

Title: **Thursday, May 1, 1997**

Date: 97/05/01

3:31 p.m.

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

Subcom.B: Community Development

Subcommittee B – Community Development

Tannas, Don, Chairman
 Laing, Mrs. Bonnie, Deputy Chairman
 Barrett, Pam
 Blakeman, Laurie
 Bonner, Bill
 Calahasen, Hon. Pearl
 Cao, Wayne C.N.

Doerksen, Victor P.
 Forsyth, Heather
 Fritz, Mrs. Yvonne
 Graham, Marlene
 Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC
 Havelock, Hon. Jon, QC
 Jonson, Hon. Halvar C.

Kryczka, Karen
 Leibovici, Karen
 McClellan, Hon. Shirley
 Melchin, Mr. Greg
 Olsen, Sue
 Tarchuk, Janis

THE CHAIRMAN: If the hon. members are ready, I'd like to call the subcommittee to order. We have before us the estimates of the Department of Community Development, and to begin this afternoon's deliberations, I'd call on the hon. Minister of Community Development.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can you all hear me? If you have a problem, will you just sort of interrupt me and let me know.

It is a pleasure for me to appear before the committee to debate the estimates of the Department of Community Development. I want to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Assembly, both from government and the opposition, for the constructive criticism and advice that they have offered to me as minister over the period of time that I've been minister and in this session. I hope that members will continue to provide that input or to ask questions when they have questions, not just necessarily during estimates, regarding seniors' programs, AADAC services, community funding, human rights, women's issues, all of the various areas that fall within my portfolio.

This is the first time that I've had the opportunity to appear before the committee with estimates, although I've been minister of this department for almost a year. Certainly this is a positive time, I believe, for us. Our budget lays out a sound fiscal plan and an exciting vision for Alberta's future, and the estimates of my department certainly mirror that budget.

I'd like to just briefly go over the three themes of Community Development's estimates and business plan. They are fiscal responsibility and accountability, a commitment to support and help sustain strong communities in our province, and a responsiveness to Albertans' priorities for their communities. I want to just take a couple of minutes to talk about how Budget '97 addresses those areas.

In the area of fiscal responsibility and accountability, like all ministries, Community Development has embraced change and innovation. We do things differently now than we did four years ago. For example, we've almost completed an administrative integration of our four lottery foundations into the department. This move alone frees up up to \$1.5 million that can go directly back to our communities for community programs by the way of grants. It also allows for greater accountability of those foundations. I want to remind members, though, that this does not indeed mean that these foundations have lost their arm's-length autonomy from our department. To the contrary. Each foundation continues to operate with its own board and policies, but it does permit them to stay in close two-way contact with the communities they serve, while at the same time reporting in a very clear and direct way to all Albertans through this ministry.

Another area of innovation has certainly been in changes to multiculturalism. Although we no longer have a separate commission, we've maintained a very important role. In fact, the human rights, citizenship, and multiculturalism education fund, a very important information vehicle, has already demonstrated its value since it was created last July.

Overall we continue to strive to keep administration at a minimum. I'm proud to report to you that the administrative costs associated with the delivery of the seniors' income support programs continues to be held at under 2.2 percent of the total cost of those programs. I can assure all members that we will continue to strive to keep the administrative costs of those programs at a minimum so that the greater amount of dollars goes to serve seniors. Certainly that program has undergone a great deal of growth and change since it was created, and the administrative efficiencies achieved there are a credit to the people who work in it, as well as the people in the seniors' community who have given us good advice as to how to simplify and streamline that program.

The commitment to strong communities. Our budget '97-98 reflects stability. I think that is important to our communities. The lottery funding to our four granting foundations as well as the human rights education fund remains unchanged from 1996-97 levels. Our business plan calls for those levels to be maintained until the year 2000. Art groups, volunteer organizations, amateur sports clubs, and others who rely on foundation grants to offset their costs will see in this budget and business plan that our commitment to those vital community-based programs remains strong and stable.

I must say, hon. members, that I, with a few other members, was able to attend today a mayor's luncheon in the city with the arts community and, importantly, the business community for their awards presentation. My understanding is that there were maybe as many as 2,000 people in that room. I think that shows a tremendous commitment to the industry, and there should be, because the arts and culture communities in this province contribute about \$2 billion – that's billion with a B – to this province's economy each and every year. I think that's very significant.

Sometimes we're asked if we should be funding the arts at all. My answer is yes. I would suggest that sound economic reason that I just gave in the figure of \$2 billion and the 80,000 persons who are employed in that industry, full-time and part-time, suggests that this is an important industry to our province as well as an important addition to the quality of life for the people who live in this province. Certainly by supporting that community, people from the smallest rural community to our largest urban areas can grow themselves, as their communities can, when these activities occur. I want to emphasize that there is a very strong community volunteer component to the success of these programs, and we should pay tribute to them.

I want to take just one moment to speak about the importance of our youth and the programs that we can provide or support,

programs that the communities provide for our youth. Focusing on youth is certainly an important part of our ministry, whether it's AADAC programs that are targeted to the young people or whether it's summer arts schools. We provide an array of community-based activities or support for those activities across our province.

I want to give you just a couple of examples so that we can all get this picture in our mind. Music Camrose: a summer music workshop that brings young people from across Alberta to Camrose every year. ArtsTrek – I'm sure most of you have heard about that – is a provincial summer theatre program for teens. Word Play Too is a unique summer writing experience for youths 11 to 18. Leaders in action: a very successful leadership and training program for young people. The future leaders program is a summer program for aboriginal youth to help them develop leadership skills that they can apply in their home communities. Another one is Make Contact, a series of weekend workshops that are for youth at risk and are led by other youth. These are just a few of the programs that receive funding from our ministry mainly through lottery dollars but can be from our department or through reporting agencies. What impresses me the most about these programs is that they're organized by the community. They are managed by the community themselves. Therefore they respond to community needs, not perceived needs that we might have sitting somewhat isolated from the community. It certainly allows our community leaders to take ownership of those programs.

3:41

Another area that is important in this ministry – and all of you know, if you've gone through the estimates book, how diverse this ministry is – is the commitment to preserving and protecting our unique cultural and natural heritage. Heritage preservation provides significant scientific, economic, and educational benefits, but most importantly, it helps Albertans build stronger communities. We have developed a number of innovative partnerships with communities in this area. For example, in each of the last two fiscal years we have assisted 450 community-based heritage preservation projects. Our new business plan calls for this to be sustained. I think all Albertans are proud and certainly should be proud of the world-class network of historic sites, museums, and cultural facilities and the ways that communities are directly involved in their management. I think each and every one of our members in this room would have one of those sites in their area. Certainly the communities being involved in their management makes sure that that sense of pride and commitment will continue. I know that all of us are very proud of the sites we have and support our communities in maintaining them.

The other area is listening to Albertans and their priorities. One of those areas that is most important in our ministry is the area of seniors, and I know that we had a lot of debate, good debate, on the supplementary estimates last week. A lot of those areas have been covered, but I do want to just emphasize the importance of seniors' involvement in assessing our programs, making sure that we continue to focus on seniors in need, making sure as much as we can that no senior falls through the cracks. I think, thanks to all of the input that I've received both from members of the Assembly and from seniors' groups and the Seniors Advisory Council, we've been able to make improvements to our seniors' programs. There are only four other provinces in Canada, as I suggested the other night, that have anywhere near the highest in cash benefits and the most generous in income thresholds for eligibility, and I'd be happy to pass that information on to any of the members.

The special-needs assistance program is one that we discussed somewhat the other night in estimates. It is unique in Canada and certainly has proved to be an effective program to meet seniors' emergent needs. We've been able to provide grants to over 3,000 lower income seniors, the average grant being about \$2,100. Of course, members will remember that the threshold has been increased to \$5,000 per year per senior. Seeing this program work is probably one of the most satisfying things that I have seen in the growth of seniors' programs. I can tell you I've received dozens of letters from seniors from around the constituencies who have benefited from the program. I most appreciate the time that seniors have taken to write to me to explain how the program helped them or in some cases how we might improve that program or the application process to strengthen it even further. As many seniors have told me, designing a program is not just about money. It's about being available, lending an ear, helping out with courtesy and kindness and clear information. Certainly our people in our department who work with seniors strive to have that kindness and compassion and listening ear.

I want to acknowledge again the work of the interagency council, which is a collection of many seniors groups, in helping to improve these programs. I think it has become responsive and certainly more accessible to those who need it. We've committed almost \$180 million in seniors' benefits, and special-needs assistance will go to \$5 million, which is \$4 million higher than it was originally in Budget '96. As you know, we made our first change in that program in June of last year, so the increase actually occurred. Our preliminary, or third quarter, estimates would suggest that we've spent over 5 and a half million dollars in that program.

I think the important thing is that we need to continue to monitor that program. I certainly need input from my colleagues as to how we can improve it and make sure that we remain responsive to seniors' needs and respond quickly to them. The seniors in this province deserve nothing less than a reliable, first-rate set of programs, and we are working hard to make sure that we can deliver those programs.

Another area I'll just touch on quickly is the area of addictions and treatment. One of the areas where you will see an increase in spending is in the area of problem gambling, and certainly that was committed to when we first put money aside for that area. Through AADAC we said that this was the amount we needed initially, and if experience showed that more moneys were needed, we would respond. We have in this budget. It's a 23 percent increase in those dollars. I know that AADAC will use this funding to provide a range of programs in probably more communities than they could before. Our three-year business plan calls for an increase of 48 percent over the next three years.

I want to make one point on this sensitive issue. AADAC continues to conduct a great deal of research into problem gambling; however, my understanding is that all the research shows that only a very small number of Albertans develop a problem with gambling, fewer than 5 percent. That means that for 95 percent of Albertans, at least, gambling is a recreational activity that leads to no serious problems. But for those for whom gambling does become a problem, we want to ensure that the support and assistance is there. That's why we'll continue to make sure that AADAC is properly funded to meet that demand.

Mr. Chairman, I will continue to be responsive to communities through this ministry and with the assistance of my colleagues in the Legislature. I believe Budget '97 gives us that ability.

I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your indulgence in allowing me to touch briefly on some of what I felt were highlights in this department and in these estimates. I think we can

look forward to some good questions. I would like to take those now, but before I do, I would like to mention to you that the Member for Calgary-Cross, the chairman of the multicultural, citizenship, and education fund, is present in the room and would be prepared to assist in answering questions if you desire. The Member for Calgary-Currie, the chairman for AADAC, is also with us. Where is she?

MRS. BURGNER: Right here.

MRS. McCLELLAN: There she is. She's hiding. She also would be prepared to assist with answering questions.

I regret that the chairman of the Seniors Advisory Council is not able to be with us, but I will try to fill in on her behalf.

So with that, Mr. Chairman, thank you, and I look forward to questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. I'd call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

3:51

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much, and thank you, Madam Minister, for your remarks. I must say that you have been viewed by the community as a fair advocate, although as part of my process in this I have consulted with a number of the groups, and they do hope that you listen as I bring forward their questions and concerns. I do appreciate that the government still does fund many of these sectors that are represented under this department. And so it should, is my belief. But as critic I will take my role seriously to push the envelope. Having said that, we will roll.

One of the concerns that I have as I look over the estimates that are prepared is how little information is given. Yes, this is a multisector department, but in most cases we're looking at a five-line budget that breaks down into no more than seven sublines at any point. When I look at the public accounts that are available for past years, there's a very good breakdown and a lot of information that's available. I think many of my questions could be answered if there were more detail given in the budget. I know there is usually a reaction about killing trees that comes, but I think information available to the members of the Legislature and to the public is very important. As we move more and more to technology, we won't have to worry about the trees; it'll all be on the Internet. I would like to see more detail.

A major concern that's been expressed to me is that there have been moneys cut from all of the areas that are under community and citizenship, \$3 million and some odd, and that's including arts and libraries, community services field offices, citizenship services, which I think used to be the Multicultural Commission, women's issues, sports and recreation, volunteer services, and also a cut to cultural facilities and historical resources. I'm assuming that some of this money has been transferred in support of services for seniors and to AADAC, but I think the community expected that it would be new money put in in support of the seniors, as they felt they'd been cut too much, and there is certainly concern that the rest of these areas are giving up money and being cut for this. So that's the first thing that's been said to me.

My questions fall into four categories: privatization, women's programs, the absorption of the administration of the lottery foundations, and more concerns from the community.

The business plan reveals that the Jubilee auditoria will be operated with the assistance of volunteer community-based advisory boards and friends-of organizations and that these changes are in response to community input, so I'm asking if the

minister could indicate what consultation process was held to receive this community input: how many consultations were held and where and an indication of which groups and individuals took part in the consultation.

Past budgets have shown revenue received from the Jubilees. I think for a reference it's on page 90. There is no revenue appearing in this year's budget. Could you explain why? The expense budget for the Jubilees has been cut from \$1.2 million to almost \$600,000. That's appearing on page 79 if you're looking for references. Why has that amount of money been cut? Is there an expectation that the friends-of groups will have to fund-raise in order to keep the facilities owned by the government operational?

Obviously, there are concerns if management is being turned over to friends-of groups. The example of CKUA is high in everybody's mind. There's great concern about what's considered a down-load upon the community.

Now, there was mention in the throne speech that some historical resources would be privatized, but I can't find which. So, number one, why does the government feel the need to divest itself of these cultural and historical resources? Which sites are being considered and why? What structures, procedures, and safeguards are being put into place, again to ensure that we don't get a repeat of the unfortunate circumstances around CKUA?

Recently groups who have offices in the Percy Page Centre were encouraged by government representatives, I understand, to form a co-op and look into taking over the management of the Percy Page Centre, which has caused a great deal of alarm from these organizations. They are all nonprofit, as you know, and many of them are now running programs that used to be handled by the government. Is it the intention of the government to privatize this centre and others like it, and will the government increase the grants to these organizations accordingly to compensate for the additional administration costs?

Okay. What happened to the Multicultural Commission? I was asked that question, but I couldn't really answer it. What happened to the programs for women? The word "woman" doesn't appear anywhere in this budget at all. They've disappeared off the face of the earth evidently.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Hardly.

MS BLAKEMAN: Well, yes. So where are the programs, and what's happening? With women still earning less than men, women still receiving less opportunities through economic development programs, still abused in their homes and on the streets, treated unequally in almost every sector – I could go on and on – I don't think we can say that women have achieved equality in Alberta. Where is the government's commitment to women? Specifically, what programs are being offered, and what amounts of money are being spent on programs for Alberta women? What programs still exist for multicultural interests and enhancement, and how much is actually allocated?

On to lottery foundations. At this point, I will put my long-standing concern on record here regarding funding such critical areas as arts and culture, historical resources, sports, recreation, parks, wildlife, and volunteer support. All funding for these areas has for some time come completely from lottery dollars, and the government has no commitment on record or in writing anywhere to back any of these organizations should something happen to the lottery dollars. So all these groups exist in a state of ongoing uncertainty and fear, and none of them want to be in the position of praying for more gambling in order to continue their existence, but they do find themselves in that position. I doubt that the government would be considering changing its position on

gambling and lotteries; nonetheless, I do want to put out that there is no government commitment. Point made.

Now, community groups receiving funding through these different lottery foundations have been told that the lottery licence previously granted for three-year periods may now only be given for a one-year period, and there's a great deal of concern about this. Can you explain how this process works: whether areas are guaranteed a percentage of lottery money, exactly who decides to grant this licence, and whether it will be granted for another three-year term? Seeing as most of the funding for these groups is coming through those lottery foundations, the question of this licence is paramount. Given that three-year business plans are now required or encouraged from all of these agencies, is it reasonable to expect that they can plan ahead without knowing whether their funding shall continue and with no idea of the level of funding they may receive? That's always been a problem.

Great concern was expressed to me during my consultations with the organizations funded through lottery foundations about the consolidation of foundation administration. You had a slightly different name for it: administrative integration. I'm afraid they disagree with you, because they have great questions about why, when other provincial and federal governments are moving towards a more arms'-s-length funding and administration model, this government seems to be drawing the agencies in closer. This move is supposed to save money – and certainly you do show that in there – but the community believes it's at their cost.

A few examples. The staff levels have decreased steadily in the past couple of years, so newcomers or emerging agencies or even new staff to established agencies can no longer find the resources and expertise in the staff that were available in the past to others; in other words, they feel that service and accessibility is definitely down. They were extremely distressed by the way the consolidation was handled. Foundation offices literally moved overnight. People showed up at office buildings to talk to their consultant, and it was gone and they didn't really know where. You're shaking your head, so you probably did some sort of announcement, but I'm telling you that the community was not very well aware of this. They were very distressed, and they continue to be distressed at this. They feel that the communication with the staff and resources available through these foundations have been deliberately moved away from them and made more inaccessible to them. So the department has removed the mechanisms by which the community was able to have face-to-face dialogue with the people who make decisions which affect them.

In the recent past grants were funded from foundations and administered by the foundation staff. Community Development staff were available for resource and administered and managed a number of programs. The organizations want to know where the money is going now. How does the amalgamation of foundations affect the administration and the way they access? It's part of the same point.

4:01

There is a particular concern that the cheques are now being issued by government staff using foundation funds. They expect those foundation funds to be used for grants, not for administrative charges back to the department. Is this an indication that we can expect the department may now levy administrative charges to the foundations for processing the foundation grants, thereby using up more of the money slated for the organizations? A number of people spoke to me about that one.

The other great concern is the downloading of programs without sufficient money to maintain them. A few examples – you've named one of them already – are: ArtsTrek, drama lab, the

Alberta culture library. In each case a PASO, provincial arts service organization, took over the program but was only given the line-item funds to run the program. The money did not include the money that had been paid for department of culture staff who managed, administered, and had the expertise for the programs. No increase has been given to these groups to cope with inflation or increased costs. In fact, many groups have taken a 20 per cent cut in the last three years. Does the minister expect this trend to continue? What assistance can be offered to these groups who have shouldered the responsibility for government programs?

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, if you want, I'll go to the next one and come back and give you whatever time you have remaining.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. I'll call on Edmonton-Highlands.

MRS. McCLELLAN: I was going to take a few of those questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh. Sorry about that, Madam Minister.

MRS. McCLELLAN: I thought it might help with the next questioners. Then after this one we'll just go through the rest of them. The hon. member did cover a great number of areas that might be of interest to some of the other hon. members.

I'm going to start with the consolidation of the lottery foundation administration. I would like to have obviously some more information from the hon. member at her convenience as to groups that are concerned or feel they are being impacted, because the point is obviously being missed. The administration side, such as cutting cheques, doing the financial statements, is really the only part that is being amalgamated. Really what happens is that rather than less money, the communities have up to \$1.5 million – it could be higher – more for community projects. The boards are still in place. The program staff are still in place. The boards will be making the decisions as they are and have been since this occurred. They are still recommending the grants to the communities. None of that has changed. Where you saw a decrease in staff, it was actually quite minimal, because most of the foundations had reduced their staff.

I would also remind the hon. member – she may not be aware of this – that the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and the Alberta historical foundation have been integrated with the department for a long time, and they have operated very well. They continue to do their grants, and their administrative costs were down around 2 and 3 per cent. How could I as minister suggest that we should be paying 7 and a half or 5 and a half per cent in administration for other foundations and having those dollars not going to the communities?

Now, I have not had a concern about staff resources being available. I have not had concerns raised that they might not be, will they be. Particularly in the area of games, there will be no change in staffing until after the summer games are all concluded. There is a review occurring with the staff as we go through the summer to ensure that we do maintain the appropriate amount of staff. We've had extensive discussions with the seniors' games people in particular to ensure that they are provided the staffing that they need, because their needs are somewhat unique in some areas.

In fact, the human resource plan for the amalgamation of the

four foundations was not carried out by the department. It was carried out by the chairman of the four foundations with my colleague from Lacombe-Stettler, at my request, chairing that group to ensure that they in fact developed the human resource plans for those foundations. So I'm not sure how much of it is a concern of what might happen or what is actually happening now, but I can tell you that in my office – and I usually am quite quick to hear from people – it's more a fear of will this happen.

This did not happen overnight. The move did, but if you've moved from an apartment to a house, you don't usually do it over six or seven months; you usually try and do it within a day. The move did, but the plans for the move were in place for quite some time: weeks, months. There was involvement of the staff. The directors of those individual groups, who still are in place, still are directors, came over, looked over the space, made sure that the space was adequate to them. The renovation that occurred was all with their direction.

So I'm having a little bit of concern, and maybe you and I can have a chat about particular groups that you might be hearing from. It certainly shouldn't be the arts groups. They've been in the same configuration for some time. Clive Padfield is the executive director of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and has been a department staff member as well. They of course have been very efficient administratively, which allows dollars in excess of \$16 million – I think it's in fact \$17 million for them – to stay intact, to go to the community rather than to administration.

The 20 percent that everybody faced three and a half years ago: everybody took a reduction. The area that wasn't reduced in government was libraries. Now, we haven't talked about libraries. Libraries will tell you that they've had a reduction, and I don't disagree with them, because they're in 1991 or '92 dollars. So in fact while their funding didn't go down initially, they've struggled with growth. But we're working through that.

I believe that the consolidation of the other two foundations – the Wild Rose Foundation and the Alberta Sports, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation – can work and will work, because the boards are working with us to make it work. I know that the hon. member would far rather have those 1 and a half million dollars going back to her community in program grants rather than unnecessary staffing costs.

The Jubilees. I'm very glad that you raised that. Yes, we have advisory boards, and we have friends of the Jubilees. I'm immensely proud of the people from Edmonton and the people from Calgary and their areas who came forward to be involved either on the advisory boards or on the friends organizations. I think it speaks to the value of those two auditoria to this province. They are indeed the only venues that we have to host certain events. There are no other auditoria that have the size.

Revenue. When you look at the revenue, the reason the revenue doesn't show up anymore is because we're not getting it anymore. The revenue came into the general revenue fund. The revenue that they receive now from their operations will go to the operations, and indeed hopefully they'll be able to make improvements.

4:11

There was a decision to look at privatization of the Jubilee auditoria. There was a lot of discussion over this. I can give you some detail in writing on the process that we went through. But we then asked for proposals. We received, I think if my memory serves me right, five or six – five, somebody's nodding – very good proposals, but not one of the proposals answered all of the questions or all of the concerns that we had with it.

As you know, there are a number of our groups that use our Jubilee auditoria at a reduced rental rate. It's extremely important to those community groups to be able to do that, or they simply couldn't exist. So when we looked at the proposals, we had to look at all of them and say, "Can we continue to operate under one of these proposals and still have that community involvement?" Indeed, the answer came down to no.

So what was the better way? Actually, through the consultation and the information that we got from the proposals, having advisory boards, community boards, and the friends of, which has worked out fantastically well, as you know, in many of our other cultural institutions – the member is looking a little dubious, but I can tell you from experience in my own constituency that the friends of the Tyrrell Museum contribute immensely to the success of that institution. We continue to fund, Public Works continues to be responsible for the Jubilee auditoria. Ultimately, they are our public buildings. So when we talked about privatization in these areas, indeed we decided to go the route of advisory boards.

Accountability? A very good question. Yes, they will be accountable, because any dollars will be accounted through their financial statements and audited and reviewed. There is a process in their terms of reference and in the contracts and agreements that we have with them to ensure that we have that. It's important that we do have that, I agree with you there.

Percy Page building. I'm a bit distressed to hear your comments about that because Percy Page has been the home of many of our community groups, continues to be, and there is no discussion that they shouldn't be. The only discussion – my staff over here might get worried looks on their faces, but my understanding of the whole discussion with them there is that we've been paying for their administrative support, and we're saying: "Why don't we just give you the money and you manage your own staff?" Now, is that a bad thing? I don't think so. I think it's very positive for them. So if there are some concerns in that area that you know, I would certainly like to hear them. It would seem to me for the groups that use Percy Page that it would be advantageous to them for us to give them the money and them hire their own staff. We pay their staff now. We're not planning on reducing that money. We just thought they could do it better.

Multicultural education fund. I'd be happy to have my colleague from Calgary-Cross, who was the chairman of the Multiculturalism Commission as well as now the chairman of the multiculturalism and citizenship education fund, make some comments there.

I'll give you some more information on women's programs. Although we don't have a Women's Secretariat, women's programs continue. Certainly I can tell you that the work that was done by the Women's Secretariat, the reports and the information that we have, is very valuable work for us in continuing to address any of the concerns that may be raised. I'd also mention to you that many programs for women are in other areas as well, such as women's shelters. Programs such as that have not been in my ministry, although we would continue to have an interest and work with my colleagues in those areas.

Some of the questions require more extensive detail, but I wanted to just touch on some of them, and we'll expand either through the rest of the committee or by letter or in a conversation.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. I have a couple of . . .

MRS. McCLELLAN: Oh, I have just one more. I'm sorry.

THE CHAIRMAN: Sure, Madam Minister.

MRS. McCLELLAN: This is a very important one I missed. Privatization of historic sites. We're not privatizing the historic site. What we are doing is allowing the community to operate the taking of admissions, the gift shops, and operate them at the community level. We are still funding them. We have not sold a historic site in my tenure as minister, and I can tell you that there is no intention to dispose of, by sale, a historic site.

Is there an intention to allow communities to operate them? You bet. If you look at a venue like Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, which is a wonderful one, and tell me whether staff from Edmonton or somebody else can direct that resource better than the community there, I tell you that the answer is no. They know their community, they know the site, and they are committed to the success of it. Where we have done that, it has been tremendously successful. I have seen no examples of it not being successful yet. I will watch them very closely and make sure that they continue to do that. It is a contract. So when we talk about privatization, that is what we are talking about with our historic sites.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister, I understand that you wanted the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross to augment you in the remaining five minutes or so.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Yes. If she would like to do it now or whenever she wishes.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Madam Minister. I understood the question to be: whatever happened to the Multiculturalism Commission? What we did do in the last session of the Legislature is that we amalgamated the Multiculturalism Commission with the Human Rights Commission, and we brought forward a consolidated Act called the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act. I know that the hon. member will be reading the Act, and I'm sure that within that Act you'll notice that under the preamble there were two key components that had traditionally been incorporated within the multiculturalism commission Act.

I'm going to read those to you just so you're aware of what they do say, just for further questions.

Whereas multiculturalism describes the diverse racial and cultural composition of Alberta society and its importance is recognized in Alberta as a fundamental principle and a matter of public policy; [and]

Whereas it is recognized in Alberta as a fundamental principle and as a matter of public policy that all Albertans should share in an awareness and appreciation of the diverse racial and cultural composition of society and that the richness of life in Alberta is enhanced by sharing that diversity . . .

What that means and why it's incorporated within that way - I'm just going to wait until you have time to listen.

AN HON. MEMBER: That's okay. She'll read it in *Hansard*.

MRS. FRITZ: No. I'll wait. Well, I'll come back to it, Madam Minister.

MRS. McCLELLAN: No. Go ahead.

MRS. FRITZ: Okay.

So what was retained from the Multiculturalism Commission is within the preamble.

What I would like to add is that there was extensive consultation with Albertans. It was called Multiculturalism: The Next Step. In that consultation Albertans were very clear that they

would like to be self-reliant when it came to this area. Traditionally - and this is from Albertans - we had funded what the community had termed the four Ds in multiculturalism: dance, dialect, diet, and dress. In order to have zero tolerance with racial discrimination what they asked is that we instead fund simply educational programs that relate to this whole area. That is what the multiculturalism area and the human rights area is now doing under the new Act. What we do is look at the educational programs and services that are brought forward to our advisory committee and make recommendations to the minister as to what would be in the best interests of the community.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4:21

THE CHAIRMAN: Just so we know where we're at, the next speaker is Edmonton-Centre, who has seven minutes remaining. However, the speaker thereafter is Edmonton-Highlands, and we have a slight switch for the moment because Edmonton-Highlands has another engagement. So we'll go there and then back to Edmonton-Centre.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Centre, who has very ably represented the arts community in her comments this afternoon. I promise to take less than two minutes, and I'm usually good at delivering on that one.

I only have two questions for the minister, and I might not be able to stay for the response. Number one, I have been told by people who work inside the system that since universality of seniors' programs was eliminated and income testing became the new model, the actual cost of the services to seniors has increased because of the administration costs. I've also been lobbied by seniors who say that they're humiliated by the process with each application. My one question there is: can the minister undertake some kind of external audit which would prove one way or the other whether or not the claim that's being made by the people inside is true?

When it comes to the arts, I think the Member for Edmonton-Centre has done a really good job of representation. My question is this. Hollywood is contracting out now big time. The movies that are making it are movies that are done independently, and I know that British Columbia and Manitoba have established organizations something like our old Alberta Motion Picture Development Corporation. I wonder if she would consider looking into copying those models. We were lucky to get the pilot of *Fargo* here; we were lucky to get an Anthony Hopkins film here. But right now the competition is stiff. Alberta's a beautiful place to film. I think we should go after that.

Thank you to the minister, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Centre.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Chairman, with permission I'll do that, and I'll try to be as succinct as the hon. member was.

Our administration cost for administering the Alberta seniors' benefit program is 2.2 percent of the budget. I think that by any standards that is very good. We're looking continually at ways of reducing that. I would agree that when the program initially began, it was difficult because it's complex. It takes a lot of programs and rolls them into one. But we have been able to reduce it. We've been able to reduce the complexity of the forms.

I don't know if the hon. member was here when I made my comments. I'm working very closely with the interagency council for seniors. I mentioned three names the other night in my

supplementary estimates, and I do that at risk because there are many: Mr. Reimer, Noreen Mahoney from the Kerby Centre. There are others: Dave Conroy from Sherwood Park area, Hazel Wilson, Tony Storcer, Jerry Pitts. There are just a number of them that have been extremely helpful. These are people that are meeting with seniors all of the time. They've made a commitment. We have a number of working groups to sit down with our department people. Ken Wilson, our ADM in that area, and his people are working with them and they're going over the forms. They're looking at them and they're saying: how can we do this better? We've improved our storefront offices. We have staff there, and I can tell you, hon. member, that the letters I get from seniors – and I don't hear from them all – have complimented the staff on their kindness, their compassion, and their caring.

So any way that we can improve that, we will. I don't think there's any advantage to doing an external audit on an administration cost of under 2.2 percent. You and I can discuss that.

The Alberta Motion Picture Development Corporation did a lot of very good work in our province. It is not in my portfolio, was not in my portfolio. Those questions would probably be better directed to Economic Development and Tourism. However, the value of the motion picture industry is important to the arts community in this province. I've had a number of discussions with them. They're worried about their competitiveness. What they would really like us to do is talk to other provinces and ask them to get rid of their subsidies, and then we would all be on a level playing field instead of all of us trying to outsubsidize the other.

We've got a lot of advantages in Alberta. We have no sales tax, which is a huge advantage to them. You've mentioned the beautiful scenery and things that we have here. We don't want to see the expertise that's been developed in this province go to other provinces. There are two ways to get on a level playing field. One is that all of you have no subsidies and go competitive, or the other is that you try to outsubsidize each other. I think the better way is to try to reduce all of them, and we'll be on a level playing field. We're still having discussions with our groups and working with them. They're a fine bunch of people.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you, Madam Minister.

Before I call on Edmonton-Centre for her remaining seven minutes, I would remind everyone of some of the constraints that the subcommittee is under this afternoon. First of all, we started a little bit late. That was because many of you left, and we were still in Committee of Supply, and we had a point of order which needed to be addressed before we could go on with the subcommittees.

Secondly, we have before us, at 5:15, that under Standing Order 61(4), Committee of the Whole must have a vote. Well, in order for us to rise and report, get down and rise and give the report to Committee of Supply and then move into Assembly to give that report, then back into Committee of the Whole, we'll need to be scrambling. So we need to be out of here on or before 5 o'clock. With that constraint in time . . .

MS LEIBOVICI: Excuse me. It won't take us more . . . We need to be downstairs at 5:15. I would think that 5:05 is probably a reasonable time, not before 5 o'clock or at 5 o'clock. It doesn't take 15 minutes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I won't debate it. It's in the hands of the committee. I will be down there before 5:15.

We have now Edmonton-Centre, Red Deer-South, Edmonton-Glengarry, Calgary-Fish Creek, Edmonton-Meadowlark, and

Edmonton-Norwood. So Edmonton-Centre has seven minutes, if you're able to take it now.

MS BLAKEMAN: Yes, I can. Thank you very much.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Could I ask a question? Would the members indicate, when they begin their comments, if they would want written answers or verbal today? Then I'll follow that.

THE CHAIRMAN: That would be helpful, yes.
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

MS BLAKEMAN: Yes. Thank you, Madam Minister. I appreciate that offer. Yes, in writing would be just grand. Thank you very much.

To pick up sort of where I left off, just briefly back to the PASOs that have taken over the organizations.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Could you give me the interpretation for that word?

MS BLAKEMAN: My understanding is that it's a provincial arts service organization, but I believe that there's a similar animal in the other sectors.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Provincial arts service – I'm not much for acronyms. Thanks. Gotcha.

MS BLAKEMAN: Okay. These groups are concerned that they have taken over programs, previously government programs. They were given exactly the budget line item to run and not the administrative money to run it, and there's been no increase. They feel that there should be a bit more support there, or they're going to be in a position where they'll start to fail, and they don't want to be blamed for that.

A quick question about the term for the current chairperson for the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. I understand that term expires in a few months, and I've been asked whether the current chairperson would be reappointed, and if not, what process is in place to ensure that a knowledgeable, nonpartisan person would be appointed with the best interest at heart of the community groups the foundation serves?

Moving on to AADAC. Is there a reduction in FTEs in this department, and is this a prelude to a move to privatization of this agency or to privatization of any part of this agency's program?

Speaking of FTEs, I'm wondering if I could get a breakout of the FTEs in each of the sectors under this department. They've been lumped out in one of the pages here, but I'm still having a hard time figuring out where they came from and where they went, so if I could get a good breakdown.

Thank you for the – I'm sorry I can't remember the name of the area.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Multiculturalism and citizenship education fund.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you. The multiculturalism and citizenship education fund. I'm wondering there if you could supply a breakout of the dollars. How much is now going to each of the areas that have been brought together under your umbrella? I know I've had questions about whether there is actually a reasonable amount of money being put into human rights, education, elimination of racism, and some of those educational programs.

4:31

I have another question. There is one line in the information that says something about children's services. I'd like to know what that is about and what sort of linkage there is happening with children's services that's coming out of Community Development.

The goals and strategies, the performance measures in this department cause me a fair amount of consternation. They are extremely vague, and I would think it very difficult to determine whether or not they have been achieved. I mean, what is "a high quality of life"? What performance measure is the minister using to determine if this goal is achieved?

I've had some feedback about goal 3, reducing discrimination and fostering equality. People are having a hard time believing that, with the consolidation of the human rights, citizenship, and multiculturalism education fund. With the combination of that, it's felt that the government's not taking this goal seriously. We would be interested in how many cases are waiting for the Human Rights Commission to review them. Has the 300-case backlog been eliminated as was promised last year?

Assisting Albertans "in achieving freedom from the abuse of alcohol, other drugs and gambling" is a good goal. It's got a good performance measure in it, but we were wondering if it's possible to include a six-month, one-year, two-year, five-year follow-up in the performance measures of this goal. What's there is good, but we're losing people after that. It's not being followed through on.

The performance measures about a community's self-reliance and voluntarism. Who was being surveyed when the department determined that there was a 97 percent community satisfaction? What questions were asked during their survey?

I'm also interested in how participation by Albertans in cultural and recreational activities was arrived at. Is there any consideration to having the people that are employed in the cultural, artistic, and recreational activities included in this or to have them surveyed as part of this? I'm confused about who it is that's being consulted for these performance measures. The same ones seem to turn up over and over and over again.

The satisfaction of Albertans with human rights protection. I'd just like to make mention that in the January '95 Environics poll that was commissioned by the department, only 25 percent of Albertans felt that human rights were very well protected in Alberta. Who is conducting the survey that's being used for the performance measure? What questions are being asked? Why is there no measurement of the percentage of people who were satisfied after dealing with the Human Rights Commission?

I'm wondering where the 450 community-based heritage preservation projects came from. How was this arrived at as an appropriate number or target? Why not 400? Why not 500? Why the 450?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Because that's how many applied.

MS BLAKEMAN: That's how many applied; okay. More information would be nice.

Why was there a reduction in the number of people that were being expected to attend the historical sites and museums? It seems to drop from 1.2 million last year to 1.1 million.

That would be my time.

MRS. McCLELLAN: I'm only going to break my rule once, because I really appreciate the fact that the hon. member has agreed to written answers. She has some very good questions, and I think we can provide that. But I am more than tempted to answer one question.

There is no intention to privatize AADAC. I mean, rumours

abound in this world. AADAC is world renowned. AADAC staff are requested to travel to many countries to share their expertise. It's a program whose model is copied in many, many countries, and they are doing a very, very good job. The chairman may want to drop you a note and give you some more information or speak, if there's a moment later, on that issue.

Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Next on my list is the hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

MR. DOERKSEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a few comments and a few specific questions for the minister. However you wish to answer them, verbally or in writing or both, is fine by me.

Just coming back to the Sport Council. I know you've addressed that topic at some length. Some of the concerns that have been told to me particularly relate to the work that has been done in the past with partners. A lot of the grants that we give out through the Sport Council have been in conjunction with partners in the community. Some of the concerns expressed to me, with the changes in administration or how it works, are that we're going to lose the contact with those sponsors, and we've worked too hard to gain those to lose that at this point. So that's a concern that's been expressed to me.

Of course, in Red Deer this coming January will be the Alberta Winter Games, and I do appreciate your continued support of that, the assurance that the money and the support will be there to complete that particular project. Also, thank you for your support and work with the Alberta sports hall of fame which eventually, I hope, will be built in our city. Of course, that's an appropriate place, because we're not biased in terms of the rest of the province. If we do ever in fact get it built, right on Highway 2 I think is a very good place with high visibility, a good place to have that.

Those are my comments on the Sport Council.

A couple of specific questions. As I page through the estimates, several things jump out at me. In all of the programs - programs 1, 3 . . .

MRS. McCLELLAN: Could you give me the pages?

MR. DOERKSEN: I'm sorry. Okay. I'm looking at pages 76, 77, 78, 79, and so forth. In every program the line item program support is increasing. I assume these are administrative dollars, and an explanation on why we'd be seeing an increase in program support or administration services in almost every case is a question, I think, that needs to be answered. Likewise on page - should I slow down?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, if you give me the page number and the number of the element, it helps quite a lot. You said page 76?

MR. DOERKSEN: Okay. Well, let's look at program 2, for instance, on page 78.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Page 78. Okay; got it.

MR. DOERKSEN: Okay. We see a '96-97 forecast of \$434,000. The estimate for '97-98 is \$445,000. The same thing on the next page, page 79; in program 3 we're going from \$452,000 to \$497,000. The same thing on the next page, page 80; program support is going from \$539,000 to \$622,000. There may be a good explanation for these, but these are administrative dollars

and that has been the target of our government, to reduce administration.

Similarly on page 77. A specific question relating to management services. The budget has increased in '96-97 from \$870,000 to . . .

MRS. McCLELLAN: You said you'd take written, and I can't turn the pages as fast as you. You've got kind of the details, so . . .

MR. DOERKSEN: Okay. Yeah, written is fine.

MRS. McCLELLAN: We'll go with that.

4:41

MR. DOERKSEN: I'm done with those. Okay? Now I want to ask a couple of questions to do with the business plan relating to AADAC, so if the chair of that committee would pay attention. I'm looking at the performance measurements. We have a measurement there called "service effectiveness."

MRS. BURGNER: Could you call the page out?

MR. DOERKSEN: Which page? We're on page 87 if you talk about the estimates book, and we're on page 113 in the budget document. Actually, if you go to the budget document, it's probably a better book to read from. I think Greg's going to share it with you there.

MRS. BURGNER: I've got it. I just can't hear you, Victor.

MR. DOERKSEN: Oh, I'm sorry.

MRS. McCLELLAN: It's really hard to hear down here for some reason. I don't know why.

MR. DOERKSEN: Do you wish me to speak louder?

HON. MEMBERS: Yeah.

THE CHAIRMAN: And slower.

MR. DOERKSEN: And slower? I want everybody to have a turn. So is the chairman now on page 113 of the budget document? Okay.

Service effectiveness. We talk about service effectiveness as it relates to a measurement done three months following treatment. That may be a highly appropriate measurement. I'm wondering why we don't measure it a year or two after treatment. I think that, to me, would seem to be a fairer measure as to the effectiveness of outcomes. So I'll leave that with you.

Then we talk about cost-effectiveness. Again the measurement is perfectly valid. What does concern me in that particular measurement is the fact that while we were more cost-effective per admission as compared to Manitoba, we in fact have more admissions per 100,000 people than the province of Manitoba. Again it would seem to me that a more appropriate measure or another measure that you may want to consider in your business plan for the future is: let's target the number of admissions and work toward reducing that. So those are a couple of suggestions.

Going back to the financial data briefly, page 93. Now we're in the estimates book. It's just a question, when we talk about fee revenue generated by AADAC, in terms of where that comes from, who pays, the charges, et cetera.

Mr. Chairman, that will end my questions for this afternoon.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

I'm sorry. Mr. Minister, you were going to give written . . .

MRS. McCLELLAN: I'm going to give written responses. I only want to make one comment on AADAC, and we will respond fully. I don't disagree with the hon. member on the idea of reducing the need for treatment. I don't think reducing admissions is the right way, because if the treatment is there - but there is included, if you look through the performance measures, a measure on reducing the need for treatment, and that means reducing the utilization of addictive substances.

I also just want to mention that I will give a copy to the new members in particular of Towards an Addiction-Free Alberta. It was released in January of 1997, and that clearly lays out the mandate for AADAC. I apologize; it slipped my mind that some of the members would not have been members then and wouldn't have had it. We will make sure that that is circulated to you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to members of this committee for attending these deliberations to discuss a very important department and its future. The Alberta Community Development department, more so than any other area of government, underscores those issues which we all understand as being tremendous contributors to the quality of life of the people of Alberta. Notwithstanding health, education, and the environment, we ask of the Department of Community Development what kind of quality of life does this department, its programs, and its services provide, particularly for seniors. My comments today will be aimed at seniors since this is my area of responsibility. I believe in many ways that this department really describes and identifies us as a society, and it also differentiates us as a society. This department has the enormous responsibility of being the custodian of civility in the province of Alberta. This department ensures we are caring members of society to all segments of society. It is evident there is a great need for planning as projections for the number of seniors in this province and the age of those seniors continue to increase.

My first question is: what happened to the full report of the second seniors review? The first one was shredded, and the second one was consolidated to two pages.

In Alberta presently females can look forward to living, on the average, 81.8 years. Males are in at 75.5 years. In the House the other day the minister referred to the number of seniors in this province, that we had a great influx. Now, I know that we've increased 9,000 over the past year, which is approximately a gain of 3 percent, but I would like to know where she got her figures that we did have a great influx of seniors into Alberta from other provinces and if she could please table a copy of that information. My second question along the same lines is: if there is an influx of seniors into the province, where are the provisions to fund this increase in the number of seniors? My third question: does this influx further weaken the amount of available funding we have for our own Alberta seniors?

Seniors wish to be an integral part of Alberta society in their later years. They do not wish to be put aside because they reach an arbitrary age. They wish to remain involved and active. Unfortunately, many of our seniors 65 and older do have some sort of condition that does limit their involvement or their activity. Seniors wish to be independent for as long as possible. The government, communities, families, and seniors themselves forge new partnerships to ensure safety, security, and full participation of all Albertans of all ages.

We must look to a future where seniors will be confident that their essential needs will be met and older Albertans will have an equal opportunity to live in dignity, independence, and security. They want the essential services and programs to be available and accessible when they can no longer manage totally on their own. They thrive best when they are closest to spouse, family, and church.

In regards to this, we have been assured that the regional health boundaries are only for administrative purposes. All Albertans can access health care services, when needed, anywhere in the province. An 87-year-old man who is in need of long-term care tried to gain access to a Capital health authority bed but was told to go back to his own regional health authority. This was in spite of the fact that being placed in his own regional health authority meant being in a strange town, hours away from his loved ones and his community. Is this an example of the department's promise of seamless delivery of health service? Is it the policy of this department to instruct regional health authorities to deny access to needed services to residents who live outside the regional health authority? When will the minister stop reviewing the known shortage of long-term care services and solve the problem by properly funding this needed program? When will this department realize that as a population ages, long-term care services also increase and reflect this in the actual funding?

4:51

Alberta seniors have faced net cuts in their provincial programs and benefits of over \$100 million since the government was elected promising to protect the people who built this province. Aggregate spending on seniors has dropped from about \$1.1 billion in 1992-93 to about \$980 million in 1996-97. This reduced spending is occurring in the context of a growing population of seniors, that I've alluded to earlier, so the per capita spending has fallen even faster. As well, we have now had a situation where the federal government has had a clawback, and as a result, Alberta seniors now are paying \$14 million more in provincial income tax as a result of the federal government broadening its tax base.

[Mrs. Laing in the Chair]

Now, the Premier did promise a rebate to those seniors, not an increase in funding but a rebate, and he did this in a speech given to the Toronto Board of Trade, that any moneys accruing to the province as a result of the broadening of the tax base would be rebated to Alberta seniors. They are still waiting for these rebates. Are these moneys going to be rebated as promised by the Premier?

The Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce and Wood Gundy have a consumer price index annual rate of 1.7 percent. Now, funding has been increasing at 3 percent, which is the same rate as the increase in the number of seniors. With inflation this means that the per capita rate cannot keep up.

However, moving along, we see here that the Alberta seniors' benefit has had an increase from \$536 in 1996-97 to \$619 per capita in 1997-98. We would like to see this increase continue as well, particularly for this segment that does need additional funding.

My first question: will the growth in the Alberta seniors' benefit financial assistance each year just keep pace with the growth in the seniors' population, or will it continue to rise as it has this year? My second question: of the large increases in program support and operations, what portion of these increases will go directly to frontline help for seniors, and what portion will go to

administration verifying Alberta seniors' benefit forms against income tax forms or other administrators? Have you considered a cap on administration? Is there an update of the excellent 1992 publication *Older Albertans*? Isn't it about time we had a survey of how seniors are faring in this brave new Alberta with respect to demographics, income, health, and accommodation?

I'd like now to refer to the business plan summary where the goal was to ensure that lower income seniors receive the income support for which they are eligible and that "government policies effectively anticipate . . . the needs of seniors." How is the definition of "lower-income seniors" to be arrived at, especially as user fees, cost of living, medication, and senior accommodation costs mount in Alberta and seniors have less and less disposable income? Exactly what does "effectively anticipate . . . the needs of seniors" mean? How is it done? Is it done by surveys, demographics, actuarial tables? Is this what was done when seniors' prescription drug costs were increased 50 percent, or was he anticipating the needs of the Provincial Treasurer?

Under Major Strategies the goal was to co-ordinate the governmentwide approach to planning for seniors' programs and policies. The Alberta assured income program co-ordinated provincial supplements with the federal guaranteed income supplement program, thereby minimizing administration and income verification costs. Does "co-ordinate the governmentwide approach" refer to only co-ordination within the provincial government, the Alberta seniors' benefit, Health, Municipal Affairs, or does it refer to co-ordination between levels of government: federal, provincial and municipal? If the latter, why was the much more cost-effective, income-tested AAIP program scrapped in favour of the stand-alone Alberta seniors' benefit program?

Another goal was to expand regional access for seniors. What is the demand like for these new regional access centres, and how many centres are up and running, at what cost, with how many staff members?

Highlights for '97-98 are to "increase financial assistance to seniors in lodges, continuing care facilities and subsidized housing," which again we do like to see, and we also see an increase in funding to senior couples. "Increase the number of seniors receiving full or partial health premium subsidies (\$9.1 million a year)." My first question: why do you continue to change seniors' regressive flat tax you call health premiums? How much does it cost to administer the health premium subsidy eligibility system? Question 3: what are you doing to alleviate the shortages of long-term care facilities where they are needed, where the demand is to stop seniors from being separated from their spouses? I did ask a question on this earlier, and a lot of seniors have commented on this.

Another goal is to "enhance payments available through Special Needs Assistance grants" at the rate of \$4 million a year. Can you provide an update on the number of applications, the number accepted, the number rejected, the average award for accepted applications, and is there a breakdown constituency by constituency? My second question: when will income threshold levels in assistance amounts of the Alberta seniors' benefit plan be altered so that the separate SNA bureaucracy is unnecessary?

Another issue that certainly we have to talk about is seniors abuse. What I would like to ask here is: what is being done for elder abuse? What intervention is there? How many private home facilities in the province do have four or fewer seniors living in them, and how have these seniors been notified of the assistance that is available to them? What has happened with respect to your seniors abuse initiative, other than the hot line? How many calls? What mechanisms are in place to ensure that the hot line is able to direct help and resources to those seniors

being abused? Why has this initiative been dropped as a high-light? Is senior abuse no longer a problem?

Investigated options for the regulation of residential care: this was a highlight last year. Why has it been dropped as a high-light? Is this no longer a priority for seniors? The Senior Citizens Advisory Council has advocated regulation of residential care for years. How much more investigation will be required before this government finally acts on these recommendations put forth by its own council?

Your key performance measures. The eligible lower income seniors receive the income support to which they are entitled. This measure provides information on the adequacy of the delivery of the Alberta seniors' benefit program. When we look at our statistics here, in the year 1994-95 the percentage of eligible seniors who collected was 98.5. In 1995-96 it was 98.5. In '96-97 it is being collected, and there is a 100 percent target in this area.

5:01

Part B, the percentage of eligible seniors satisfied with the service received. It was not applicable in 1994-95. The figures we have are that it was being collected in '95-96. In '96-97 there was 85 percent, but this particular indicator is gone.

My questions regarding performance measures. How were the thresholds arrived at to determine lower income seniors? Was the Stats Canada low-income cutoff used? Does the government recognize that the cost of living varies region by region, urban versus rural? What is a lower income? A lower disposable income? Seniors have paid more for accommodation, home care, prescriptions, municipal transportation and user fees, property taxes, and utilities. Or are we looking at gross income, net income, taxable income? What is the lower income?

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

The ASB and the SNA thresholds have been set in constant dollars. When will these thresholds be altered to recognize, one, that they were set too low to begin with and, two, that the real eligibility thresholds are in fact dropping due to inflation and government's increasing reliance on user fees for provincial and municipal services? Have you considered indexing or even partially indexing the thresholds so seniors and near-seniors can plan ahead rather than relying on cabinet whims and largesse?

Why did 1 percent of eligible seniors not receive the benefits in 1994-95? This probably represents 1,500 seniors in this province. I did like your comments about trying to eliminate these seniors' falling through the cracks. But how are we addressing these issues since 1994-95 to try and eliminate this 1 percent, or 1,500 seniors?

What is the cost of collecting all of this data? How many dollars? Is it being done in-house or contracted out? If contracted out, to whom? What are the performance indicators regarding the collection of data? When might Albertans expect to see the results for 1995-96?

Our questions regarding performance measure B. What happened to performance measure B? It has been dropped from the Community Development key performance measures as attached to the estimates. Was the seniors' rating of service that bad that you just stopped measuring it? I know that in my constituency the one group that spoke out very strongly against what's happened to them was our seniors.

Questions regarding performance measures in general. Why are not more objective measurable performance measures being used? What is the turnaround time for processing the Alberta seniors'

benefit application? What is the percentage of SNA and ASB applications processed without being returned for further information? What's the amount of time between application being processed and verification of the income tax data?

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: The chairman needs to apologize to the subcommittee. I'm operating on the thought that we had the Standing Order 61(4), which I quoted earlier, but remember we did that little jog where we had Committee of the Whole, we passed it, we went into Assembly, then back into Committee of Supply. So the vote is not needed at 5:15. We presumably would like to get out of here by 5:15 and down there, so we have a few minutes more.

Hon. minister.

MRS. McCLELLAN: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South asked a couple of questions. I think if he goes back and reads those pages over again, as I've kind of looked at them, in fact most of those are a decrease, not an increase. Maybe you've just reversed the columns, or maybe we don't write our estimates very clearly. I would like him to check that, and if there are concerns in a specific area, just raise them with me, please. There is an increase in two areas but not in the others. I just wanted to make sure we get that straight.

The Member for Edmonton-Glengarry raised a lot of the same comments and concerns that he raised in supplementary estimates. I have written to him extensively. I don't know if he's had a chance to see it. I have written, signed, and sent it. I may not have had an opportunity as I did for other members from that.

I do want to respond to a couple of things, though, because written responses don't go into *Hansard*. We talked about the \$14 million the other day. Perhaps if the hon. members have some influence with the federal government, they could ask them to reduce their tax room and then give it back to everyone. Certainly it is tied to an increase in federal tax. So, you know, if you have some influence, I'm sure that more than seniors would be happy to see that happen. The \$14 million has gone back to seniors. True, it's probably gone back to more low-income seniors rather than trying to write out multiple cheques of goodness knows what to how many people. I would assume that most low-income seniors perhaps don't pay a great deal of income tax, but I do believe we've done it the right way in ensuring that the dollars go back to those most in need.

I was asked where the statistics came from for the in-migration of seniors. It is from A Portrait of Seniors in Canada from Stats Canada. You can, I'm sure, check at the Leg. Library, or if you can't get a copy, we'll get one for you. It does show very clearly that in 1994-95, 1,228 more people age 65 and over moved into Alberta than moved out. Ontario had the second highest net migration, and that was at 300. Why? Well, Alberta and Ontario seniors have the highest average incomes in the country. Alberta seniors enjoy the most comprehensive package of benefits available in Canada, and those are very able to be qualified. This is fact. It is fact, and Stats Canada - I mean, we use that when it's good the other way. Let's accept that Stats Canada has some good information. Even though it makes our province look good and that may bother some people, I'm actually kind of proud of it.

Alberta also offers seniors excellent health programs. Many of your questions are more properly addressed to the Minister of Health, although I take them as a concern. The actual questions on long-term rates: they are the lowest in Canada. They are indexed to a person's income. I'm sure that seniors in Alberta are

quite pleased they don't pay the rates that are in some of the other provinces. We do have premium subsidies for health insurance premiums. Over 50 percent of seniors don't pay any premium or partial. We do have universal Blue Cross coverage. That's another reason seniors want to be here. Alberta seniors, as all Albertans, pay no sales tax, which is significant to seniors. Seniors tell me that. In 1995, it was shown that property and utility charges in Alberta were consistent with or lower than other provinces in Canada.

You asked some questions as to why that large in-migration of seniors to Alberta. Those are some of the reasons that happens. I understand and share a genuine concern to make sure that our seniors' programs do meet the needs of seniors. I have never suggested, since the changes in these programs, that I support total universality. I do support making sure that our lower income seniors, our people who are more vulnerable, receive the benefits they require to live in dignity and independence.

5:11

I want to correct one area, even though it is not in my ministry. There are no charges for home care on the medical side. There are small charges, hourly charges for homemaking services such as grocery shopping, vacuuming, things like that. However, that is capped per month, and if a senior cannot pay, they are not charged. More importantly, those dollars stay in the program to ensure that they can help other seniors. So there is no charge for home care, for nursing care, or medical care in the home in Alberta.

ASB applications: how do they get them? For anyone that we know is going to turn 65, applications are sent to them up to six months previous to their birthday. Some people must get a little

shock, you know, when it comes in the mail, but that is one way. We try hard, really hard to identify seniors, but obviously there may be seniors whom we're not aware of, and we are encouraging our seniors groups to help us in that identification. So it is sent out six months previous to their birthday. If they are filled out and sent in, obviously they're ready by the time they reach the eligible age. There are staff who will go to seniors' homes to assist them, and there is a phone line.

I want you to look at page 109 – that's in our business plan – and see that abuse is still in the book as a priority.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Calgary-Fish Creek.

MRS. FORSYTH: Yes. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to make a motion that the committee rise and report, please.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek has moved that the subcommittee rise and report. All those in support of this motion, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Those opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Carried.

[The committee adjourned at 5:13 p.m.]