

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, March 28, 1995**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 95/03/28

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: Good evening. I'd like to call the committee to order and invite you all to take a seat.

head: **Main Estimates 1995-96**

Family and Social Services

THE CHAIRMAN: You're reminded that we are in Committee of Supply, the second evening of the estimates for the Department of Family and Social Services. We would invite the minister to begin this evening's deliberations, if he so wishes.

Again we would remind hon. members that we are going to try and stick to the custom of having only one member standing and talking at the same time. If we can kind of keep that in mind, we're ready for the second inning.

The hon. Minister of Family and Social Services.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Good evening. I'd like to start off by introducing the three staff members I have in the gallery: Don Fleming, Duncan Campbell, and Frank Wilson, the three members in our department that do a lot of the work in relation to the budget. Without their hard work I don't believe a lot of what we've accomplished in the last years would have been achieved. So I'd like to thank them on behalf of our Assembly here tonight.

First, let me thank the members of the Liberal opposition for their many questions and comments that they raised a week ago Monday night. Some of the suggestions will be reviewed by department staff to determine their potential for implementation. A number of the questions, especially from Edmonton-Highlands-Beverly, were quite detailed and require further investigation by department staff. Any question I do not answer tonight will be answered . . .

Chairman's Ruling Decorum

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Minister, I'm sorry. You're being drowned out. I'm not inviting you to shout louder; I'm just inviting others to shout less loudly and perhaps whisper. We can't hear you. [interjections]

MR. CARDINAL: I can move, if you like.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. minister, for offering to move, but unfortunately or fortunately parliamentary tradition requires that in order to speak you stand in your place. What I would suggest to those who wish to engage in lively conversation is don't be inhibited by us; just get out to the other reaches so we can't hear you, and then we can hear the hon. Minister of Family and Social Services.

Debate Continued

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much. I'd just like to indicate again that a number of the questions, especially from Edmonton-Highlands-Beverly, were quite detailed and require

further investigation by departmental staff, and any questions I do not address tonight will be answered in writing at a later date, if that's acceptable. There are also a number of questions that were not related to the '95-96 budget estimates, and no doubt some of those may come up again, but I don't intend to answer any questions that are not part of the budget estimates. I only intend to address issues in relation to the budget estimates.

As I mentioned, a number of the questions we'll be answering were raised by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Beverly. The first one is the reduced ADM children's services budget, reference 1.0.4, which represents the overhead component of the children's services program, and as was suggested is a reflection of operation streamlining in this particular area.

In the freedom of information area plans are for 10 people to be employed initially until we see what the demands are in this particular area. The type of information and timing will be in accordance with the guidelines provided within the Act.

As I mentioned before in this House, the program 2 savings of \$107 million in '94-95 were primarily a result of the caseload average being lower than budgeted. We had expected a monthly average caseload of 68,100, but with the help of our employment training initiatives and in co-operation with Advanced Education and Career Development and other departments, the average will be in the range of 54,500 rather than 68,100. The expected caseload composition and other demographics for the supplement to earnings and employment and training support elements are as follows. Supplement to earnings: the '95-96 monthly projection is 13,400 cases, which means we will assist almost 30,500 people each month. The average duration on assistance for 52 percent of the clients is less than three months, for a further 20 percent up to six months, and the remaining 20 percent require this supplementary support for longer than six months. The average top-up is \$644 a month. Using January data, there were 6,600 single parents of which 2,500 received child care support. The other element, employment and training support: the current caseload is 21,100, of which 7,600 are single parents.

As I mentioned in my opening remarks, the department is not planning to lay off any staff, even though the supports for independence caseload has dropped considerably. Instead we are redeploying this staff to other areas of the department, such as high-needs areas such as child welfare, fraud investigation, day care subsidy, error detection, and some staff, of course, may have to be reduced in the future.

In answer to the question on rate adequacy, members should know that the department is always reviewing our benefits. For example, as I stated before, we have responded to needs by increasing the amount provided for school fees, and the employment expense benefit allowances have doubled in the past year. We are always open for other positive suggestions as to how we may make adjustments when we see people falling through the cracks in some particular areas.

In the child welfare area, specifically the intake and investigations element, reference 3.2.2, the \$358,000 budget reduction over this year's forecast results from full-year savings of the 5 percent staff salary reductions, which was implemented in September of the current fiscal year.

I want to also clarify the \$50 million that is being spent on a child welfare program, the early intervention initiative, as a result of the commissioner's report. As I indicated in my initial remarks on Monday, \$10 million has been added to the community-based family support services as a first installment on this particular initiative. A further \$10 million will be added the next year,

bringing the total base budget to \$20 million. When you add the \$10 million to be spent in '95-96, the \$20 million to be spent in '96-97, and \$20 million in '97-98, you have a total of \$50 million, which will be spent over the next three years in that particular transitional period. We will have further announcements about the application of these funds in the next number of months and years.

8:10

You also wanted to know about the success of the in-home family support program. This two-year pilot project operating in the northeast region is being reviewed by an independent evaluation team, and I expect their report early this fall.

Questions that were raised in the adoptions area will be answered when we publicly announce the changes and the availability of the new search system, which should be early in the fiscal year.

Questions were asked regarding the agencies contracted to provide community-based family support. This is similar to questions that were put on Motions for Returns concerning all services contracted by the department. The motion for a return will be addressed later; however, I can say that in this particular element, community-based family support, 3.2.6, we have about 60 agencies. We spent over \$7 million contracting these family support services.

The term "cost-control objectives" in the services to persons with disabilities section of the business plan refers to efforts to ensure that needed services are provided in the most cost-efficient manner. The department is working in partnership with guardians, families, and community agencies towards this objective. Clearly, cost control refers to the streamlining of the system, not reducing benefits in this particular area.

Another business plan question around the performance measure was on the acceptable percentage for the number of children who get face-to-face contact with a social worker as required. Currently one face-to-face contact is required every three months. I plan to increase this to once a month for children who have been in placement for less than one year; however, the exact number of visits depends upon the nature of the child's problems.

The Member for Redwater asked about the budget provided for Indian land claims. The budget of \$2.6 million has been provided in anticipation of settlement of land claims that are currently being negotiated between Indian bands and the federal government. Responsibility for land claims rests with the federal government. The province provides land transfers and some dollars under the national revenue transfer agreement.

Also to the Member for Redwater, I wanted to clarify the statutory expenditure of \$30 million that is paid as a result of the Metis Settlements Accord Implementation Act. The \$25 million capital operations and maintenance assistance payment is for the ongoing operation of the eight Metis settlements. The \$5 million future development assistance payment is set aside in the bank account each year for the settlements to draw on in the year 2007. At that time the fund should total \$35 million plus earned interest. The Metis transition commission, which has a budget of \$5.3 million and is found on page 177, was established to help the settlements achieve self-sufficiency, and that area is also going very well.

The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar asked what we would do if our projected caseload reductions are not achieved in future years. This is a hypothetical question I am not prepared to answer; however, the supports for independence caseload has dropped from 94,000 cases in March 1993, or around 180,000 individuals, to about 52,000, so there is a considerable drop there.

With the continued emphasis on employment initiatives and our training partnership with Advanced Education and Career Development, we are confident our caseload targets will be met.

Before I sit down, I want to comment on performance measures that are outlined in the department's business plan. A number of members made reference to these measures in their comments. As you know, this government will be publishing these performance measures so that the public can see if we can and are able to take another successful step in relation to how our government performs and how we achieve those particular objectives. The program outcomes, program outputs, and efficiency measures identified in the plan represent the department's initial thinking in these areas. As usual, I would be more than happy if the Liberals would fax me their helpful suggestions that we can incorporate into our business plans. As we gain experience with these measures, you can expect us to revise and refine them so they become an even more important part of our fiscal year plan.

I will now sit down and look forward to listening to more comments on the budget estimates. I may try and answer as many as I can tonight. The ones that I can't, we will do in writing, especially the ones that are detailed. I also would like to mention to the opposition that any of the recommendations you make, even if we do not answer you in writing, we will consider a lot of those recommendations as we review our programs in the future.

Thank you very much.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Beverly.

MS HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the minister for his opening comments last time in telling us that he would be answering the questions either in writing or verbally. I appreciate the answers you gave us last week at the end of the session as well as what you've given us tonight. Also, I would like you to thank your staff on our behalf, because, as you commented, they were going to have a lot of work to come up with the answers. I have just a few more questions, and then after tonight there will be people who didn't have an opportunity to speak last week.

I wanted to ask a couple more questions on program 2.2.4, employment and training support. These are about caseloads. I wonder if you could tell me what the current caseloads for this category are in each of the different regions. Also, how many new files are opened every month and closed so that we have some kind of idea of the turnover on a monthly basis? In line with that too: the average duration for a family on welfare.

I did have a couple of questions on transitional support, 2.2.5. That's where there is an increase of \$14 million over last year's forecast but a decrease of \$14 million when you compare it with last year's gross estimate of \$146 million. This, as you know, is the category of people who are temporarily unable to work: health problems, family responsibilities, caring for an infant or a disabled family member. I wonder if you could tell us how many clients come into this category and the average duration of that. Is the increase in this category because of an anticipated increase in caseloads in the area or is it for some other reason? Also, I would like to know how many children receive assistance in this category.

Then my last questions would be a little bit about the office of the commissioner, since it's a new office. I would like to ask about the appointments to the regional authorities, administered by the commissioner's office. Would you consider making the

appointment process more public so that the public knows that the people are qualified and that there isn't any concern in that area? As well – and this is a question I have asked before – can you assure us that the government will retain full legal liability and responsibility for child welfare after the three-year period is up? This is a concern of a lot of people, and I'm hoping that that is your intention.

8:20

The last question I have is in regard to urban natives. You have indicated the process for land-based native people, but I have recently spoken to a number of native people, both Metis and at one time reserve-based or status natives, who are concerned that the special needs of their children will not be taken into account under the present process, where they would be part of the larger picture.

I thank you very much, Mr. Minister.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to start off by indicating to the minister that I have a keen interest in the work of his department, because I expect that my constituents represent – of the 20 Calgary constituencies there probably aren't more that generate a larger volume of work for this minister's department.

I want to start off on a positive note by telling the minister how impressed I am with the people he has in the Alberta Place office of the Department of Family and Social Services. I'd like to say that for the most part, Mr. Minister, my constituency administrator and assistant get excellent co-operation from your department in downtown Calgary. We deal with a very high-needs population. Many of these people feel that they've exhausted what appear to be the regular programs and services available to them. I'm encouraged that we've been able to work with people in that department to find and fashion creative solutions that sometimes don't always fit neatly into the categories of your program. So I appreciate that, and I appreciate the work done by people in Calgary, in particular in the Alberta Place office.

Mr. Minister, I want to go from that and tell you also that I'm somewhat disappointed. I have a very large aboriginal population in my constituency, and I've had the chance, along with the Member for Calgary-*Cross*, to attend at least a couple of meetings of the aboriginal advisory group in the city of Calgary. When I'm advised that they don't wish me to attend a meeting with you because they understand that if I'm there, you refuse to be, I'm concerned about that, Mr. Minister. You've not struck me as being one of the most partisan people in the House, and I think it's important we recognize that I'm there to do a job for my constituents, as are you. I'm hopeful that this isn't a suggestion that is going to be unnecessarily politicized. I'm interested in finding solutions for the significant number of aboriginal Canadians living in downtown Calgary. They have some particular needs, and I'm interested in finding ways that those constituents of mine can access services. I have no hesitation in meeting with you, Mr. Minister, and I'm hopeful that the information I got was erroneous and that you're prepared to meet with the aboriginal working group, whether their MLA is there or not.

Mr. Minister, I also wanted to thank you for a matter that I'd raised and that you dealt with. I want to say this publicly because we've exchanged correspondence on it. I'm referring to the situation that I drew to your concern on January 23 where we had a blind income maintenance client and a welfare fraud investigator had made a home visit without any advance notification, and this

caused some distress to a blind client. I wanted to acknowledge the fact that by your letter of February 7 you said that you were going to deal with that particular problem, so I appreciate the quick response to that point as well.

I want to put to you some specific concerns I hear about from constituents. One of them has to do with somebody who's receiving maintenance enforcement and also happens to be a client of yours. I have a very high concentration of single parents in Calgary-*Buffalo*, and I wanted to ask you if you have considered – and if you haven't considered, will you consider – the prospect that low-income constituents who are relying on maintenance enforcement often don't get their maintenance support through the director of MEP until midmonth or sometimes the end of the month. I'm wondering if social services would consider providing these individuals with the amount they're entitled to on supports for independence and then recover the amount directly from maintenance enforcement. This would mean some extra administrative work for your department, but it would be an enormous assistance to low-income single-parent constituents of mine who otherwise end up in this jam. If they can't pay their rent, landlords in downtown Calgary will charge sometimes \$3, sometimes \$5 a day as a penalty for every day the rent isn't paid. Well, that's money that could better be spent on one or two or three children living with a single parent. It seems to me, Mr. Minister, that this is a suggestion that may have some merit, and I'd like you to explore it and advise me whether you'd be prepared to deal with that.

Another concern that's arisen in my constituency that I'd like you to look at presents itself with a couple on supports for independence living in a common-law relationship in my constituency. The file with your department is under the husband's name. The couple was cut off social assistance for failing to participate in the job club. They were told that they could be reinstated if they found employment and needed wages to be topped up. In fact, the woman found part-time employment as a waitress, then went to social services to have the wages topped up but was told that this wasn't possible because the supports for independence file was under the husband's name and only if the husband found work could the wages be topped up.

When my office made inquiries of your office, we were advised that social services had some concerns about the husband's willingness to find work. They left these people with this advice, which I find disturbing: social services would only assist the wife if she moved out and took up a separate residence. Well, Mr. Minister, maybe this is an isolated case, but it seems to me that if we're all interested in economizing on the taxpayer's dollar and making sure that resources are husbanded as effectively as we can, this is the kind of problem that there has to be some way of dealing with, Mr. Minister, and I'd invite your comments and advice on that.

Mr. Minister, I know there's an item 3.4.5, prevention of family violence, and that puts me in mind of a wonderful initiative in my constituency at the Kerby Centre. It's called the Synergy 2 project, and this is an elder abuse program. I was in mind of it with a debate earlier today. What's happened there is the Kerby Centre, which services approximately half of all the seniors in the city of Calgary, has come up with a program, and they've learned a lot from it. There are a lot of very valuable recommendations for ways of protecting particularly the elderly. I know that you don't have primary responsibility for seniors, but it seems to me that this is somewhere that you might be able to provide some leadership within your cabinet, in terms of looking at the Synergy 2 program run by the Kerby Centre.

They've made a bunch of recommendations to me, which I've communicated to the Member for Highwood, who is looking at sponsoring a private member's Bill. I'd like you to speak with that member, Mr. Minister, and see if there's a role that your department can play. It may be just leadership that you provide in collaboration with the minister responsible for seniors, the Minister of Community Development, but I'd like you to look into that and address that, Mr. Minister.

Another concern that's come to my attention – and this is a very recent directive; I think it's only about two weeks old – is cases where you have handicapped parents. These would be mentally challenged parents looking after children who formerly would have a caregiver come into their home and assist those parents in looking after those children. I think, Mr. Minister, that you know the kind of scenario I'm discussing.

8:30

About two weeks ago your department sent notices out that from now on, instead of the department paying, the caregiver, I call him, the person going into the house to help the mentally challenged parents, it would now be the responsibility of the parents, the clients, to do the paperwork in terms of pay and to do the payroll deduction, the income tax deduction, Canada pension, and that sort of thing, to do all of that processing. What's been brought to my attention is that many of these parents already have enormous difficulty in terms that they've never been a small businessperson before, and now your department is asking them to be a small businessman. If you've never dealt with Revenue Canada and their myriad forms and regulations, I think this is very intimidating for these people. What I'm advised is that the net result of this saving – and you may save some dollars by not having to administer it – is that some of these parents aren't going to be able to go through the paperwork, pay this caregiver who's coming in to assist them. The result of it: people are going to get out of the business of acting as caregivers. If that happens, we've got a real loss to the children in these families where the parents are having a struggle anyway just coping with what they have to do to manage their family. So, Mr. Minister, I guess I'm asking you to reconsider that policy. I'd like you to tell me how much you expect your department will save by being able to pass off that paperwork to those parents and not doing it as you had formerly done and how you're monitoring the situation so that we determine that these parents are not put in an impossible position, with the net result that the children are not going to have the benefit of this outside assistance coming in. I think it's a problem, Mr. Minister, and I wanted to alert you right away while this change is in its infancy.

Moving on, Mr. Minister, I've often heard you in the House talk about how much you're spending in the area of Family and Social Services. I understand those numbers, but I've also heard you talk about shedding people from the welfare rolls, from the social assistance rolls. I look around my constituency, and I see the increased demand on Connection Housing, on the food bank, on the Booth Centre, run by the Salvation Army in downtown Calgary, the Mustard Seed, the Exit program that is focused on teenaged prostitutes and runaway kids. I look at St. Mary's church hall every Sunday evening, when they offer a free meal to people, and I see the lineup getting longer and longer and longer every Sunday.

Mr. Minister, tell me what your department does to track the increased demand, the increased caseload on those private agencies that are trying to provide food and shelter and counseling and in some cases job finding assistance to people who are in

some cases homeless and in other cases people who simply aren't able to survive without accessing those kinds of services. I'm assuming that you must do something, certainly in Calgary, in terms of tracking. What's happening there? I'd like you to tell me how you track those sorts of things, how you monitor what's going on there so that you know that when people are being shed from your supports for independence list, they haven't all moved to B.C.; many of them have just moved into the streets and the parks of Calgary-Buffalo. So that's a concern.

I understand that you've already been asked in terms of 1.0.9. This is the freedom of information area. I have a particular interest in this element. I heard you say a moment ago in response to something asked last week that there would be some 10 people employed working on freedom of information in terms of start-up, but you've budgeted \$600,000. I see the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services is there, and he's probably interested in this too. Can you tell me how much money is spent on outside contractors in addition to the 10 people you plan on employing? How many people do you plan on having on a permanent basis after your directory for freedom of information is completed? When do you anticipate you will have your portion of the FOI directory completed?

You have a specific responsibility in terms of aboriginal concerns, native affairs, in this province, and I want to ask you why it is that we still have no aboriginal justice commission in Alberta. How many years has it been since we had the Cawsey report telling us that there should be an aboriginal justice commission? Then I think in the year after that there was a further document prepared, which I tabled in the House I think in the fall of 1992 or the spring of 1993. It was a working document that talked about maybe two commissions. Here we are, Mr. Minister, a number of years after the recommendation was made and still no aboriginal justice commission. Why is that?

I accept that some of this may be things that have to be done through the Department of Justice. It seems to me that that minister is responsible for a broad range of programs, as are you, but I think that the need for moving forward in terms of aboriginal justice issues is so compelling that it can't wait longer. I know there have been some positive steps taken by legal aid and by the RCMP and by certainly the major police forces in Edmonton and Calgary to implement things that are in their area, but there are a number of things that are provincial government responsibility. I'd like an update in terms of when we're going to see an aboriginal justice commission or two commissions. If there's not to be one, would you outline the reasons why that's been determined?

Mr. Minister, we've had exchanges in the past dealing with the baby boy M case and dealing with the whole business of the baby pipeline from California and so on. We've seen now at least some movement to address parts of that, but I'd like to ask you whether your department is making recommendations to your colleague the Minister of Justice to amend the Domestic Relations Act to change the presumption in terms of guardianship for children born out of wedlock, to use the anachronistic expression. I'd like to hear from you whether you have other specific plans to deal with the problems that were highlighted by Mr. Justice Mason of the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta in the baby boy M case. I take it from an earlier response on the adoptions that there's further work under way and you're going to be advising us in reasonable course about that as well.

The other particular concern I had was 3.4.4, mediation and court services. Mr. Minister, I want to tell you that I'm disappointed we haven't followed the lead of Saskatchewan, which has

said that there is an enormous potential to be able to use mediation as an alternative to the court system. I'd like a commitment from you, Mr. Minister, that you will look at the report done in the province of Saskatchewan, to really promote mediation as a government, to promote mediation in a very aggressive fashion. I'd like to have you look at the report and tell me which of those programs can be implemented in this province.

8:40

Those are my key concerns. The other one, just in terms of prevention of family violence. I'm disappointed to see a reduction in that program. It may be a modest reduction, but every time I see the Member for Calgary-Cross I'm reminded that the Mayor's Task Force on Community and Family Violence came out with a very long list of things that were within the responsibility of your department to move in the area of family violence. So far we seem to be moving at a glacial pace in implementing those recommendations. I'd like to ask you this: would you undertake to file with the Legislature a list of those recommendations you plan on moving on?

Thank you, Mr. Minister.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In speaking to the Family and Social Services budget, I'd like to speak for a moment to the Alberta disadvantage. This budget slashing that we see here in this department ignores women's differential position in the labour market and their disproportionate dependence on the government programs and services in this government department and their reliance on the welfare state. The reductions in this minister's budget really are not gender neutral, and I hope that the minister will address this the next time he gets up to speak to this issue. Because of women's tenuous economic position and their reliance on the welfare state in this province the Alberta approach as this minister has implemented it is especially harmful to them.

We speak to the welfare toll for a minute. This minister's budget cuts have reduced social services and seniors' benefits and restricted eligibility for them. These measures have devastated elderly women and single mothers on welfare. The Alberta Family and Social Services department has reduced its budget by slashing monthly welfare rates. On October 1, 1993, the rate for a single adult supporting one child was decreased to \$766 per month, a reduction of 9 percent. Are those the same figures that we're going to see in this year's budget, Mr. Minister? According to the *Edmonton Journal* this is the lowest rate in the country for support. In comparison, Ontario provides a single parent with one child \$1,221 in social assistance per month. As well, stricter eligibility requirements along with other factors cut an estimated 36,566 recipients of family benefits from the Alberta welfare caseload between March 1993 and September 1994. Are we looking at similar reductions for this year, Mr. Minister?

The provincial government saved \$200 million in welfare benefits in '93-94 and expects to save an additional \$160 million in '94-95. That's correct? Yes, the minister concurs with that figure. Given that 42 percent of welfare cases are single parents and that women head 82 percent of single-parent families, it's clear, then, that a large chunk of these savings has come from single women trying to support their children. I wonder if the minister would address why he has particularly singled out this group.

[Mr. Herard in the Chair]

According to the Alberta Association of Social Workers families are hit on all sides by the cuts. They can no longer pay rent and buy food. Children are embarrassed in school at lunchtime because of inadequate or nonexistent food, inadequate clothing, and the inability to participate in fee-for-service school activities. This is a direct reaction to the cuts that we've seen from this minister's department. Therefore, the deepening poverty of Alberta's unemployed poor is shown by the dramatic rise in the numbers of people served by food banks. Mr. Minister, I hope you'll address this significant and severe situation. Edmonton's food banks report a steady increase in the numbers of clients served in 1993 and predict that the number will continue to climb as the cuts continue.

The minister for science and technology earlier this year explained to all of us here in the Legislature that 90 percent of women still enjoy being at home raising a family. I wonder if the Minister of Family and Social Services' inquiries would concur with that and if that's his reason for cutting the rolls. Or is it in fact the case that women on social assistance can't find jobs or are not properly trained for them? She stated, "They do want to go back to the home and promote the family unit." Indeed, we see here that some members of the government

imply, or state outright, that if women were doing their "rightful" jobs as mothers, children would be properly taken care of and the government would be rid of a significant regulatory and financial burden.

Now, how does the minister apply this in terms of single parents? We have a good example of this minister's actions in the 1993 case of the six-year-old girl who was raped by her babysitter.

Alberta Family and Social Services at first refused to pay for counselling for the child. [This] minister blamed the child's mother for the problem, asserting that she should have chosen her babysitter more carefully. On the other hand, [this] government refuses to support women in . . .

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, hon. member. I'm having trouble hearing, first of all, and secondly, I'm having real trouble trying to relate these to the estimates. So if you could maybe stick more to the estimates, it would be appreciated. Thank you.

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for that clarification, but in fact they do relate to the estimates. They tie in to how this minister is administering this year's budget, and I'm wondering if he's made any changes in this year's budget which accommodate specific situations like this. The minister did say in this particular situation that they would refuse to support women in these situations. Is this going to be the same criterion for women getting counseling or women facing family breakups in the coming year? That ties directly into his estimates and directly into the dollars that we're talking about here. It's program 2.2.4 for his specific reference, if he wants to refer back to that when he talks about training support.

We as Liberals have suggested for a long time that there be a tightening up of the maintenance enforcement program, which this minister and his colleagues have soundly rejected because this government supports nuclear families, not single moms. Now, maintenance enforcement properly enforced would drastically reduce the number of dollars that this minister has to put into programming in social assistance support, but for some reason he seems to ignore that when it comes to budget cuts.

Most of the previous comments came directly out of a draft paper entitled Road Kill: Women in Alberta's Drive Towards

Deficit Elimination by Gurston Dacks, Joyce Green, and Linda Trimble, Department of Political Science, University of Alberta. Most of these comments were based on an independent review of this minister's department, and they concur with what we have been saying on the Liberal side of this House for a number of years.

Now, put forward to this minister some time ago – in fact, it would have been back in July of 1994 – were some recommendations to this government. We did not see these issues addressed then, and I'm wondering specifically if the minister has addressed them in this budget year. These are recommendations brought forward by the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues. They stated:

Whereas:

Training and education are the keys to better jobs and resulting economic independence.

Whereas:

Current training and education programs may reinforce systemic discrimination and the ghettoization of women's work.

Whereas:

[There is] currently review of the Career and Life Management Program.

The Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues recommends that:

And these again tie into the budget, Mr. Chairman, because we're wanting to see if these recommendations are implemented in this year's budget, and if so, where. I could not specifically identify them in the votes.

So they recommended that

the Government of Alberta identify the number and type of jobs and job-creation programs,

which is directly under this minister's review,

and the number of women employed as a result of these programs.

Ensure that training dollars for women are directed to programs that will provide marketable skills for long-term employment and that will help to assure sustainable economic dependence.

The Government of Alberta implement combined high-school upgrading/apprenticeship programs to meet the need for in-demand trades, and that women be encouraged to participate in these programs.

Ensure clear sexual harassment policies and procedures in such programs are in place and are enforced.

Ensure that the Career and Life Management Program includes education on practical financial issues and be representative of women's lives and economic realities.

Now, I have to state from concerns that have been raised in my constituency that this is a particular concern. The life skills training that this minister's department currently provides for social assistance recipients who are clearly wanting to re-enter the workforce is inadequate and impractical and does not in fact prepare them for a job that is not a dead-end job, for one that will be productive and will raise their family above the poverty levels.

8:50

Two more recommendations.

The regulations of the Students Finance Board be reviewed and revised to ensure single parents' access to schooling that will lead to long-term employment that pays sufficient income to assure sustainable economic independence.

Now, this needs to be done in conjunction with the minister of advanced education, and there is a definite overlap here in terms of this minister's department when we're talking about social services parents. And "ensure education and training programs being accessed by single parents," particularly low-income parents or parents who are on social assistance, "reflect policies of

flexibility," which is something that this department has not addressed, "such as part-time attendance and alternative delivery modes, to allow for dependent care responsibilities." It'd be very nice if the minister could provide us a progress report with regard to these recommendations in this budget year. Have they been started, have they been thought about, and at what stage are they?

Another recommendation.

Whereas:

In economics, consumers and persons aren't counted – households are, which results in the masking of women's personal poverty. The "household" and the thinking behind it serve as a background to theories of income distribution, taxation, welfare, and economic development. Formulation of government policy is currently based . . . on measures of household income and therefore does not adequately represent the economic status of women as individuals

with regard to this minister's department and the budget line.

So the government of Alberta is recommended to

formulate a policy on women's economic and individual conditions.

and

The Government of Alberta formally request the government of Canada to include women's unpaid work in the calculation of the Gross Domestic Product.

and

The Government of Alberta formally request the Government of Canada to begin the process of determining policy based on women's individual economic conditions.

I know these situations have been brought to the minister's attention before, and I'm sure that he has them incorporated somewhere in this budget year.

We have to remember that

the language of economics is unfamiliar to many women and further marginalizes their literate participation in understanding and working to develop policies that may have a positive outcome in their lives,

which directly ties into this minister's life skills training. So it was recommended that

The Government of Alberta work in partnership with its relevant agencies and financial institutions to develop written and video educational materials in plain language to improve women's economic literacy.

and

Government economic policy be written in plain language.

Again, as we mentioned before, this should be a part of the life skills training provided to women who are within the mandate of this minister's department. How these issues are addressed in this budget year under review is of extreme interest to me and to many women who are in this department.

You know, the fact that women and their work at home aren't counted has been brought to the attention of the United Nations System of National Accounts, and they now have a system in place which is used globally to measure and record the economic activity of a country, which includes measuring the economic output of households. So I'm wondering if the minister has taken any of this under consideration in this budget year or has even put aside some of his budget dollars to think this through and formulate an Alberta policy. If we are to have an Alberta advantage in this province, then this is something that we really need to talk about. We need to talk in this province about our gross domestic product and the gross national product, which are used to monitor rates and patterns of growth and to set priorities in policy-making. If you're forward thinking, Mr. Minister, these would be concepts that you would be using to measure the success of policies in this province and to measure the economic welfare

within the mandate of your department. Since the bulk of women's work is left out of the GDP, it's a large step towards leaving them out of policy considerations altogether if you don't consider this when you're talking about your social assistance programs.

A current example here which would apply directly to the minister – and he doesn't think this is relevant or important to him, but I assure you, Mr. Minister, it is – is the welfare mom who doesn't work and the provincial debt here in this province. We need to compare it. If that woman's work were counted, we would see that our provincial GDP would increase by 25 to 30 percent. It would change dramatically the output of the current debt position. Perhaps this is something that you would want to review in conjunction with the Provincial Treasurer. I would like to know if you're addressing this at all, and is there a co-operative approach between you and the Provincial Treasurer in this matter?

As I earlier said, most of these particular comments came from the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues, and it's my understanding that they have not received any reply to these recommendations that they made at this point in time. Now, it's nearly a year since this paper was put out, *The Economic Situation of Women over 55, Present and Projected*. If the minister has lost his copy and has therefore not incorporated it into the budget, then I'd be happy to share my copy with him.

You know, the objective of this government should be to improve and develop a sustainable support system, but in fact this is not what we've seen. What we need is reform that reflects what is really right for Albertans, but what we have seen here are changes in the social security system and in the training programs, which do not adequately lead to jobs which are full-time and which are of a nature to produce an income which will raise families out of the poverty level. What this means, then, is that many families and individuals are not able to participate in the economy of this province in any meaningful way.

I'm wondering if the minister would explain how it is that he has forgotten this very critical part of his restructuring. When we have great unemployment or lower paying jobs, families face poverty, and some of them face very abject poverty. To say that there are people living on the streets and people eating out of garbage cans and increased lines at the food banks is not fear mongering, Mr. Minister; it's a reality of this province. It's not just a reality in Edmonton; it's a reality in all the other cities in this province and in many, many rural areas. I think that the minister in his budget predictions and reductions has chosen to ignore this. It's really too bad of him and too bad of his government to have done this. Clearly family poverty and child poverty are inextricably linked here, and the minister needs to keep that in mind.

Passive programs, which is what we see within this department, allow the family to survive, but reintegration into the workforce is fraught with barriers and disincentives in this province. The programs outlined in your budget in this upcoming year are very passive programs. I wonder if the minister would be prepared to address that. Many of the families who are affected by these programs are headed by women whose situations are further complicated by the lower wages that they achieve, and for the most part, even in equal jobs, women are paid 80 percent less than their male counterparts. That has a significant impact on families and particularly on single parent families.

The lack of quality child care. We see time and time again concerns raised in the constituency, which are then brought forward to this Legislature, about the lack of child care for women in this minister's programs. To date you've done nothing

to address the problem of child care while women are trying to look for jobs. When they're in job re-entry programs, they can't get adequate child care at this point. So how does the minister ever expect them to evolve out of this cycle of poverty and into proper kinds of jobs? Also, this minister doesn't address the loss of benefits for families while they're re-entering the labour market or that time lag between the point when their social security ends and their first paycheque arrives. Many times there are significant problems getting the differential in terms of benefits even considered by the social programming that he's got, never mind making it an adequate cost and lifestyle for these people to achieve.

The lack of access to real training opportunities, which is part of this minister's mandate in terms of job re-entry, and really the kind of training programs that the greatest majority of social assistance recipients are in lead only to low-wage jobs, to part-time jobs, and to dead-end jobs. To date this minister has not addressed this. We need to know what he's doing in this upcoming budget year. To change your training programs for highly skilled and highly trained jobs is of significant concern not only to the people directly affected by this, to the children and to the families, but to all of us who end up subsidizing those families because they can't get an adequate job. The social cost of subsidizing those families in the long-term future – when they're not provided for in terms of proper training and proper education and proper nutrition, none of their needs are met. So really the need for a highly skilled and trained workforce demands that we invest in the development of the Alberta potential, and that means our children. In this province primarily that means children who are living under the poverty level. I want to know what this minister has done in this budget year to address this.

We all know that the investment we make now in work and learning and security are the basis on which Albertans can compete in a global marketplace. So I'm sure the minister will be happy to address these issues.

9:00

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I start my comments, I just want to assure you, because of the valued guidance you've given me in the past, that all my remarks will be directly related to the estimates. In fact, I could pinpoint specifically the program numbers. I'm not going to speak very long because there are just a few points I want to make.

Program 2.2.8, where there's \$11.7 million more for personal supports to allow persons with disabilities to remain in their homes or move into their own homes rather than institutional care. The minister touched on that when he was responding to the last evening of estimates. This is one that, you know, is very, very important to me, that I can identify with, having gone through that situation 30 years ago, leaving the Glenrose hospital. At that time a paraplegic like myself, which I don't consider that severe in terms of a disability, would be shuffled off to the Good Sam nursing home or the Good Sam auxiliary hospital. It was unheard of to kind of go back into the community. Thirty years later, of course, attitudes have changed. Somebody like myself is now shuffled through the rehab process in about three months, and they're anxious to get you back in the community and make you a productive member of society, which is good.

Then you have the other extreme, which becomes more difficult. That's somebody with a much more severe disability

than myself, like Danielle Larson that we spoke of the other day here in the House, where the minister was kind enough to arrange a meeting for next Wednesday. But this is exactly the type of program that 2.2.8 can address; in other words, providing the resources so a person with a disability can reach that ultimate dream of getting back into the community and being a productive member of society. So 2.2.8 becomes very, very important, and the additional budgeting in that program I think is a tremendous move.

Now, as we shift from institutional living to community living, without the resources in the community it can be very, very difficult. This refers specifically to the budgeting dealing with the Michener Centre. I toured the Michener Centre not too long ago. I know there are some in the community who feel that should be closed down – just shut down, period – and that those persons presently living in there should be placed in the community. The unfortunate part is that the resources are not in the community yet to accommodate all those persons in Michener Centre, some of them with very, very severe disabilities. So there has to be that balance, Mr. Chairman. That balance becomes very, very important.

I know the Association for Community Living stresses the importance of community living, and I concur with community living. They also express, Mr. Minister – and I'm sure they've met with you as well – the concern that we've raised in transferring the services to persons with disabilities over to the health boards, in terms of being responsible for the monitoring and such. I would like to know, as time goes on, as to how that is progressing, as to whether it does look like it's going to become a reality, and just to feel comforted that sufficient consultation has taken place.

Two other areas I just want to touch on. One is AISH, the assured income for the severely handicapped. Again we see an increase in budgeting here in that particular program, which is good. At first there was some alarm that AISH was going to really get the hit, but it didn't get the hit, Mr. Chairman. I'm glad it didn't get the hit, because there are many persons out there with disabilities who aren't capable of working that are deemed unemployable at this particular time, so they rely on AISH and AISH becomes essential to them. There have been some that have been reinstated after it's been pointed out that it has been clearly demonstrated that their disability did qualify them. So those people that have fallen in between the cracks we're slowly getting out of the cracks and getting them back into the programs they should be in.

Now the last area, and I've asked the minister this point before, but it's a very, very important point. It's a concern that comes to me from constituents on a fairly regular basis. For persons on social assistance that are retrained, that are provided funding to become re-educated, to increase their educational skills, their levels of education, once they complete that, there is a fear. Is there a place for them in the workforce? Or are they simply going to be transferred from Students Finance, whatever the case may be, back to a social services program or a social assistance program?

So just to wrap up now, those are my comments, which gear on the personal supports increase, which is good; the need for some caution in terms of the transfer from institutional to community living, like the Michener Centre; thirdly, the transfer of programming for persons with disabilities to the regional health boards; fourthly, the AISH; and then fifthly, the need to feel comforted that there are opportunities for persons after they spend a great deal of time getting re-educated or increasing their skills.

On that note I'm going to conclude, because there are others in our caucus that want to speak.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MS LEBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, rise to speak to the estimates for the department of social services this evening, and I have some specific questions and some general observations. With regards to the program areas of 3.2.2 and 3.3.1, which deal with intake and investigations in child welfare as well as the office of the commissioner, I have a number of questions, given that we're looking in a sense at almost privatizing child welfare within this province.

What I'd like to say is that one of the things I have done as a career is to be a social worker with children and families in communities, so I feel that I speak from some area of expertise when I talk about child welfare and I talk in particular about children who have been abused in situations. I look with trepidation at what the department is aiming to do with regards to the pushing out of the responsibility and pushing out of the accountability with regards to child welfare. Some of the Members of this Legislative Assembly have indicated that they became involved in politics because they felt the fiscal regime in this province was so poor that they couldn't stand it anymore. Well, one of the reasons I became involved in politics was that I felt the child welfare in this province was so deplorable that I could not stand it anymore, and my fear is that we're moving in that direction again.

So I have a number of questions. One is: will the department consult with its frontline workers, and when will this happen? That's not something that I understand has happened in an open manner. What is this government's plan to transfer or retrain the 1,500 current government employees into these community-based agencies? What is the liability if appropriate standards are not met by the community-based agencies? Is the liability on the employees? Does the liability rest with the community-based agencies, or does the liability rest with the government?

9:10

What safeguards will be put in place to ensure that professional standards of care and treatment are adhered to by employees who are not members of a professional organization? I've heard the Minister of Health say: don't worry if we de-skill the health care professions; don't worry if we move out of monitoring, because the professions will be self-monitoring. Where the inconsistency comes into play is that we are not looking at professional bodies monitoring anymore. We are looking at individuals who are not members of professional bodies performing work that was formerly done by professionals who adhere to a professional code of ethics, and that's a huge, huge problem in terms of self-monitoring. Who will do the self-monitoring? Will the government ensure that agencies can afford – this is extremely important – to hire qualified staff? Will the dollars be made available?

What contingencies have been made for those 1,500 employees who may not all be absorbed within these community-based agencies with regards to workforce adjustment programs? Again, we've seen programs within the health care sector. We have not seen a similar kind of initiative within the social services sector. When will the department of social services – and the minister may not like this – release the gag order on its employees so that they're freer to discuss their concerns with the report without fear of layoff and without fear of retribution?

Some suggestions in terms of maintaining the quality of child welfare services. One thing that the minister may wish to look at is that a process of accreditation be approved or be developed

which outlines worker complement, requirements, course standards, complaint procedures, and responsibilities of the employer, the community agencies, and the employee. This is not something that's foreign to the health care profession. There are accreditation standards currently within the social services sector as well that can be adapted so that we ensure that children within this province receive the care they're entitled to. There's also another aspect in terms of the review of individuals – and this I know is a tricky area – who may be unqualified or untrained who are providing services and whether there's a spot for the professions and occupations review committee to look at that particular aspect.

I have a couple of questions that have come up in terms of my own constituency that I think relate directly to some items. One is vote 2.2.7, when we talk about employment initiatives. I have a question whether the quota system with regards to AISH is still in place. I'd also like to know whether there has been any tracking to see what happens in terms of the cycle that I think we're beginning to see in the community. The cycle that I'm talking about is when an individual, be they on welfare or be they on AISH, is moved into some kind of a training program, some kind of employment initiative. That training program, the pilot project or whatever it is, which is a three- or six-month project, runs out. That individual then has difficulty finding a job, and is placed on UIC. Once UIC runs out – and that's not for very long, nor are there very many dollars that an individual has to live on – that individual is then back on the welfare rolls. Until we see a tracking of how many full-time jobs individuals actually achieve as a result of their training, the kinds of training and dollars that are allocated, and whether there is actually a cost benefit at the end of that training period, until we see those kinds of statistics coming through, I think it's going to be very difficult for the minister to say that his program is a success. That has to be an integral part of the welfare reforms that the minister likes to refer to.

An issue with regards to single mothers and day care that has been brought up in question period, an issue that again relates directly to vote 2.2.7 and program 3.4.2 with regards to day care programs. The question there, very specifically – and unfortunately I don't have the statistics with me, but single mothers, as the minister is well aware, have the highest poverty level and have one of the highest unemployment levels as well. This is just another roadblock that is put into their path in terms of obtaining employment, if day care is not available for these single mothers. I know that the minister likes to indicate that there are many dollars placed into our social services system. He's very fond of telling us of the millions of dollars spent on social services, but the fact, for myself at any rate, is: dollars are fine, but people are quite another matter. You can't place a value on a person who has lost their job, who has now been unable to find employment. The only way that individual and his or her family can survive is to go to a food bank. That is not something that is measurable in the millions of dollars that the minister provides with social services, and that is something that distinctly has to be looked at: the loss of dignity and respect. When we see the increases with regard to the food banks that we are seeing over the last couple of years, it is hard for me to understand how the minister can say that his social welfare reforms are an unqualified success. That I do not believe is the case. If it were, then the food banks would be put out of business, which I believe they should be. The food banks were a temporary measure put into place and have now become an institution within our society, and I believe that is wrong.

Again, we look at some other specific questions. With regards to prevention of family violence, of course it's a huge concern that there's been a cut of \$2.6 million over last year's net

forecast. This is program 3.4.5. There was a very interesting breakfast that I attended this morning with representatives from WIN House. The government's Whip was in attendance at that particular function. One of the suggestions they had put on the table was to look at the legal system as an avenue for ensuring that the victims of family violence do not remain victimized but in fact that the true perpetrators of family violence are the ones evicted from the homes. This is, I think, an issue that the minister needs to look at in more detail and perhaps in terms of a pilot project or an education project can look at instituting some kind of reforms within the legal system in conjunction with the Minister of Justice.

I had an occasion to visit with some members from the Alberta Association for Community Living, as I believe other Members of the Legislative Assembly have as well. One of their major concerns is with regards to the budget, their budget allocations, and whether their program will remain under social services. I've also had a call from a constituent of mine who has also indicated that this is a program that most rightly belongs with social services as opposed to health care, that these are not disabled individuals who are being taken care of within their family unit and are not a health care problem. It's not a health care issue. It is an issue that belongs with social services. They have requested, as I'm sure they have with other government members, that the minister indicate to them that this will not occur, that there will not be a movement from social services to the Health program.

I have just a couple more issues, as my time is running short. Again with regards to employment initiatives, I have a question as to whether the companies currently contracted with the department – whether it's possible for the minister to table a list of those companies, the amount of the contract, a description of the services, and the success rate. What I am especially interested in is the success rate of each program. One of the features to determine success is: how many clients have been enrolled in the program, have found full-time work for more than a three- or a six-month period? I think that's extremely . . . [interjection] It's under program 2.2.7.

9:20

A question with regards to the new urban job corps program as well. A concern that I have with training just for training's sake is that there is no potential positive outcome as a result of the training. So once again we start the cycle: welfare, job for a short period of time, UIC, welfare. When an individual is part of a skills training program, I would hope there is some kind of forecasting that has occurred within the department to say that these are positions that will be required in the future. The other part of that is that these are positions that will be above the minimum wage rate because, in reality, if you are receiving minimum wage, even if you are working a 40-hour workweek the chances are that you are still below the poverty level; you cannot make ends meet. That is a concern perhaps that I would request, that the minister of social services ask the Minister of Labour with regards to ensuring that the annual review of the minimum wage is provided.

I do have a couple of other questions with regards to adoptions, how that particular area is proceeding. I would just like to leave the minister with a couple of words of caution. These are two sayings that we hear every once in a while. One is that the minister can be penny-wise and pound-foolish in terms of how the cuts are occurring. The other is with regards to child welfare. There was a statement made, I believe in the Budget '95: Building a Strong Foundation, that if there are not enough dollars within that particular program, it would be taken from other areas. My

concern there is that we're robbing Peter to pay Paul and that, in effect, I would be very concerned about more dollars being taken out of the other areas.

Thank you very much.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll confine myself – well, maybe I guess two estimates. I'd best maybe go to the supplementary estimates that the hon. member has, general revenue fund, page 25, Family and Social Services. I was intrigued. When you look on page 25 of the supplementary estimates of the general revenue fund, we have income support to individuals of about \$931 million. That's nearly a billion dollars. That's a lot of money. The social support to individuals and families of \$421 million. So it's about \$1.3 billion, \$1.4 billion.

Mr. Minister, somebody came up to me the other day, so I started playing with a pencil. If you're a single parent and have a couple of children and you're working on minimum wage, you have to be topped up by social services. That's right. That's the way it should be. That's a cost out of the taxpayers' pocket. I couldn't help but think – I was just wondering whether your department had done any studies; I'd be interested. If they had, they would file it. What would happen if we raised the minimum wage \$1 an hour? Now, that should realize more income to the people being subsidized on welfare, because most of them are on minimum wage. Right now really what's boiling down is the taxpayer is subsidizing many of our corporations, some of them the largest ones.

I don't know if McDonald's pays minimum wage, but many in the food industry anyhow, many of the larger ones get by with the minimum wage. Because we have to top it up and because quite often there are women employed or single parents in that type of work, we the taxpayer – and this is something that might be quite a saving – are paying what industry should be paying. Now, industry of course will tell you: well, if we raise minimum wage a dollar an hour, we'll be noncompetitive. That's not true, because nine out of 10 industries that pay the minimum wage are domestic, and the only people they compete with is the person down the block. So if everybody's hamburger goes up 25 cents, they're in no worse competitive position after the new, higher minimum wage is in than they would be with the old minimum wage. Their competitive position stays the same.

Now, if it's an export industry and it's depending on a minimum wage in order to penetrate markets around the world, I don't think we want that type of industry. If we have to have some sort of a sweatshop paying minimum wages in order to penetrate a market outside Canada, I don't think it should exist. So I think the minister may have an opportunity here – especially with all the right-wingers you have in the cabinet there – to talk about raising the minimum wage and saving on the welfare rolls. We're putting in a big subsidy there that is really only out of the taxpayers' money. It's a shift in a subsidy from the taxpayers' pocket over to many corporations who are paying the minimum wage, I don't think necessarily the minimum wage. I just throw that out as a study. I think it would be well worth finding out, because out of a \$1.3 billion bill I have a hunch that if you raised the minimum wage, you would cut yourself out of a fair amount of money.

The second thing is that I noticed the minister, when he started off, mentioned that he was restricting his comments, but on to the programs. So the other program I wanted to touch on would be the Metis settlements accord and the Premier's council. Now, the minister well knows – and I think he and I agree to a certain extent – that you cannot interfere too much with self-government

for our native peoples. They have to find and reach their equilibrium and fight just as we do here in the Legislature. There's no reason that they're going to arrive at democratic self-government with any less pain probably than we do.

However, one thing bothers me a bit, from the way I hear the minister talking and the way these things show up in the estimates, the department total. I don't think it's correct. I think it's demeaning the Metis settlement people to show them in here as payments as if they're a program, because they are not a program. What they are is a court settlement. This is a fine, if you want to call it that. This is an out-of-court settlement for the Metis people for their oil and gas mineral rights. To show it in the books here along with social support and welfare payments I think is demeaning to our Metis people. That money that they're getting is a right; it's not a program of this government.

When the lawsuit was launched some years ago – to refresh the minds of some of the baby-faced people around me. The Metis, when they moved after the Reil rebellion, had every reason to be afraid to register their land titles because of what had happened in the Red River and other areas. So consequently they lived a rather gypsy-like or – I don't know what the right word is; peripatetic is another one, but that gets a little too deep. They moved here and there, and where they did settle, they did not register their land titles, the very reason they were afraid of government. This was around the turn of the century. Everybody else had moved here and got land and got their oil and gas rights. So by the time the Metis and nonnative governments were speaking to each other, it was too late to get mineral title, the Metis rightfully sued, launched a lawsuit and said, after the oil and gas came in, "We have rights to a lot of this oil and gas around here, because we were here before the title registered."

Now, the government settled out of court in the lawsuit. I'm not going to argue whether the settlement was too high or too low. If I were on the Metis side, I'd have gone after you. It would have been twice as tough on you Tories if I was in there as a Metis. I think you got off easy. But to turn around and put it in the books here as a program I think is insulting, because it is a payment for a lawsuit that we settled with them.

Now, that leads to the next question. What bothers me a certain amount – and I'd like the minister to answer me on this – is: are we netting our Metis people quite often telling them, "Well, you've got this court payment, so therefore you could pay some of your school, some of your hospital, some of your social service"? I have a feeling that they're not getting a square deal. I have a feeling that we are rooking them a bit, in effect taking some moneys from a court payment that we are required by law to pay them, not a grant, and telling them that they can use some of that money to pay for services like roads, schools, all the rest of the things that every citizen gets because they are a citizen of Alberta.

9:30

That rolls me into the next question. If our native people are working to self-government – and I hope they do and I support it. I think that's one thing the minister and I could agree on. However, I'm not so sure I can agree with him on the native accord – they signed it, I'll admit, but I don't think they should have – where the minister has a right to have the tribunal or he can order an investigation with his own auditors to come in as if they were operating under a grant. I think what we should be doing there is offering them the services of the Auditor General, just as the Auditor General performs a service for our nonnative society, which we can follow or not follow. In other words, the Auditor General is not a binding type, I think, as the Treasurer so

well knows. The Auditor General might be a bit of a burr under his saddle, but if he can suck in his stomach . . .

MR. DINNING: It's not like he was the receiver for Lochiel.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Well, don't forget that I had an auditor I had to follow.

When the Auditor General makes a comment here, the government can ignore it, at their own peril of course but it can be ignored. I think the same thing should happen with the minister here. I think we should. I think it would be a great deal if the minister, because he's in government, took the lead and said to our native peoples: "We are going to set up a department of the Auditor General that you can call on. It's yours to use, if you want. We're not going to use our authority as we have in the accord and send in an auditor." They can borrow him or her, whatever it is, borrow it. What do you call an Auditor General? "It" I guess might be a better word, de-sex this thing in any way, shape, or form. It can go ahead and make a report to be followed or not followed.

That, Mr. Chairman, is my complete substance for the evening. Thank you.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Hon. members, prior to hearing from the minister, could we have unanimous consent to revert to the Introduction of Guests, please?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

MR. DINNING: Mr. Chairman, we are joined this evening by family members of one of our pages. Marika Warren's family is here, her father, her mother, and her sister: Doug, Mary, and Michelle Warren. They've come to see their daughter in action in the Assembly. We should pass a few extra notes to get her running off her feet. I can tell Mr. and Mrs. Warren and their family that we're privileged to have Marika here working with us in our Assembly. I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome from all members of the Assembly.

head: **Main Estimates 1995-96**

Family and Social Services (*continued*)

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Family and Social Services.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'd just like to take a moment in closing to thank the members of the opposition for their interest in the department, in some of the policies that we have, and in programs we need to provide for people in need. There were a lot of good recommendations tonight, and we will definitely look at those recommendations. I know the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Beverly had a lot of recommendations. The Member for Calgary-Buffalo had a lot of good recommendations, some specific ones in Calgary. Also, the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie had a lot of recommendations; the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford in relation to persons with disabilities. Edmonton-Meadowlark also had a lot of good questions and good recommendations. Member for Redwater, if I were to answer all the questions you had tonight, it would no doubt take me until 2 o'clock in the morning or so.

What I intend to do, because they are very sensitive and complicated and very important to us, is answer all the questions in writing within a very short while. I would also encourage you to continue contacting my department officials and myself if you have any good recommendations that you'd like to see maybe implemented and also if you have concerns, if you see areas where we are not serving people as well as we would like to serve, keeping in mind what our departmental policies and government policies are in relation to getting away from a passive welfare system and getting into an active employment and training system, moving people off welfare into employment and self-sufficiency and independence. Within that policy I would like at any time to receive recommendations, sit down over coffee, and if you have ideas you want to discuss, I'm open to doing that. It is a very high-needs area and, I think, needs everybody in this House to participate in designing a good program for the future for those people that are in need.

At this time, Mr. Chairman, I would like to call the question on the estimates of Family and Social Services.

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Agreed to: | |
| Operating Expenditure | \$1,342,167,000 |
| Capital Investment | \$1,033,000 |

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Chairman, I move at this time that the vote be reported.

[Motion carried]

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee now rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1996, for the department and purposes indicated. The Department of Family and Social Services: \$1,342,167,000, operating expenditure, and \$1,033,000, capital investment.

9:40

THE ACTING SPEAKER: All in favour of the report?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed, if any? Carried.
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House now adjourn until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Yes.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader has made a very popular motion.

[At 9:42 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]

