reconcile the legal system being recognized as being less and less accessible to Albertans with family domestic problems, yet over the last, I think, three budget periods we've seen reductions of almost 300 percent in mediation support. So I need some explanation from you, Mr. Minister, in terms of where we're going with these cuts, how the cuts in this particular budget are going to be reflected in programs and services available through your department for couples that are requiring and looking for mediation assistance.

MR. CARDINAL: Don will expand on it in detail, but that's part of the five-year salary reduction and transfer of some staff members, I believe.

Don, is that what happened in that particular area?

MR. FLEMING: Yes.

MR. CARDINAL: Is there anything you want to expand on further?

MR. FLEMING: Not too much, I don't think. It's a matter of using resources in the most effective and efficient way that you can. We've moved, I think, four or five staff out of that program and put them into the maintenance and recovery area. I don't know that there's much more to say.

MR. DICKSON: Well, can you tell me how many people we're losing who are or just were recently providing a mediation service to couples that require it? How many people are being moved out of a mediation passkey into some other role?

MR. FLEMING: I believe there were four.

MR. DICKSON: All right. How many people does that leave to provide mediation service? How many qualified mediators do we have left?

MR. FLEMING: I'm not sure. We'd have to get that information for you.

10:32

MR. CHAIRMAN: Peter Sekulic.

MR. SEKULIC: Okay. To the minister. Mr. Minister, I note that FCSS doesn't appear in this '94-95 budget under Family and Social Services. I was wondering: what was the basis for the decision to transfer FCSS out of Family and Social Services?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That gets to be a policy issue, and I'm not sure how that relates to this budget.

MR. SEKULIC: Well, I can make a linkage, and it'll be my first supplementary.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Make the linkage, and we'll decide.

MR. SEKULIC: The expenditure of FCSS dollars has a strong correlation to the amount expended in the Family and Social Services budget under income support. My belief is that because of this relationship there is an onus for the minister to, I guess, justify or define the basis on which this strong control is now outside the department.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Go ahead.

MR. CARDINAL: I can touch on that. I don't want to tie up too much time here to do it. The FCSS program has been around a long time. It used to be preventive social services back in the early '70s, and I've indicated that the programs were always developed at the local level. The FCSS board involved regional agreements in most cases, at least in the rural areas, with a number of municipalities, with one leading municipality signing the agreement with the province. What has always happened is that the programs were developed locally, all local administration, and programs were prioritized locally, and the budgets were set up locally. The province was never involved in setting up any of that. Therefore, the program generally operated very autonomously from the department itself and the province.

The municipal organizations – the MDs, the counties, and the urban municipalities – have always requested trying to channel these program grants, different grants, directly to them to administer and redistribute to the programs within their municipalities. They've been asking for that for over 10 years now, and they seem to be very supportive that the programs will continue. I am confident as the minister that wherever there is a need, the municipalities are, you know, as capable as the province of determining those needs. I'm confident that they will continue providing those programs that are needed.

Now, in cases where there's duplication and programs that may not be required at the local level, the municipality is in a better position than I am as a minister or our department is to say: you have to change. They can identify it a lot faster and quicker than us. Therefore, I think the program will be more efficient and more effective in the future, probably better utilization of dollars in targeted areas, because they will continue having the authority to administer the program.

Don, I don't know if you want to add anything to that.

MR. FLEMING: No.

MR. CARDINAL: That's not in the '94-95 budget either, but that's okay. It's an important issue.

MR. SEKULIC: Okay. I believe it is a very, very important issue and point. I concur that local development is a critical part of the FCSS operation, but the provincial impact is my major concern. FCSS deals with many people who are not on assistance and prevents many others from coming on to assistance. The basis of my questioning is: why would you permit the distancing of such a valuable program?

MR. CARDINAL: Well, I think to streamline the process and reduce administrative costs, although we are, you know, going to continue the 10 staff persons we have, and there are six regional consultants. My department will continue operating with the local boards as they are, because the FCSS programs and boards have always been autonomous. I don't see very much changing in that particular area. The directors and the boards that sit out there will convince the municipal councils to continue funding the high-needs programs. I don't have any hesitation. They always have, ever since I can remember in the early '70s. It's the FCSS board that sets the priorities along with the municipalities. There's never been a problem that I know of out there. I assume that should continue. There's no reason why not.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Final supplementary.

MR. SEKULIC: Okay. My final supplementary. There is a potential loss of CAP funding if the community chooses to use the grant on an unconditional basis. If they do go on a conditional basis, they will continue to fall within the FCSS Act. My question here would be: because of the direct link and the very strong financial impact on your department, will you be encouraging communities in this '94-95 fiscal year to take the grant conditionally and fall within the FCSS Act?

MR. CARDINAL: Our department won't be, but I would hope that happens as much as possible. The '94-95 budget doesn't show FCSS. It's under Municipal Affairs. But the '93-94 budget was \$36.6 million, and only 17 percent of that portion is cost shared. So it's not a big portion that is cost shared now. I can't comment on what – you know, it's under another department.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pearl Calahasen.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On the subprogram family support services, 3.4.5, Mr. Minister, prevention of family violence, when you look at the total expenditures in the estimates from '93-94 to '94-95, you'll see almost a million dollar increase in that subprogram. Could you tell me what that is being used for?

MR. CARDINAL: Don, do you have the specifics on that increased funding?

MR. FLEMING: Yeah. I believe we responded to that. It was the area where we've increased funding to the rural family violence program and the native shelter in Calgary.

MS CALAHASEN: Supplementary. Is there any funding that would come from the federal government relative to family violence?

MR. FLEMING: Not really, no.

MR. WILSON: Not through our department, except we'd cost share part of this program under the Canada assistance plan so we'd have an offset in revenue. But there is no direct funding to us.

MR. CARDINAL: But other programs that are out there from the federal side may impact some of this, and one would be the \$1.7 million or so allocated for '94-95 under Brighter Futures. I mentioned that part in my introduction. There are 10 projects approved. It's a joint agreement between the federal government and the province, and the federal government took the leading role in it. Once the process of approving those projects is completed, they'll be made public, and no doubt it will have some impact on this particular area.

MR. FLEMING: Thirty-three percent of that funding is cost shared under CAP. You know, those dollars would be, I guess, identified as federal.

MS CALAHASEN: Yeah. Looking at that and the projects you identified in the rural area, are there any in the north?

MR. FLEMING: Most of those are.

MS CALAHASEN: Okay. Thanks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Gary Dickson.

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, on October 14 you'd been asked a question in reference to an Edmonton social planning report that dealt with the problem of 16 and 17 year olds in the system, and your response was that there'd be a report within a couple of weeks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're getting off on these reports again. I'm really having a problem . . .

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Chairman, if you let me finish the question, I think then we can make a determination on relevance.

Mr. Minister, your response was that you had a report that would be addressing this particular problem group. I assume the report was done. I haven't seen it. So my question is: can you show me where in program 3 your action plan to deal with that problematic group, that difficult group of 16 and 17 year olds is reflected?

10:42

MR. CARDINAL: Well, basically what I was referring to was the Reshaping Child Welfare issue with the commissioner, and that's an 18-month process which will involve a lot of interest groups out there. When the report is completed, of course that is when it will be released, along with implementation time lines and budget requirements in order to address a number of these complicated issues.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Supplementary.

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. So the report you were talking about on October 14 that you were going to file within two weeks, that was your – what do we call it?

MR. CARDINAL: Reshaping Child Welfare.

MR. DICKSON: All right. That's the report you had in mind.

MR. CARDINAL: The appointment of the commissioner, yeah.

MR. DICKSON: All right.

I guess my other supplementary question, then, would be: have you any response to or position on the recommendation from the Edmonton safer cities report, which makes some specific recommendations?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, once again we're back to asking for responses to reports that were done outside the department. I really am having trouble understanding how that relates to the estimates we are now dealing with, program 3, and I think we're going to have to rule that out of order.

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Chairman, I would say that a question of that nature is more designed for question period probably.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, one of the ideas of having these subcommittees was so the delivery of the programs could be discussed. We invite staff to be part of it so they can explain the programs, how they operate, where the dollars are going, and in the House you have the opportunity to deal with the kinds of questions you have just asked.

MR. DICKSON: Well, Mr. Chairman, before you make the ruling, I trust I'm going to have an opportunity to speak to it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have already made the ruling, and I have said that we are moving on to the next questioner, and that's Roy Brassard.

MR. DICKSON: Well, Mr. Chairman, with respect, if there's a point in terms of a question, then I think you have to allow me the opportunity to defend the question and why I think it's appropriate before you make the ruling. I think that's a basic principle of fairness; is it not?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Go ahead and try to make your argument, but I want to caution you that I may interject if in fact you're going to go into a long dissertation about a report that was done and requesting a response from the minister on a report. If you can relate it to the expenditure in one of the subprograms in program 3 and ask how that program is being administered in the community, so be it. But I'll be listening very carefully to the linkage.

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity. I think what we're here for is not to talk about numbers. I think it's to talk about Albertans, and I would have thought the minister and his senior officials would embrace the opportunity to come and speak not simply about numbers and columns but what those figures represent. All that this material is for is in terms of driving programs that this minister and this government deliver to Albertans. To me, this is no grand philosophical exercise. It's nothing more than trying to test the programs that you, Mr. Minister, are coming forward with and responding to real people's concerns.

So I accept if you tell me, Mr. Minister, that you're not doing something particularly now or you're waiting for a report. That's fair. But it seems to me the very essence of what we're doing here, Mr. Chairman, is being able to ask if a program is there and, if it's not, why not. That's what's driving this process. It's not the dollars.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. We're going to get into a big argument, so I'm going to move on to the next questioner, who is Roy Brassard.

MR. BRASSARD: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I really would have liked to rebut my colleague's remarks, but I'd like to discuss the handicapped children's services. That's in 3.5.2. By design this program has always been extremely flexible; in fact, a necessity for the program to be flexible is the very nature of its ability to respond to children in need. I notice that there's been an increase of almost \$2 million. Could you explain: is the caseload increased, or are you expanding some of the things you do?

MR. CARDINAL: Yeah. There is increase of 9.5 percent. Of course, it's an increase over \$1.8 million. This program continues to face increases in demand that need to be met, and funding for this program is a priority, as it enables handicapped children to remain at home with their parents by providing essential treatment and services in their own home. Without these services, more children would no doubt be institutionalized or not get the proper services at home. The '93-94 budget caseload will be over 6,000, and the '94-95 caseload is going to go up to 6,500 or so. That's the projected increase. In addition to providing for increased demand, funds have also been allocated for increased demands. It's a very important area, and we've

always indicated as we move on with the welfare reforms that we would redirect dollars to high-needs areas. This is one area that's a high-needs area; therefore, we're able to redirect dollars there from the changes in the reduction of our caseload. Putting young Albertans back to work in training programs has allowed us to have these extra dollars, and that was always the original plan of this department.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Supplementary.

MR. BRASSARD: There's always been a very close link between handicapped children's services and those services provided by the Department of Health in that a child who is in hospital with a chronic but possibly terminal illness is indeed handicapped and therefore can access your program by moving out of the hospital into a home setting and therefore out of the health program into social services. Is this what you see increasing or driving your caseload increase? I mean, I don't think there are this many children out there. What is driving your caseload?

MR. FLEMING: Well, it is primarily the growth, the additional cases. We're projecting another 350 coming on.

MR. BRASSARD: But where are they coming from? That's the question. We're not getting more kids, are we?

MR. FLEMING: Yes. Yes, we are.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Final supplementary.

MR. BRASSARD: Okay. Then let me ask you this: has the nature of the program been expanded to increase some of the things you will do? It just seems that in this time of reduction when we're all streamlining things, a program with just a 500 population increase in the caseload would not drive it up by almost \$2 million.

MR. FLEMING: Well, this is one of the positives and the negatives, I guess, of this particular program: it really hasn't got any defined boundaries. So a lot of it is on individual need, and maybe that's something we need to look at in the future, but for the moment that's the situation. It does prevent us from having to put kiddies into institutions and move them out of the home.

MR. CARDINAL: We have to keep it so that you can deal with issues in an innovative way, involving the parent in some cases, because each parent's needs and the child's needs could be different. Therefore, we should have flexibility in here to be able to deal with these issues. It can't be a standard program for all; otherwise, we wouldn't be meeting the full needs of individual children. Hopefully we can keep it, at least at this time.

10:52

MR. CHAIRMAN: Bettie Hewes.

MRS. HEWES: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. My questions are about group homes, a continuing source of concern to me. But I have a throwaway question I'd like your indulgence on. At some point in time maybe the minister or someone else can tell us about the future of Rosecrest, just building on your question.

The group homes. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, can you assure me that this – we're putting a lot of money and resources into this whole program. Do we have in place guidelines and specific requirements, conditions, for those group homes as to the training of the personnel? I know you've got guidelines for

physical space and so on, but what have we got there that requires that the people who are working in those group homes, on shifts for the most part, have training, that they've gone through some courses? Have you put those guidelines in place? Sorry; that's a long, clumsy question here.

MR. FLEMING: Well, we have, I guess, two checks and balances, one in the contract itself. They're all individual contracts, and within the body of the main contract there are some general parameters. Then with the schedules A and B we get into some specifics as to what we want and what we expect to have come out of that. We do have social work staff monitoring the group homes, both as a group home and as an individual placement of the child. We have over the past year or so entered into a process with the Alberta Association of Services for Children and Families to develop some core standards or some standards that would be applied to our various resources.

MRS. HEWES: So, Mr. Chairman, would I be correct in assuming that at present we don't have those standards in place, that this is simply a matter of negotiating when the contract is entered into?

MR. FLEMING: No. We do have what we call core standards that every facility must meet.

MRS. HEWES: I've seen those.

MR. FLEMING: What I'm talking about is something more specific and something that's got the support of the community agencies and ourselves with regards to safe standards.

MRS. HEWES: Well, Mr. Chairman, since we're moving more aggressively into this whole field of practice, does it not seem absolutely essential that we have published standards so that everybody knows that when their loved ones are entering into a group home scene, they're going to be in a safe situation, and they know that the people who are working there have certain kinds of training to deal with them? Don't we think this is . . .

MR. FLEMING: They are published. Our core standards are a matter of public knowledge. The standard document that was produced as a matter of public knowledge: if you wish, I can certainly . . .

MRS. HEWES: Yes, I've seen that.

MR. CARDINAL: I've personally toured a lot of these facilities and talked to the staff, and I've talked to parents that have children in these facilities. I haven't personally had one complaint to me from the parents on the question of how capable the workers are that are operating these facilities. In fact, it's been very positive from the parents as far as their children being in these facilities.

The staff I've talked to seem to be able to operate these individual facilities very well. As I've toured through the facilities, I haven't seen anything that I would question personally that would be a problem at this time. Whoever set the standards, whenever they were established, must have done a reasonable job in having the flexibility to be innovative, to make adjustments as required in each facility. It hasn't been a problem at all.

MRS. HEWES: This is such sensitive and difficult work, Mr. Minister. It seems to me we need . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Roy Brassard.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, I think I have one more.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Not according to my record, but since the occasion tomorrow is such a great anniversary, go ahead.

MRS. HEWES: It's a birthday present.

Many of these people in group homes are on individualized funding, and I wonder if you can reassure me that there's some kind of auditing that takes place to give me some confidence that in fact the client is getting all of the services that we're contracting.

MR. CARDINAL: Don, do you want to expand on that a bit?

MR. FLEMING: Yeah, there certainly is. As I indicated before, we do have staff that go out and monitor these various facilities. We have the social care facilities group that go around and drop in periodically and do individual reviews. We have our licensing people who drop by. We have our health folks that stop in and do their regular routine visits, fire and paramedics . . .

MR. CARDINAL: And the parents.

MR. FLEMING: There are any number of checks and balances.

MRS. HEWES: Individualized funding.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. BRASSARD: I'm going to hopefully not pre-empt the questions that my colleague here would be asking. I, too, am interested in Rosecrest and the Eric Cormack centre and where we're going with that. Traditionally, that centre has dealt with extremely challenged children and adults as well. I recall a discussion I had with the person who looked after that who felt that at least 40 to 50 percent of the people could be moved into a community setting, with a higher quality of life and so on. Could you tell me where we're heading with these two centres, Rosecrest and Eric Cormack? I gather that they're under institutional services in vote 3.5.5. Is that right?

MR. CARDINAL: I've toured these facilities recently – Rosecrest, in particular, twice in the past nine months or so – and found that facility does a good job. Don, I don't know if you want to add to that a bit more or not.

MR. BRASSARD: Well, the age of that facility would dictate what you can do there. It's not that new a building.

MR. FLEMING: If I might partly answer your question, any of our institutions we have to review as to their appropriateness for a particular clientele. Certainly I think it's no secret that that information you've just made available has been out there, and we have been looking at if there are potential options. We will continue to look at that with Rosecrest, Eric Cormack, or any other centre that we fund. So I don't know . . .

MR. BRASSARD: Well, Mr. Chairman, I know that in Michener Centre the resident numbers have been reduced significantly over the last 10 years. Has there been a similar reduction in Rosecrest or Eric Cormack?

MR. FLEMING: Not in the quantity, no.

MR. BRASSARD: Is that because of the significance of the challenge?

MR. CARDINAL: That's what it is, yes.

MR. BRASSARD: My final supplementary. I'm going to just branch off. I'll try desperately to tie this in. We talked about qualifications within a group home, and certainly as people move out of an institutional setting into a group home, then qualifications become very significant. Gail Roberson's group did quite a bit of work on qualifications for working in group homes. Have we looked at that? Is that a part of your deliberations? Do you know the lady I'm talking about, the organization I'm talking about? They did a program dealing with accreditation qualifications.

MR. FLEMING: Yeah. We've been working quite closely with both those two associations, ACL and ARC, and will continue to do so. The work they've done has been good work, and we're looking at how we can continually – this isn't just a onetime effort. I think it's a moving target. I think steering back to where you may have been coming from, when we talk about group homes, there's a licensed group home when they get up over the bed capacities, and then there are some individual placements. Some of those individual placements that we fund are not monitored nor are there set standards in place to the extent that there are with the licensed ones. I've heard some expression of concern about that. However, on the flip side of the coin you have individual choice, where parents, guardians, or individuals themselves may choose to live in a situation that we as government agents might not think is appropriate, yet it's a matter of freedom of choice.

11:02

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. I don't have any other questioners on my list. Is that all we have for program 3? If so, I believe it's the government members' turn to decide which program we go on to next. I have three that say 2, so we'll be moving to program 2.

MR. CARDINAL: Program 2?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Program 2, and I believe it's the opposition's turn to lead off. I don't have someone listed who is going to lead off. Peter.

MR. SEKULIC: Yeah. I'm just giving the minister a chance to . . .

MR. CARDINAL: Okay.

MR. SEKULIC: Okay. Here I'm going to beg a bit of flexibility, because the budget without the related utilization and outcome measures is merely a spreadsheet of numbers in rows and columns. In some way we have to try to link the need and the program, so that's what I'll attempt to do here.

Mr. Minister, on a number of occasions you have indicated that the cuts were designed so that we could reallocate funds to high-need areas. Now, the premise of the SFI program is that there are no other resources available. Just by the existence of the program and its purpose if someone qualifies, they are high need. Now, could you just address how there can be cuts in benefit

levels in these areas? When someone does qualify for this program, they are in fact high need. How can we cut, then, the benefit levels?

MR. CARDINAL: Okay. Basically, I guess we want to make the program similar to what a working Albertan would get so that the benefits weren't greater than those of the person that wasn't receiving benefits. The plan is to make sure that we didn't discourage people from working. We designed the process keeping in mind that we'd have the flexibility as we moved on to make the necessary readjustments when the justification is there and the required need is there. We set out a plan where, for an example, there are three phases of the reform. One is to look at the employables and trainables and couples without children to start with. That's one target group, because a high percentage of the 94,000 caseload was in that category. So the first step was to move in that direction, and that allowed us last year alone to move close to a hundred million dollars into the high-needs area. While we're doing the reforms, of course, the second phase was reshaping child welfare. The third phase is dealing with persons with disabilities with the intention of making sure that those areas have the proper programs and services and dollars required to operate.

An example of how we've redirected dollars that I mentioned earlier today: we have now 8,500 of our clients attending various forms of training programs. Those particular cases – for an example, a single student that's away from home will now receive \$655, which is 30 percent higher than the old rate of \$470 and considerably higher, in fact almost double, than the existing rate of \$394. That's to encourage people to be active and get out of the house and go back into the work force through training, and that's just an innovative way of providing more dollars to an area that's more positive. We're encouraging people to go out and train.

I guess we will continue to review our rates. We try to do a comparison always across Canada as to where the rates are and try to make sure that the basic needs of families are at least looked after, with an opportunity for us to do an ongoing review and monitoring of where the weaknesses may be in the whole process of reforms.

The Premier and myself met with 20 individuals just the other day to look at some of their concerns, and some of the concerns they had – of course, sometimes misinformation. For an example, one person mentioned that they couldn't get the ambulance anymore because there's only one time they could use it. Well, that's not the case. It's still available. So there was a little miscommunication there. The other area was the need to make the Alberta community employment program longer than what's allowed now because some people feel the jobs may not be out there in private industry, or some may feel they're not ready to get into the work force or training because the period isn't long enough. We agreed to look at that, and as we move on, we'll look at all these services to make sure that we make adjustments as we go.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Supplementary.

MR. SEKULIC: Having met with that group at Amity House a number of weeks prior to your going out there, I do appreciate yourself and the Premier going to hear the concerns of those individuals. Now, the budget in program 2 shows a significant drastic decrease over the previous fiscal period, and going along with that are the comments in the Auditor General's report for 1992-93 that

the Department does not know why its clients stop applying for public assistance, or whether its efforts to help them find employment are succeeding.

That to me is very alarming. Could you please explain how that, then, is reflected in this decrease of what I've calculated to be \$135 million in program 2? I know that a certain number of individuals went to the Students Finance Board. Now, the question is: how many single parents or . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, maybe he should answer the first question first.

MR. SEKULIC: Okay. I'm sorry.

MR. CARDINAL: Okay. The whole idea was to redirect dollars in '93-94 alone, and of course we're doing a similar thing in '94-95. As an example, we redirected close to a hundred million dollars to the high-needs area. I believe over \$60 million of that was in – the students' finance was part of it, and then there's the northern job corps, the employment skills program, and the Alberta community employment program funded under that. So what we did is shift dollars to those areas. For an example, students' finance alone – the same 8,000 that were on social assistance at one time are now here training and getting the same dollars. The other adjustments, I'm not sure exactly. Don may have how many people have been employed in a number of the ACE projects and the job corps and the employment skills program, and of course, there are a lot of people also that moved on to private industry. We do have now an opportunity for people to get back into the work force, and we encourage that. In some cases we do continue the subsidies in health, dental, optical, and even income subsidies in some cases, and we've increased, of course, the income exemption. At one time you were allowed to earn \$115. We've increased that by an additional 25 percent. So there are more people encouraged to be in the work force.

Just talking to a small business operator a while back that hired four people that were previously on social assistance indicated to me that there is a general trend out there that small businesses are hiring people and they're very happy with the changes we've made and encourage people to work and not quit their jobs and come back on assistance so easily. They felt the employees were happy, and the employer was sure happy too. So I suspect that whoever wants to work or train is out there doing that. Whoever doesn't want to do that, I guess is maybe elsewhere. I don't know.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Final supplementary.

11:12

MR. SEKULIC: Yes. Given that there's a decrease of approximately 60,000 individuals from social allowance, I think that translates into the area of 30,000 files. Now, of that 60,000 number of former clients, from what I've seen and from what you've said in the House and elsewhere publicly, we've accounted for approximately 20,000 individuals. There are 40,000 unaccounted for, many of which have families. I'd like to link this now to – there's no notable change in the unemployment rate in Alberta. I can't assume that these people are employed. I'd like to know: given the Auditor General's comments, what has the department done to ensure that they do know whether the programs are succeeding, where these individuals are going, and what the likelihood is of returning to assistance? Or are they merely just living in poverty and fear?

MR. CARDINAL: I believe what happens is, no doubt, that there are a lot of people back into the work force. We really have no way or no authority once an individual or family closes their file. There is, I believe, a turnover of 10,000 a month – is that what it is? – in closed files and new files. We really don't have a process to follow up clients once they leave and the file is closed. The policy we have is that the worker should do a closing summary on the file, but other than that, it would be tough to follow someone. They may not want that to happen either once they go on their own, off to work or training, for us to show up and say, "Are you going to come back on assistance, or are you happy working?" I think it would be tough to do.

MR. FRIEDEL: I have a question on 2.2.2, maintenance and recovery. Can you elaborate just a little bit on what that program is all about?

MR. WILSON: This is a program that involves workers obtaining voluntary payments from mainly husbands who are not living with their wives and the wives are on supports for independence. That generates about \$14.9 million worth of revenue which is collected under the maintenance enforcement program administered by the Department of Justice. We offset supports for independence payments by about \$8 million on account of the voluntary maintenance orders that we obtain. In addition, when we get a permanent court order, we register it with the maintenance enforcement program, and that program generates about \$14.9 million a year, which is paid directly to the general revenue fund. We employ approximately 80 people in this program.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Supplementary.

MR. FRIEDEL: Is there any correlation to the amount that's spent in this part of the budget to the amount that's recovered?

MR. WILSON: Yeah, and this was an area where we moved an extra four people in this year because there is a return on our investment. We collect more than it costs us to collect. Over the last three to four years, we've added approximately 40 people and had a consequential increase in revenue.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A final supplementary.

MR. FRIEDEL: The fact, then, that this expenditure actually returns more than it spends – and I guess maybe this might be better directed at the minister. Are you relatively satisfied that this is an optimum return that we're getting?

MR. CARDINAL: At this time I haven't had any complaints from any individual that wasn't satisfied with what is out there. I guess at this time that's about all a person can say, Don, unless you have something to add.

MR. FLEMING: Just basically to substantiate what you're saying, that there is a break-even point where, you know, you reach your optimum, and we feel that we've got it staffed – that leveled off.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Alice Hanson.

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question about a statement that's in *Securing Alberta's Future*. It's on page 89, under Family and Social Services, and it states:

Priority has been given to providing services to those individuals and families most in need.

I am assuming that you have some kind of criteria or some way of deciding what's most in need and what's not quite. I wonder if you could elaborate on that, please.

MR. CARDINAL: I guess an example of all the welfare reforms – 11 months or so ago when we looked at the caseload, there were 94,000 cases, which is close to 180,000 individuals. A high percentage of those were young, healthy, single people or in some cases couples without children that were able to work, and too many were not working and were sitting on the system. What we've always indicated is that we'll put the reforms in place and review the high-needs area to make sure we provide maximum dollars.

One example that comes to mind is the review on AISH, the assured income for the severely handicapped. We did a review on that, and of course there was panic when we did the review, thinking that we were going to kick people off, but what we did with that review was actually add 1,000 more cases. Our expectation was not to cut people off AISH but to review to make sure the people that were eligible were getting that particular program. It happened that, yes, we moved I think 97 to another category because they're employable, but 1,000 came on because they needed the program.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Supplementary.

MS HANSON: This isn't a supplementary. I think I wasn't too clear on my first question, because I was thinking of people on supports for independence. I wondered, where there is not a disability, what kind of criteria you would use for determining need or most in need.

MR. CARDINAL: I guess basically health care, food, and shelter, education, of course, and clothing.

MR. FLEMING: Yeah. The income support program lays out the qualifications, what qualifies you for public assistance if you're unemployed. We've identified what the level of basic need is, what the shelter rates are, and other extraordinary sorts of things. We've got them all laid out by policy, so if they haven't got income, that's the deciding criteria we use.

MS HANSON: So you have the current shelter rates, the current food costs, that kind of thing. Okay. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Supplementary.

MS HANSON: Yeah. I was trying to decide.

The statement about SFI being more in line with working Albertans. Could you clarify a little bit about just what that means?

MR. CARDINAL: I think when you look at the rates we had set up previously, from what I understand – and Don may want to verify this, or finance – our rates were equivalent to about \$9 an hour. A lot of people were working for less than that and doing quite well at their jobs. We were, in fact, paying more for people not to work, and therefore those rates were adjusted to try and address that issue.

Now, Don, I don't know if you want to add anything on that or if that's basically it.

MR. FLEMING: No. That's the basic premise we used. It fluctuates. If you look at our welfare rates for a single, two

singles living as a couple, one single with kids, and so forth and equate that to dollar values, we've got that laid out.

Just to give you an example, the rate for a single person: you'd have to earn \$4 an hour to make better than our welfare rates, so if you're earning \$5 an hour, you would be making sufficient to keep you off the rolls. But if you move on down to, say, a single parent with two children, you'd have to earn \$10 to be better off, and a single couple with one earner only, \$7. There's a range of different rates there, so we're just trying to equate that to what working Albertans would have to live on.

11:22

MS HANSON: Okay. Thank you. My last question has to do with the employability thing again when it's not related to physical or mental disability. How do you assess that? In terms of potential for being trained, there are things like literacy and all kinds of things. I notice that only 8,500 of the people, I believe, that are in training were previously on welfare. I wondered: was it a personal decision on the part of the others, or did you not feel they had the potential to be trained?

MR. CARDINAL: No. You know, we reduced the caseload considerably more than the 8,500, and I would suspect that a lot of the 30,000 caseload reductions would be doing other training programs on their own without us being involved, because there are other programs out there, the existing programs they would be eligible for. So I assume there could be a lot more in training. The 8,500 are ones that are financed under student finance that we know of. But for the others that would be going to some of the colleges who are on their own or have support from parents or support from other institutions, financing wouldn't show up, and it may be possible that double that could be attending training programs.

MS HANSON: So you're saying it was open to people within the plan.

MR. CARDINAL: Yeah.

MR. FLEMING: It's really a matter of individual choice. When someone comes to us and indicates they're in need, we sit down with them and go through the process of making that determination. If they're unemployed, of course, we look to their unemployableness as an issue, so we do an employment plan. So there's a determination made as to whether they're job ready, if they need some life skills, whether or not they need some academic upgrading, and so forth. The individual is offered a choice to pursue whichever route he or she feels is most appropriate to their particular need. Once that decision is made, they either go to student finance or, if they're job ready and there are no jobs, we have the ACE programs that we plug them into. At last count we've got 1,330 positions, and we're looking at increasing that to where we can run as many as 3,400 through that program this coming year. In the job corp I think we did 218, and we're looking at increasing that to 500. So there will be more opportunity for people to take the interim employment.

MR. CARDINAL: The other thing that's available in addition to that and will expand no doubt by September 1 is distance learning through Athabasca University. We're working very closely with Athabasca University and Advanced Ed and Career Development to see how we can design some of those programs to accommodate some of the needs of our clientele, and it may be possible for people to get a degree in education or social work or other

areas through that particular institution while staying in their home community or at home. They can take that from anywhere in Alberta. So that's just one option we're looking at in addition to what's existing out there. What do we do after these clients reach grade 12? Do they come back on welfare? Of course, they don't want that, and none of us want that. We want to see those people move on to other opportunities. We're working very closely with the other departments, including the federal government, to look at how we may address those issues.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.
Pearl Calahasen.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I guess just sort of following on that issue, regarding 2.2.4 and 2.2.5, could you explain briefly what those two are all about, the employment and training support and transitional support?

MR. CARDINAL: Okay. The employment training and the transitional support, 2.2.4. These categories of assistance are relatively new, and it's only in the past year that the new supports for independence computer system was available to provide more accurate information on case counts. In other words, more funds were allocated to transitional support than were required in '93-94. Of course, we mentioned earlier, I think, that we corrected that in the '94-95 budget. That will be corrected. It's a minus.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Supplementary?

MS CALAHASEN: Yeah. I wanted to know what each of those did, Mr. Chairman, if I can. I wanted a clarification of that before I ask the supplementary.

MR. CARDINAL: Okay. The employment and training support, 2.2.4: of course, there's a reduction in that, and it basically provides benefits to persons who are able and available to work or attend school or those who are participating in training and education programs. Transitional support, which is 2.2.5, of course also shows a decrease but provides benefits to persons who are currently unavailable for employment or training programs due to temporary health problems or caring for young children or dependants. That's for people who have that.

MS CALAHASEN: Then a supplementary, Mr. Chairman. Why is there such a disproportionate reduction between the 2.2.4 and 2.2.5 then?

MR. CARDINAL: There was a correction on that one, and we mentioned that before.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Bettie Hewes.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, we need clarification on the widows' pension and the ASB. I'm sure all of our offices are getting a lot of calls about: is it going to continue, and if so, where is it in your budget or anyone else's budget?

MR. CARDINAL: Don, do you want to expand on that, or do you want me to do it?

MR. FLEMING: Well, it's shown in our budget transferring over to community development effective July 1. So you see it in our . . .

MR. CARDINAL: Part of it is in here.

MRS. HEWES: In spite of the fact that if it's in ASB, it says you don't get anything until you're 65, and the widows' pension starts 10 years before that. How do we reconcile those things?

MR. CARDINAL: There are no changes at all. It's just a matter that the administration process will be under another department as of July 1, but there are no changes in the program.

MRS. HEWES: It is not the Alberta seniors' benefit then?

MR. CARDINAL: No. Don, do you want to explain what happened on that particular piece?

MRS. HEWES: It says it is.

MR. CARDINAL: Don, will explain what happened to that.

MR. FLEMING: The widows' pension, the \$810 that we've been providing in our department, will continue to be provided to widows once they're moved over to the other department.

MR. CARDINAL: Not part of the seniors' . . .

MRS. HEWES: Not part of the seniors' package.

MR. CARDINAL: No, but that's how it shows up.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, what about single women, divorced women? What happens to them?

MR. BRASSARD: Now we're getting off the subject altogether, I'm afraid.

MRS. HEWES: Okay. Let me try another question, Mr. Chairman. The requirement is that if you are not yet a senior and are indigent – this is in program 2 – if you have CPP, you may be required to access that instead of going on SFI. I need to know from the minister: is this practice continuing? How many people have we forced to take their CPP in advance of age 65, which reduces their pension?

MR. CARDINAL: I don't know what the exact caseload is, but once they do get CPP, then we supplement that particular income, based on our rates of course. Don, I don't know to date what the caseload has been and what we project the caseload to be.

MRS. HEWES: That's not the question, Mr. Chairman. The question is that if they are forced to take their pension in advance of 65, then the total pension is reduced.

MR. CARDINAL: At 65.

MRS. HEWES: Yes. So they don't get it. I want to know how many people we've forced into that position.

MR. CARDINAL: What are the stats on that, Don?

MR. FLEMING: We don't keep that as a distinct figure, but the Act does require that people avail themselves of any available income, and that income is available.

MRS. HEWES: In spite of the fact that this reduces the income that would accrue to them at 65. We've had no challenge to that?

MR. FLEMING: Not to myself.

MR. CARDINAL: No, not to me either.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you have one more, Bettie?

11:32

MRS. HEWES: I've got a lot more, Mr. Chairman, but would you just put me down on the list for the next time around, please?

MR. BRASSARD: This whole program 2 is one of swings and slides from great reductions to increases with a net reduction of \$135 million. I'd like to speak specifically about 2.2.7, the employment initiatives, and start out by complimenting you, Mr. Minister, for reducing the number so significantly. A \$30,000 reduction is dramatic. I see that you have reduced employment and training support, yet your employment initiatives under 2.2.7 are up \$13.6 million or almost \$14 million. Can you tell me what's happening?

MR. FLEMING: Well, primarily it would be relative to the caseload reductions. The people in this particular area are either finding work or they're going into some upgrading or training, educational endeavour.

MR. BRASSARD: You're increasing employment initiatives by \$14 million. How? What are you spending that on?

MR. CARDINAL: That's part of the – I can speak now. Go ahead though.

MR. FLEMING: Well, that's part of the northern Alberta job corps and the ACE project and the moneys we're sending over to career development for the Students Finance Board, the training programs.

MR. BRASSARD: I would have thought that would have been under employment and training support. No? I don't want to get into semantics here, but I just wondered what the difference is.

MR. FLEMING: Well, it's just a categorization of individuals that come in and receive assistance. If they don't get assistance, which they don't, then they come over to this program. We don't see that as public assistance anymore. We see it as upgrading, training, and skills development.

MR. BRASSARD: Okay. The criticism has been that basically we're training people to be hamburger flippers and this kind of stuff. Can you give me an idea what type of training you are providing? Are we into computerization in any way? Is there a broad range of skill development in technology and so on?

MR. FLEMING: Yeah, there's a real range. The people that are going to the Students Finance Board may be some of those computer experts; they may be in some technical program area. A lot of the ACE programs we're doing are maintenance. The tree planting one we talked about, silviculture. Some of them are in construction. Some of them are working with boys and girls clubs and basically child care counselor types of areas. So there's a real variety. Some of them might be hamburger flippers.

MR. BRASSARD: Okay. That's it, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Gary Dickson.

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, why is it that we have different eligibility criteria for AISH and the Canada pension plan disability program? Why haven't we harmonized those two eligibility criteria?

MR. CARDINAL: I don't know how AISH was put in place. I guess three jurisdictions in Canada have AISH. AISH is a program that is provided. It's not a cost-share program, from what I understand.

MR. FLEMING: Not all of it.

MR. CARDINAL: Not all of it, a very small portion. Don, as far as the comparison to the federal program, could you expand on that?

MR. FLEMING: Well, I'm not exactly sure of your question. If it's why aren't the two the same, the Canada pension for the disabled is if you are in the work force and you're hurt in the course of work and you've been paying into Canada pension, then you're covered there. The AISH program does, I guess, ultimately pick up some of those individuals, but primarily the AISH program started out to be a program for the mentally handicapped, disabled individuals of that nature and has grown a bit. Depending on what their Canada pension is, if it's smaller than what they would qualify for on AISH, then we would top it off.

MR. CARDINAL: We'd top it off up to the maximum.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Supplementary.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you. My supplementary, then, is: why when there's a cost of living increase in the CPP disability pension is that clawed back? What are the reasons for clawing that back rather than just recognizing the fact that these people may need the cost of living adjustment?

MR. FLEMING: Well, just to try to maintain the programs within current budgets, I think, is about the only explanation I could give you.

MR. DICKSON: Put me back on the list. I don't have another supplementary.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.
Moe Amery.

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Actually, following along the same line as Roy under the subprograms here, programs 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3, 2.2.4 and 2.2.5 have seen a decrease, but 2.2.6 has seen a hefty increase of almost \$21 million. I wonder if we could get some explanation. I'm talking about the assured support.

MR. CARDINAL: Yeah. I've indicated before that we wouldn't make adjustments and that as the reforms move forward, we would continue reviewing the high-needs area, and this is one area that's high needs. Recently we announced that we would provide an additional \$20 per month for each individual and also a onetime grant of a thousand dollars for individuals moving into the community for furniture, damage deposits, and moving costs.

This increased, of course, the total budget of \$4.3 million. We also anticipate a caseload growth of about a thousand for the '94-95 budget year in this particular case.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Supplementary?

MR. AMERY: That's all.

MR. SEKULIC: Mr. Minister, are there any dollars in program support for impact analysis? Edmonton, for example, had a 103 percent increase in food bank utilization. Women's shelters across the province have seen an increase, and I'm just wondering: have you allocated any dollars to measure the impact of your department's cuts?

MR. CARDINAL: I think there's ongoing work with the interest groups. Don, maybe you'll expand on that, and I'll expand a bit on some of the impacts on the positive side.

MR. FLEMING: We haven't got dollars designated for that specifically. What we do have is staff on board in our program policy design areas that do some research and cost comparisons between provinces. So that is there, and also within the quality assurance unit we have some capacity to look at that sort of stuff, but nothing specific to what you've mentioned.

MR. CARDINAL: Part of our three-year plan – and it will impact, of course, our program this year – is that we'll have measures on the success of the programs. Again, I can only go by past experience where we ran programs very similar to what we have in a northern community where the crime rate was quite high. The RCMP used to carry 20 files at any one time, and the community had only a population of 500. In that particular two-year period when the reforms were in place and the community managed the project, the crime rate almost disappeared in that particular area. During the same period of time the health care costs dropped because the community operated the project that kept in touch with all the agencies. The health care usage dropped considerably, and the school attendance went up. So those were positive experiences. Now, that may not happen all over, and I wouldn't want our welfare reforms to take credit if the crime rate dropped in Calgary, Edmonton, and other areas, but it happened in this one particular community. As far as other ways of measuring it, I don't know.

11:42

MR. CHAIRMAN: Have you got a supplementary?

MR. SEKULIC: Yes. Thank you. To the minister again: is there any place in this program 2 budget where there are benefits that can be provided to individuals that are awaiting appeal? A lot of individuals have been put into severe hardship, and I know constituencies across the province are experiencing this. A decision has been made to reject a benefit, and it could be something like rent or food, and many of these are single-parent families with no other resources. Is there a place in the budget where dollars can be allocated for these individuals?

MR. CARDINAL: Don will expand on this to give an update on where the appeals process is at this time. There was a waiting list in the past of appeals, and since the welfare reforms were introduced, that particular area dropped considerably. In areas of rural Alberta where they used to have appeal board hearings once a week, they're down to once a month if they're lucky

because there are just no appeals. Don, in Edmonton, I think, it's similar. They used to work full-time on the appeals process. I understand it's down to about three days a week. So they should be able to accommodate more people quicker in the appeals process than previously. That doesn't directly answer your question, but if our appeal boards are there and they're only sitting three days a week and they used to sit five days a week, there's no reason why there has to be a waiting list or a long waiting list at least.

Don, go ahead.

MR. FLEMING: The only supplement I would have to what the minister has given: having in a former life worked in our organization, you'll recall that as a department we used the appeal board rather than making decisions ourselves sometimes. That ended up costing us an awful lot of money. What we chose to do was to put in place a policy that would cut some of that decisiveness out of our organization and the additional cost. What we've said in policy is: make sure that when you're doing your assessment, if you're absolutely sure that the individual has a means of income or they're not accessing a means of income, then do not give any assistance. Let them go to appeal. If you're not sure, put them on assistance, and the individual may at that point appeal. You may put him on for a month and say, "That's all we're going to give you." In that way I think the appeals still may get used somewhat. For the most part, it's either you do or you don't qualify for assistance, and we like to use that approach.

MR. SEKULIC: My final supplemental is with regards to health care and other related benefits for individuals on assistance, many of which are pursuing employment and training. Now, I believe one of the department's processes is that recommendations by medical practitioners don't have to be followed. I believe that's one of the policies. We're on the fringe here with that. If a doctor provides a note stating that an individual can't work or can't attend a training course, the individual staff – it could be a financial benefit worker by policy – has the authority to overturn that. Have you looked at correcting this deficiency, that department staff should no longer have the right to overturn a medical practitioner's recommendations?

MR. CARDINAL: It hasn't been identified anywhere that there is a problem, because if the letter is written by a doctor, it's unlikely that any worker would overrule that. I've never heard of it. Don, I don't know if you have. I suspect the individual would call us immediately. I would think they would if there was a problem.

MR. FLEMING: You can correct me, but I think maybe you're referencing more the application for the AISH benefit as opposed to the income support benefit.

MR. SEKULIC: No. It's ongoing income support benefits. Many people are finding out there's a three-month review for their health status. A doctor can submit a note confirming that the status hasn't changed, and many times that will be overturned by a worker. If you're not familiar with that, at this time I would ask the minister to investigate this because the volume in my constituency and I imagine others is increasing in this regard.

MR. CARDINAL: We haven't been alerted to it. We'll sure look into it; yeah, for sure.

MR. SEKULIC: I'd appreciate that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Heather Forsyth.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to touch on a couple of items, Mr. Minister. The first one is 2.3.4. I'm pleased to see that we've got an increase on the AISH benefits, because I truly believe in my heart, after being involved with the department for a few years, that those are people who truly deserve the benefits. One of the questions I think I brought up at the last meeting we were at was: is there some sort of process going on within the department right now requalifying the people who are right now receiving AISH?

MR. CARDINAL: It's an ongoing process, of course. That is the issue I mentioned earlier. You know, there's almost a \$7 million increase, and that's due to increased caseloads. When we reviewed the files, up to date I believe we moved about 97 individuals to a different category but added close to a thousand to the AISH category. That is why there's an adjustment there. When the reforms were introduced, we always indicated that that is exactly what we would do. We do have the dollars now as we move the young people off. We're still paying some to train, but some have moved on to private industry jobs and the public sector. It allows us now more dollars – you know, have it easier. That's exactly what we've done in this budget.

MRS. FORSYTH: My second question is on 2.2.7, employment initiatives. Is the department working with the work force out in the cities and the rural in some way so that they can, you know – for example, my son was working at the Keg as a dishwasher at \$5 an hour, and we finally kiboshed that for the fact that, you know, he's going to school. They're desperate for help – I mean, he was working three, four nights a week – and couldn't get staff. I guess the question is: a lot of these people would feel a lot better if they had some sort of income, if they were working or they were just out, but they maybe don't know how to get this particular job or where you go for this. Is there any sort of movement getting into the community saying we have people that want to work?

MR. CARDINAL: There are a number of areas we're looking at. The first phase of the program was part of the reform. It was colocation. In some areas, of course, colocation identifies, pulls together employment and immigration, which, you know, do their role – and I think everybody's familiar with that – Advanced Education and Career Development and Family and Social Services. They do identify the needs in that community as far as job opportunities and encourage nonprofit organizations and municipalities to apply for funding through Alberta community employment programs and hire these people. That was only the first year of reforms.

The second year of the welfare reforms was to start looking at working with private industry to try and figure out how we may encourage private industry to hire more of our clients. I guess there could be many innovative ways of doing that: possibly providing transition health benefits, for example, to an employee while they take on a job; possibly allowing different earnings exemptions when a person goes on to a job; possibly wage subsidy. At one time Alberta had a wage subsidy under career development and employment, which provided a subsidy for private industry to hire an unemployed person. That is the second phase of our reforms in that particular area. This year starting April 1 we'll be sitting down with the private sector and figuring out how we may supplement or assist and encourage them to hire local people.

11:52

We do have a couple of proposals out there that are really interesting and challenging, and these are from the private sector. It's in the agricultural area, where an agricultural service board is proposing to run a program where farmers can actually pick from a labour pool of our clients, which would be established through the service board, but they would then be employed by the farm sector. A lot of farmers out there would like to hire a lot of our clients, but there is really not a process in place for them to hire a person if they need a person for, say, three, four, or five days. This proposal we're looking at is in northern Alberta. We need to look at that very closely. I've talked to our colleagues in government. I've talked to the minister. I've talked to the opposition critic for agriculture for us to sit down and look at possible options of how we may assist that particular sector of Alberta to hire more of our people.

We're very open, and we have to be very innovative to assist more clients to get back into the work force, first of all in private industry, if possible.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you have a final supplementary?

MRS. FORSYTH: Yes, I do. My third question sort of follows up on that line. Has the department considered bringing on line – and I don't know how to justify the costs or things, but hooking into the UIC system for the job opportunities which can hook into the provincial and federal sort of job opportunities?

A lot of the people that are in the stages of assistance that truly need it are sort of beaten down and don't want to have to go to this UIC office and then into the Harry Hays building. Has the department considered any way so that it's like sort of a one-stop shopping thing where they can just go in and talk to their social worker and she can say, "Well, look, this is what I have right here, and that's just one bus ticket to this job or this job"?

MR. CARDINAL: We have that set up now in Athabasca and Lac La Biche and Westlock areas, and it works very well. Of course, we need to look at that across the province. It is a very interesting and innovative way to deliver services to our clientele. When we met with Mr. Axworthy recently, this is one of the areas that he was interested in, to look at possibly piloting a project in Edmonton where we could co-locate and co-manage resources and be more efficient, more effective, and provide a better service for the clientele out there and still redirect dollars to productive use. I believe we've commenced talks with the deputies to look at ways.

Don, do you want to expand on it a bit maybe? That would touch on what you're looking at.

MR. FLEMING: Yeah. We have several, actually. In addition to the ones that the minister has mentioned, we've got several other locations, some of them right here in Edmonton, in Calgary, in Rocky Mountain House, where they're doing a lot of that co-ordinated stuff. That's the big one I spoke to earlier in terms of where we're working with the federal government, the regional representatives of federal government and ourselves and career development, to look at how we can meet some of these needs in a more integrated sort of fashion. Because you're right. That business of referral from here to there, even if it's across the street, sometimes is enough to have someone lose interest, and to have to tell their story three times over . . .

MRS. FORSYTH: Yeah.

MR. CARDINAL: Each region has been encouraged to set up these programs in an innovative way based on local needs involving local people including the clientele, rather than us developing a program that's standard for across Alberta. What we try to do is bring it to the community level, and Don's been working very closely with the six regional directors we have and their managers. In fact, a manager can develop a program for their local community involving, again, the community, the client, the frontline worker. We, of course, support that concept. The program that's provided in Rocky Mountain House could be completely different from the one provided in High Level or Lac La Biche, and it seems to work quite well, because the clients are very happy with it.

MRS. FORSYTH: Well . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: We've got a long list, and we've had three questions, Heather, so I must move on to Bettie Hewes.

MRS. HEWES: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. To the minister: are you anticipating and can we look forward to an increase this year in income support entitlements in food, clothing, and shelter? Does the budget provide for an increase?

MR. CARDINAL: In the high-needs area – and I would suspect that's what you're referring to – as we moved on with our budgets, I've always indicated that a \$1.6 billion budget for the size of our province is a reasonably large budget for my department. I felt that a lot of the dollars that were expended from that department were used in areas where people were healthy, employable, and young, and once we'd moved with processes that would move those off our welfare rolls into active job training and job opportunities, then we would continue a review of our rates on an ongoing basis to try and look at ways of maybe – one way I mentioned earlier is through students' finance, for example. They've got 30 percent more through students' finance grants than they would have even from the old rate. So those particular people that qualify for that already get 30 percent more dollars. Now, that's an innovative way of providing more money in a positive fashion for those particular people that are eligible for that.

The ones, of course, that are at home and not able to work: we'll continue looking at that. Don and I have agreed that if there's a problem in Edmonton, for example, we'll set up a process of how we may continue dialogue with those groups that are impacted in a negative way, if that is the case. I feel they would come up with some good ideas on how we may make positive changes.

MRS. HEWES: With students' finance, of course, they may be encumbered with a loan.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, last year the advisory council on women did an excellent report on the impact of SFI on women in the province, some very specific recommendations. Does this budget and has your department responded in this budget to those recommendations?

MR. CARDINAL: Don, what areas would we have done that?

MR. FLEMING: Well, I don't think I can respond in a general way. If you can give me a specific, perhaps I could tell you.

MRS. HEWES: Well, there's a whole series of recommendations – the impact that it has on women, particularly single, sole

support women parents. It was very specific and quite devastating, Mr. Deputy Minister, and I just want to know: have we reacted to that in a positive fashion, or did that one just gather dust? I'm sure you can get back to me on that.

MR. CARDINAL: I don't have a comment on that other than, you know, I do get some phone calls personally from individuals that are taking advantage of some of the programs we are providing, and they're very happy with it. I do get some calls of concern about the existing rates, but it's been reasonably more positive than negative in the whole process.

MRS. HEWES: Well, that's why I asked the question about whether or not the entitlements will go up.

My other question, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister. The city has now made a formal request regarding SFI. Can we anticipate that these four items are going to be dealt with immediately?

MR. CARDINAL: Which are the four items again?

MRS. HEWES: Over-the-counter children's medication, transportation costs, telephones in homes with children, coverage for minimum parental portion of out-of-school care.

12:02

MR. CARDINAL: Those are the same issues that we were sitting down with the 20 individuals on, and we'll continue that dialogue in the next little while to see what adjustments are required. Like I said earlier, some of the concerns that were brought to our attention were already being dealt with under the existing system. There was a bit of miscommunication. For example, the ambulance use: there's no onetime ambulance use. You know, if you need it, you need it.

MRS. HEWES: They quote cases where SFI workers refused transportation costs where people have to go for . . .

MR. CARDINAL: The other one was lack of telephones, and what we're looking at in that particular one as an option that could be utilized, because most areas don't require long-distance calls any more, is that you can get a restricted telephone, that flat rate. Maybe we need to provide that as an option to some people. I've already directed my staff to start working on that as one option to make sure that people have telephones.

MRS. HEWES: But we can assume that they don't.

MR. CARDINAL: Yeah. In most areas you can dial directly within a radius that would have a hospital, ambulance, and those high-needs services. So I think that can be addressed within our existing system.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Before we move on to the next one, I just want to draw to the members' attention that there are two programs that we haven't touched on. We have a fairly long list of people who want to ask questions. We've got less than half an hour, about 24 minutes left. The chair is totally in the hands of the committee, but I'd just throw that out.

MR. BRASSARD: What time constraints do we have, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We will conclude at 12:27.

MR. BRASSARD: Twenty-seven? Oh, dear.

Okay. Well, I'd like to pick up on a question that Mrs. Forsyth raised regarding assured income for the handicapped. I applaud your department for the review. It was long overdue. Recognizing that a lot of the people in that program are there through circumstance rather than choice, is the same effort being expended? I see you increased that program \$7 million. Is that going to be directed more into helping them gain greater independence through the work force and so on? Because a lot of people who are on that program don't want to be on it and could do something and have been restricted in the past by the limitations of the program in that if they earn \$115, there was a significant reduction in future earning dollars. I always felt that if the transition period was slower, where it was calibrated on a reduced rate, it would encourage people to get off the program more. I'm jumbling this like a parable.

MR. CARDINAL: That's okay.

MR. BRASSARD: You know what I mean. I felt that if there was a greater incentive for people to be in the work force, then a lot more would access it.

MR. FLEMING: That was the intention of the review, Roy. We actually to date have reviewed 210 cases, and about a hundred of those were the ones that were working and could be employed.

MR. BRASSARD: It's almost 50 percent.

MR. FLEMING: Yeah. In the others I think 27 of those were put onto SFI, so you could start to use the earnings exemption stuff. Some of them were inappropriately placed on that program, but it's not anywhere as near severe as what it was portrayed to be. I think it's been a very positive thing. In fact, for the most part it's been received fairly positively.

MR. CARDINAL: That's where you see the increase in caseload. It's just caseload increase.

MR. BRASSARD: That's my supplementary question. I was concerned that there were a thousand more people on the caseload to add to your review. Is this a transfer from one of the existing programs, like SFI, that should more appropriately be on AISH?

MR. FLEMING: This has been an increasing thing. Our caseloads have been increasing with some new applicants as opposed to anything to do with the reviews. So we've got two or three things happening. We've got more people coming on that are needy and disabled. At the same time, we had some on that should have been off, so it's just been a redistribution.

MR. CARDINAL: That was always the plan, when we did a review, to make sure that the people who are needy out there get the assistance that they require. We have no plans of reviewing AISH to take people off. We reviewed AISH to make sure that whoever is eligible gets AISH, and in this case the caseload is increased considerably. Because we have a lot of young people back training or into the work force, we're able to come up with those additional dollars to accommodate those additional caseloads. That was always the plan, and I believe it's working, at least in that particular area, very well. We'll continue reviewing the files, of course.

MR. BRASSARD: Okay. Then my final question regarding the AISH program. There's always been the perception out there that if someone did get a job and got off of AISH, they would have a terrible time getting back on if the job didn't work out. So there was a reluctance to take the job in the first place because reaccessing the program became a barrier to leaving the program in the first place. Have we done anything in that area to enable people to return to the program if indeed it just doesn't work out for them?

MR. FLEMING: It's those very ones, Roy, that the reviews centred around. The program was set up to provide assistance for people who were permanently and irreversibly handicapped and disabled. If they could work, they shouldn't have been on the program in the first place. So if there are people who have potential to work, they're better served with the SFI program, where we can actually meet their needs and let them supplement their earnings. They're financially better off anyway. So it's a bit of a misconception, I think.

MR. BRASSARD: Okay.
Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Alice Hanson.

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, we were talking a few minutes ago about ambulance charges and under what conditions they'd be paid. I have a page from the benefits policy, and I don't know if I'm reading it wrong. Do you want the page number?

MR. CARDINAL: That's okay. You can read it to me.

MS HANSON: Okay. What it says is:

In an emergency only, recipients, applicants, and applicants for one-time issue, including transients, are eligible for ambulance service to the nearest hospital where essential medical care can be given.

What does "one-time issue" mean?

MR. CARDINAL: Don, do you want to expand on that? Because as far as I know, if you need an ambulance and if you're on assistance, you're eligible.

MR. FLEMING: Yeah. I think what it's meant to catch is that we have a number of individuals on our caseloads that use the ambulance like a taxi.

MS HANSON: Oh, okay.

MR. CARDINAL: That was what it was intended to prevent. That's happened in the past.

MR. FLEMING: But if it's a legitimate case of someone who is sick and hospitalized or has to receive significant medical treatment, then we'll pay for it. The reason the change was in there was to prevent the abuse.

MS HANSON: Yes, I know, but the reason I was curious is because so many people have phoned me and said that the ambulance would not take them unless they had the money to pay, and I wondered if this was not intended to mean one time only.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think we're getting into a policy issue again.

MS HANSON: Well, I don't know if it's policy.

MR. FLEMING: I'd be happy to look at that one.

MS HANSON: I just want to know how it's being interpreted. Perhaps it's being misinterpreted from this "one-time issue" clause. But I know it happens.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you have a supplementary, Alice?

MS HANSON: No, I don't.

MR. CARDINAL: Don, you'll deal with that one then.

MS HANSON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pearl Calahasen.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I have a few questions. One is regarding the widows' pension, 2.3.2. Mr. Minister, there's a drastic reduction from 1993-94 to '94-95. Could you indicate how the widowers or widows will be affected through this?

12:12

MR. CARDINAL: The reason for the reduction in that program is that we are funding it, I believe, till the end of June of this year. Effective July 1 it's transferred under Community Development. So that is why only a portion this year is actually funded.

MS CALAHASEN: Okay. Then my second question is relative to 2.2, supports for independence, just the whole program.

MR. CARDINAL: Oh, okay.

MS CALAHASEN: You know, there's been a lot of talk about success, and I wanted to know what indications you have that measure the success of your welfare reforms.

MR. CARDINAL: Well, I guess when you see a reduction in caseload of young, healthy Albertans or couples without children that are employable no longer on assistance and you have, say, 8,500 taking various forms of training programs that we know of for sure – no doubt there are others – and when you get calls from clients and employers saying that the program is working, "We've hired your clients and they're happy and we're happy," I guess that's the only way we can measure it.

The other measure you can use is that it allows us to increase dollars in the high-needs area, and I just mentioned AISH, for an example, with their added caseloads. We've increased dollars in foster care, for an example, and child welfare, another high-needs areas. When you have fewer young, healthy Albertans on the system and you can increase dollars in the high-needs area, then I would say that was how the program was intended originally, to deal with the people that can't fend for themselves. I guess that's the only way you could measure it, Pearl.

MS CALAHASEN: Yeah. I've heard lots about it, and I certainly get a lot of feedback, but I wanted to find out whether or not there were any measures that you would also take into consideration for finding out that success.

MR. CARDINAL: Well, in a long-range plan, of course, we look at others: if you have an increased participation in school

attendance, a possible reduction in cost in health care, and possibly a drop in the crime rate. I guess there are things we could look at. You look in the northern Alberta communities, for example. You know, before 1950 there was no welfare system, and we were all completely independent, self-sufficient, and the crime rate was almost none. The health care costs were very limited. You know, when you look at that, what I tend to think is that we need to look at those dollars and use those dollars in a productive fashion and only provide more dollars than for the people that are really needy, and when you look at the north, I think we're heading in that direction.

MS CALAHASEN: That's good. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Gary Dickson.

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I represent a high-needs area. A lot of my constituents are your clients. I've seen and my constituency office has seen numerous cases where the distress of people is compounded by lack of information they get from your department. Let me give you three examples. The first one is people on social assistance medical. These are people that get the extra \$50 top up if there's a doctor's certificate saying that a move would be detrimental to their health and their rent is just a little bit over the limit. Those people aren't told, apparently, as a matter of routine, that they need to get the letter every three months. What happens is something like the cheque isn't there, and these people phone my office; they phone your office. What can be done to ensure that this thing works a little more smoothly and people are advised up front that this is a recurring requirement?

MR. CARDINAL: There are a number of processes I think a person would use. As a former MLA, before I became minister of the department of course, I had the same phone calls that no doubt you have. I set up a process in that particular area where it allowed, for an example, any person that called, we made sure they called the worker's supervisor if not the manager of the office before they called my office. Otherwise what was happening was I was getting the calls first before even the person sometimes would go to talk to the social worker or the supervisor or the manager of that office. So when you put that system in place, they will in most cases call the manager at our office and in a lot of cases get the issue dealt with. So in that particular area I cut the workload probably by 80 percent by setting that up. I would have to give the phone number and name of the person for them to call. I think it's an issue. If it is a problem, then you can be assured our department will deal with it. What we've done: when we had a caseload of 94,000, we had just a bit over 5,000 staff. Well, we have a caseload today of 64,000. We still have over 5,000 staff. Now, if we can have our staff for some reason, you know, not dealing with the issues, then we'd better look at our internal management and processes, because we should be able to serve our clients better. That was always the intention: once we reduced the caseload, the high-needs area will require more dollars. What we've done also is: we'll also require more human resources to concentrate on the problem areas. That is why we've never reduced staff.

Don, I don't know if you want to expand on that, but if there's something within that system, then we will deal with it. There's no question about it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Supplementary?

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Minister. I appreciate your offer to look at this and see if you can deal with this.

The second issue is: in the experience of my constituency office, your clients aren't told that there's money available for people with special diet programs. They're not told how to access that money. Is that something that can be dealt with as a part of your process if people aren't familiar with what's available?

MR. FLEMING: We have what's referred to as the Other Welfare Manual. That's sort of the laymen's version of our detailed one. The intent of that was to try and simplify the stuff some, because as you can see, when you write things up, they're for specific reasons and they get into a lot of diatribe sometimes that we don't need. So that's one way of doing it. I don't know; I'm certainly open to suggestions on how, without going to a lot of printing costs – people don't read stuff anyway for the most part unless it's an issue specific to them. So I'm not sure how we address some of that stuff. I think if I could be given a few specific examples of what's happening . . .

MR. CARDINAL: It would be a good way to do it too.

MR. DICKSON: I'd be happy to work with the Alberta Place office, and we'll give you that information.

The final thing I was going to ask is: when a parent and child have special dietary needs, both different – not the same but different – why are additional funds not available to cover those two different kinds of diet? That appears not to be the case now.

MR. FLEMING: It shouldn't be.

MR. CARDINAL: It shouldn't be. The flexibility should always be there to deal with issues. Don, again, if it's an internal issue, it may be specific with one case or one office. We're willing to deal with it.

MR. DICKSON: Each of these things I've mentioned is a recurring problem in my constituency office.

MR. CARDINAL: Let's deal with it. I haven't had a complaint on that area.

MR. DICKSON: I'll follow up. Thank you.

MR. CARDINAL: Sure.

MR. CHAIRMAN: At the start during the organizational portion of the meeting there was a suggestion made – and I agreed to it – that the minister would have an opportunity to wrap up at the end. I don't know whether the minister wants to do that. We still have two folks that want to ask questions. I know what Gary is going to say, and that is that when he made the suggestion, in fact I had neglected to mention that you were going to have an opportunity for opening remarks.

MR. CARDINAL: I think the opening remarks were sufficient, other than to say that the exchange of information here is valuable because this is how, I guess, you learn to provide good programs out there for the clients, and we're always open to take suggestions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It was strictly an oversight on my part, because we've always done it, and I guess when you're so close to the forest, you can't see the trees.

MR. FRIEDEL: I'll concede my question to a quick wrap-up.

12:22

MR. SEKULIC: Oh, okay. Well, I'll do a quick question as well here. In this fiscal period, '94-95, and the following years of the plan, you've projected a 3,000 per year decrease in caseloads. I was just wondering: could you give definite criteria; what must occur prior to those caseloads dropping by 3,000? Must the employment rate pick up? Spaces in colleges? What must occur? On what premise to you base your 3,000 projection?

MR. CARDINAL: In the past I think what we have done – and I still maintain it has been a mistake – is always wait for the jobs to be there before we make adjustments in our training and employment initiatives programs. In this particular case we took the initiative of putting on the employment and training initiatives programs without guaranteeing there will be jobs at the end. With the unemployment rate as it is across Canada, if we were to wait for the point where there are jobs available for all our clients, then we'd probably have a long gap there that we're wasting and not training people or preparing for job opportunities and setting the attitudes of not only the clients but the various levels of government, including a number of departments in Alberta, and also the attitudes of employers out there.

I believe what's happened in Alberta is that the attitudes of employers in the private industry in regards to welfare clientele has changed. From talking to small business, people are saying: with the changes you've made both in the training and also in the department, we're seeing more productive employees. The people that come to work don't quit their jobs. They show up on time, they seem to be happier, and attitudes are changing there.

When you look at the overall picture, you know, the population in Alberta has increased in the past year. So has our employment rate. More people are working now than there were before. I suspect a portion of all those – there are indications that some people left this province. Actually, we have an increase in population and more people working. I suspect the more people working are a portion of our clientele. Now, like I said before, we have no way of tracing it.

The other thing, I think, with a process like this is that it makes the private industry, the community, and other departments be more responsible in how we deliver programs. What we've done in the past is hand out dollars when we could have used those dollars in a more productive way. I still maintain the program is working. We have more people, no doubt, in the work force and in training.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Supplementary?

MR. SEKULIC: Yes, just one. This 1994-95 budget. You've spoken, and I'm very encouraged by your comments that you're willing to reconsider the benefit levels and increase them, because I think we've consistently heard that they are insufficient, particularly the food and shelter. I am very encouraged that you're looking at the potential to increase the levels. Will your budget, the budget we've seen here today and debated here today, permit for increases?

MR. CARDINAL: You know, you file an annual budget, and then there's a three-year business plan also. There's always an ongoing review, of course, of our own budget within the '94-95. That's the proposed budget. Within that you may be able to make adjustments. It may be that the caseload reductions could be 6,000 instead of 3,000, which allows you more flexibility to

work within the system. Those reviews will continue directing dollars to the high-needs area. I'm confident that there is enough money there for the high-needs area if we can put the young, healthy people back to work.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, thank you, Mr. Minister.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the staff that came this morning and the minister, of course, and the committee members who made the extra effort to be here this morning. I am very encouraged and impressed with the discussion we had this morning. There was, in my opinion, a lot of good exchange of ideas, and I think it was very productive.

I do have one other little piece of business, though, that we must take care of. That is that we should have a motion. Under Standing Order 56(7) debate has now concluded on the consideration of the '94-95 estimates of the Department of Family and Social Services. Would someone care to move that motion?

MRS. FORSYTH: Sure; I'll move that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are we all in favour?

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, a question on that. This does not preclude this being presented in the Legislature?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. I would give a report to the Legislature. Under the Standing Orders we're asked to do this review, and then I have to make that report in the Legislature.

MRS. HEWES: There is an opportunity, then, for members not present here to ask questions?

MR. CHAIRMAN: There can be some discussion on it. The intent was that this would be a supplement to what happens in the House and speed it up in the House.

MRS. HEWES: Indeed. I just want to be sure that it was clear.

MR. DICKSON: I think the intention of the motion is that this concludes debate by this special committee. That's the issue.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, and I must report, as chair of this committee, to the Legislature.

Well, with that we will close the session.

[The committee adjourned at 12:28 p.m.]

