

Title: **Monday, March 2, 1998**

Date: 98/03/02

8:04 a.m.

[Mrs. Laing in the chair]

Des.subcom: Family & Social Serv.

Designated Supply Subcommittee – Family and Social Services

Laing, Bonnie, Chairman
Barrett, Pam
Cao, Wayne
Cardinal, Mike

Johnson, LeRoy
Kryczka, Karen
Leibovici, Karen
Lougheed, Rob

Melchin, Greg
Olsen, Sue
Shariff, Shiraz
Sloan, Linda

THE CHAIRMAN: I'd like to call the meeting to order. Welcome to the two ministers and their staff and also to the government members and to the loyal opposition members. I'll just read the procedural motion that's required prior to the commencement of our meeting.

Be it resolved that the designated supply subcommittee on Family and Social Services allocate the four hours allotted to it pursuant to Standing Order 56(7)(b) as follows:

- (a) the minister responsible first addresses the subcommittee for a maximum of 20 minutes;
- (b) opposition subcommittee members then have one hour for questions and answers;
- (c) government subcommittee members then have one hour for questions and answers;
- (d) opposition subcommittee members then have one hour for questions and answers, opposition subcommittee time of 120 minutes total will be split 90-10 with the third party New Democrats receiving a block of 12 minutes to be used in either opposition hour;
- (e) government subcommittee members have the remainder, and once those government members have finished their questions, the meeting is concluded.

I would invite someone to move the motion, please. Would someone like to move the motion?

MR. LOUGHEED: So moved.

THE CHAIRMAN: Seconder, Mr. Cardinal. All in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. All right. In order to conclude prior to the four hours allocated under Standing Order 56(7), unanimous consent will be required.

The minister has 20 minutes, and I believe five minutes of that 20 minutes will be allocated to Minister Calahasen.

Mr. Minister.

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Bonnie. Thank you very much for coming here bright and early this morning. First of all, perhaps I could introduce the people that are with me. On my far left is Jim Menzies, who's a director of budget; Duncan Campbell, who's an executive director. On my immediate right is Maria David-Evans, my deputy minister; Minister Calahasen you know; and John Lackey, the commissioner of children's services.

I have a few opening remarks, and then I will ask Minister Calahasen to provide some comments. We will then turn the floor back for questions. The estimates for Family and Social Services begin on page 199 of the 1998-99 government and lottery fund estimates. The business plan starts on page 249 of Budget '98, Agenda for Opportunity.

When compared to '97-98 the overall budget will increase by more than \$16 million to \$1.37 billion. In addition to this

increase on the bottom line, the continuing success of welfare reforms will allow the ministry to reallocate a further \$40 million to high-priority areas. This adds up to a budget increase of some \$56 million for such programs as child welfare, handicapped children's services, assured income for the severely handicapped, and family and community support services.

Within the supports for independence program, which appears on page 202 of your estimates book, the ministry continues to achieve success in helping clients to get into training programs and return to work as quickly as possible. As a result of this success, the average monthly caseload will be down from a forecast of 37,000 for '97-98 to 36,000 for '98-99.

In addition to reduced spending requirements for welfare in '98-99, we are introducing a child health benefit program to assist low-income working Albertans with health-related costs for their children. The program has been funded using dollars freed up under the national child benefit program. In addition to benefitting working Albertans, the child health benefit program will create another tool to help those on welfare achieve independence.

Under services for children and families on page 203, we see budget increases to meet rising caseloads. In the child welfare area, cases are expected to rise by 770 from the '97-98 budget of 11,000. That's an increase of 7 percent. The budget will rise to \$240 million from \$220 million in '97-98. In handicapped children's services caseloads are forecast to rise by 340 to 8,290, and the budget is going up by \$6.5 million. To provide more spaces, an additional \$1 million will be added to the women's shelter budget.

In the area of services to persons with developmental disabilities, which is program 4 on page 204, the budget will rise by \$19 million, reflecting the increasing caseload in this area. The ministry has budgeted \$5 million to help contracted service providers address cost pressures and attract qualified staff. This funding relates to agencies providing services to persons with developmental disabilities as well as child welfare and shelters. In addition, last Wednesday we announced that these agencies have also had the '93-94 3 percent reduction reinstated in recognition of the province's success in meeting its deficit reduction target.

In the family and community support services program, funding will increase by \$5 million to help with the implementation of a new funding formula and to enable more municipalities to join the program. In the ministry's business plan we continue to focus on giving communities greater input into programs and services. We will also be working closely with other ministries to clarify mandates, roles, and responsibilities in all program areas. Of particular note, over the coming year we will see our community-based boards and authorities begin to assume direct responsibility for delivering services for the developmentally disabled and services for children and families.

In summary, the budget and business plan reflect a focus on helping children and families most in need. We are helping them to get off welfare rolls and back to work. We are helping them with health costs. We are addressing the needs of children who are abused or neglected or who have other special needs. We are

increasing funding for high-priority areas, whether they are delivered through the department, contracted agencies, municipalities, or the new community-based delivery structures that are emerging.

At this point I'd like Minister Calahasen to provide some opening remarks as well.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. First of all, I'd like to talk about the communities across the province working together to redesign a service delivery system for children and families in Alberta. We are in the final stages of redesign and are seeing positive and tangible progress.

The first child and family services authority was appointed in December 1997 – that was the Calgary Rockyview – and will begin to oversee the delivery of services by the summer of 1998. An accelerated recruitment process has been identified for appointment by the remaining child and family services authorities. All remaining authorities will be appointed in April 1998.

The first task of each authority, once it is appointed, is to prepare a business plan and transition plan based on a vision of the service plan for approval by government. This will be the formula that makes the plan work. Most child and family services authorities will be ready to assume service delivery responsibilities by January 1999. The department and each authority work closely together and carefully on the sequence and timing of the transfer of responsibilities. Together, detailed preparations will be made for the transition of staff, funding, and other resources.

The reduction in program support under program 3, services for children and families, reflects the progress that has been made in moving towards the establishment of child and family services authorities. As a result, the cost to our committee of planning will be reduced. To support authorities in their new role, \$1 million has been reallocated to cover the cost of authority operations.

The early intervention program has received \$17 million. This reflects the completion of government's \$50 million commitment to the early intervention program as well as its commitment to ensuring that resources continue to be available for many full early intervention programs. By 1999-2000 authorities will be fully operational and can budget for early intervention programs as they feel the need in their communities.

I look forward to receiving any questions that you may have relative to this.

THE CHAIRMAN: All right. Thank you. That concludes the ministers' remarks. I should remind you also that Minister Calahasen does not have budgetary responsibilities. Therefore, any of your questions pertaining to that would go to the Minister for Family and Social Services.

All right, who's on first? Mrs. Sloan.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you very much. We appreciate the opportunity to raise questions today with respect to the ministry's mission, goals, performance measures, and budgets. My questions, just to categorize them for you, will be focused on the mission, goals, performance measures of the department, your performance measures, as well as program 1 of the budget.

DR. OBERG: If you could just state the page when you ask a question, Linda, that would be great.

MRS. SLOAN: Okay. Then, to summarize, it would be pages 210, 211 of the government and lottery fund estimates as well as 251 through 258 of the business plan document.

It has been public knowledge that I've been extremely concerned about the overall direction of the department, particularly with respect to the regionalization of children's services, the underlying objectives within that.

As I look at the ministry's mission statement and goals, it continues to concern me that I do not see, particularly in the mission, the incorporation of rights and privileges for children, for families. Particularly, we see the mission: "Help families to be responsible and accountable." All of us know that we do not live in a perfect world and that all families are not capable of doing that, so I have some concern with respect to the way in which the mission continues to be framed by this ministry.

8:14

As well, we see no incorporation of the UN convention on the rights of the child. Perhaps I was mistaken, but I thought there was some commitment of this ministry to move towards the adoption of that. If that is not the case, I would like to know why we are the only province in the country that is not. The federal government has endorsed it, and I do not understand why Alberta, given the Premier's commitment to placing children as priorities in this province, would be reluctant to endorse that convention declaration.

With respect, then, to the goals. In general terms, again, we are concerned and would question the ministry, given some of the external reports that have been done, the continued fixation on preparing people for employment. In a not so perfect world we know that there are many who are not capable of being employed, yet they are forced to go through an employment-fixated process. I guess the question in that is: has the ministry statistically or factually done any analysis of those individuals who are currently perhaps on SFI or AISH and realistically looked up their capabilities in terms of employment?

With respect to the business plan, particularly the services to children and families, the plan is not specific about the transition process regarding services for children and families, what the role of the executive manager of services transition will be. How does this position relate to the transition committee? What vote funds the executive manager position and transition committee members will have is also not clear.

When we read in the highlights of the winding down of the commissioner of services for children and families, a position that has overseen and guided the process since its inception, it's of concern to us that that position and mandate would be removed before the regional authorities are in place. What is the rationale for that? Is it strictly to recoup the savings from that office? Do the savings equate to what would be lost in terms of leadership and guardianship with respect to that role? As well, what program areas are identified as requiring the services of the government transition team leader? It's not clear. What other ministries will be involved? Will there in fact be any true integration in this process? Which of the programs will be affected if other ministries are going to be involved? What specific programs are being heralded as partnering, or where in the other ministry estimates is this partnering evident? That is not clear to us.

I have asked repeatedly now for the funding model, the standards document, the monitoring and evaluation framework. I have never received it formally from the minister. I have received it informally from people in the sector. So I'm wondering when it is planned for that document to be publicly released for debate and discussion.

A specific question with respect to the fetal alcohol syndrome

initiative. The minister's direction in that regard is not clear other than the allocation of money. We do not know what other ministries will be involved. It would seem prudent that there be other ministries involved, including Education and Justice. We're wondering if that initiative directly stems from the inquiry with respect to Olivia Calf Robe and the scathing summary review that was compiled in that inquiry report. I believe publicly it should be attributed to that. There should be some degree of closure for the family of that young girl. It has not been to date publicly associated with her death. I think it would be prudent to make that link if it is in fact there.

As well, just to relate the FAS initiative and to jump somewhat into the budget itself, we see within the residential treatment that there are reductions made. [interjection] It's page 203. It's 3.2.7. That estimate increase doesn't match the forecast expenditure for last year. Given the magnitude of the disease, not only of fetal alcohol but also attention deficit disorder, it seems odd that the ministry would move to reduce that without any consideration about whether or not these children will need some type of residential care.

I'd like to move now to the performance measures. It was disappointing, to say the least, after the repetitive round of sparring the minister and I have had over the performance measure of the percentage of children who stay free from abuse, neglect, and death while receiving child protection services, that we maintain a performance measure that only reports those children kept free from abuse and neglect. I still do not understand the rationale of that. There is no performance measure reporting the deaths of children in care. This government has been repetitively inconsistent with the publication of those numbers. I again do not understand the rationale as to why we continue to maintain performance measures which overmagnify successes without addressing or responding to the failures.

Other performance measures of concern with respect to the day care centres. The ministry was unable to meet last year's target of 85 percent. In fact, the percentage of centres meeting standards has dropped by 3 percent. This means that approximately 20 percent of day cares in Alberta do not meet critical standards. I would quote from the plan to say that "non-compliance is most likely to place children at risk." What areas are the centres failing in? Please provide a breakdown of the areas, of centres not meeting standards and where they're failing; i.e., staff ratios, qualifications, or discipline. And what initiatives is the minister taking to bring these centres up to standard?

Also with respect to the performance measures, the targets for a number of employment-related performance measures "are constant due to the Ministry now having a higher proportion of clients who are not job ready." What barriers to employment do these clients face? Has any study been undertaken by the department to determine this, and if so, will the minister share it? Have the programs and services being offered to these clients changed as a result? Would it be prudent to suggest that if the targets are constant, then we can assume that the budget estimates will be constant in the near future? Thirdly, what improvements does the department expect the new family maintenance information system will bring, and how will this affect targets?

The other general area of concern I would question the minister on with respect to the performance measures is that we see virtually no measures that will establish, monitor, or control the transition to the regional authority process in child welfare. We question whether that was an oversight. Was it intentional? How will the ministry, or the public for that matter, know the success of that program if there are no measures incorporated within the business plan? It would seem there is a whole array of areas

where the child welfare regionalization needs to be measured: in terms of compliance to standards, in terms of funding, in terms of evaluation and monitoring. Why has the minister not seen fit to incorporate those types of controls and measures in the business plan?

8:24

I would like to move now to program 1, ministry support services. Vote 1.0.1, with respect to the minister's office: we'd like to know why the increase in this budget line when the minister's office was forecast to spend approximately \$2,000 below last year's estimate. It would also seem odd that that increase is incorporated when the ministry is proposing that the regional authorities will be up and running in this budget year.

In relation to 1.0.2, minister without portfolio, we would like further clarification as to what actual responsibilities belong to the minister without portfolio. In response to questions during the last budgetary year, the minister primarily has spoken about community consultation. Once the regional authorities are established, I would assume, perhaps incorrectly, that that consultation will then be their responsibility. We question the prudence of maintaining this officer, with all due respect to the member occupying it. I would like to ask the minister for a detailed list of expenditures similar to last year's. Specifically, I would also like to see a breakdown of staff positions being paid for through this office.

For 1.0.3, standing policy committee, I would like to know why the increase. If this is to factor in inflation, we don't seem to do that in other program areas for the budget, so why would we do it for a policy committee that is not all-party? It has been insulting to me to attend those meetings and not even be given the privilege of asking a question. Actually, I should say that on one occasion a provision has been made through the chair. We do not see anything tangible in terms of the product of that committee work. There is nothing in the business plan that speaks to what they've done in the past year or what they propose to do in the future. Do they have any goals or objectives? Is this an appropriate use of taxpayers' dollars in light of the constraints the ministry has proposed on other portions of the budget?

With respect to 1.0.4., the deputy minister's office, a \$9,000 increase is incorporated here. Again we would ask the rationale for that increase on the basis of: for what responsibilities are these dollars being added?

Vote 1.0.5, assistant deputy minister, children's programs. There's been a significant decrease in this budget, and we would ask why. What are the responsibilities of the ADM? What is the relationship between that position and the minister without portfolio? What is the proposed relationship between that position and the regional authorities?

With respect to 1.0.6., assistant DM, adults' programs, again we see an increase here when the adult program budget overall is decreasing by \$29 million.

DR. OBERG: Did you say that was 1.0.6?

MRS. SLOAN: Vote 1.0.6.

THE CHAIRMAN: There's three minutes remaining.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you.

We would ask why the contrasting principle of increasing the bureaucracy budget and decreasing the program supports.

My final question is relating to freedom of information and privacy. I'd like the minister to please provide a breakdown of

freedom of information requests: by whom they have been requested – i.e., a government official, client or former client, opposition member, or member of the public – the number of refusals to each category of the requester and the reasons why they were refused, as well as the number and specifics as to those that were provided.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Minister.

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Bonnie. I counted 24 questions there, so I'll attempt to go through them all here.

If I could, I'll start with the first comments. The first comments were on the ministry's mission statement, to make families "responsible and accountable." The comment was made that they're a little bit too pie-in-the-sky, so to speak, and that in a perfect world they would be met, but in our world they would not be. We certainly recognize that, but we feel it is extremely important to keep the goals and mission of this department as 100 percent as opposed to anything that is even close to that. "Responsible and accountable" I feel is a very important mission of this ministry, and we feel it is important to have families that are responsible and accountable. So with regards to that, I make no apologies for saying that the ministry's mission is to "help families to be responsible and accountable." I think that's an extremely important aspect of this ministry. The other aspects in the mission statement, to "help adults be independent" and to "keep children safe", I feel are equally as important and are equally as important to this ministry.

The second point that was made was on the convention on the rights of children. This government has never made the comment that we were going to adopt the convention on the rights of children, and I guess there are a couple of reasons for that. First of all, we feel that our policies in Alberta are much superior to the convention on the rights of children. We also feel that there are some important issues in the convention of the rights of children that are missing.

The other fascinating thing. I probably get, oh, 20 letters a month saying to oppose the convention on the rights of children. In looking at it, when you look at the nations that have signed the convention, there are some nations such as Zaire, some of the nations in Africa – to say that purely because they have signed a document called the convention on the rights of children they will automatically treat their children better is wrong.

I had the advantage of working on a document on the convention on the rights and responsibilities of the family. This was approximately three years ago in Montreal. It was a United Nations document. At that time the comments were made that if everything was going the way it should, the convention on the rights and responsibilities of the family should have preceded the convention on the rights of the child – and this was from the NGOs that were there – and that probably the convention on the rights of the children should read, "convention on rights and responsibilities of children," because Lord knows we've seen a lot of places where the responsibilities of children, especially in the Young Offender's Act, need to be enforced.

A third point was on the external reports; that's what I've got written down. Certainly if there are any external reports on children's services, any reports that we receive, we will certainly make those reports public. And, yes, we do rely on external reports. A good example is the Coopers & Lybrand report which was finished on January 23, which looked at children's services, looked at the transition, looked at the future, looked at where we were doing wrong and where we were doing right. I have stood up in the House and stated that that will be released sometime

soon once we look at the findings ourselves.

8:34

The fourth question was very interesting. It was a fixation on being employed. One of the huge successes of the welfare reforms was quite simply that we took people who were not working and who could work and we put them into the workforce. This was probably the single most important thing. The philosophy in the department went from giving people money to finding people a job. I've gone around the province and talked to a lot of social workers, and I preface each discussion by asking the income and employment people: what is your job? Around the province each and every one of them says: my job is to get people employed; it isn't to hand out cheques. So we feel that's an extremely important aspect. This was reinforced by the Canada West Foundation study. The Canada West Foundation study found that 70 percent of the people that had come off the welfare rolls were actually gainfully employed, the average salary something like \$7.50, \$7.70 if I remember correctly. But even more important was that the people who had come off welfare agreed with the direction of this department in that they agreed there should be more focus on employability.

The disabled: another fascinating topic when it comes to being employed. One of the issues is that the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities has come forward and stated that it is not correct to pension people off. Just because someone is disabled does not mean they don't want to work, does not mean that this government should go and pension them off, never to be seen again. I'm sorry, but in 1998 people who are disabled are gainful members of our community and should not be pensioned off. If they want to work, if they can work, I think we should be there. I think we should help them work rather than putting them in a dark room and saying: here's your cheque every month. I think it's extremely important that we have employability programs that can help these people get back into the workforce. I'm not talking from a monetary point of view. I'm talking from a moralistic point of view. Like I say, in 1998 the disabled are functioning members of this community. We respect that and we will help them to become gainfully employed.

In the services to children and families the role of the executive manager was the fifth question that was asked. Perhaps what I could do is ask Minister Calahasen to comment on that.

MS CALAHASEN: Maybe I'll go after you to talk about some of the questions, Lyle.

DR. OBERG: Sure.

Along the same lines, the question was about the commissioner of children and families, and I'll certainly ask Minister Calahasen to comment on this as well. First of all, the commissioner of children and families' initial job was to aid in the transfer of resources to the community service boards coming on line. As that has occurred, the commissioner of children and families' temporary job, which is what it always was – it was always a contracted job – has been eliminated as of the end of March of this year.

What we have seen is that there has been a divergence in planning according to children's services, and that was absolutely critical. We had the department over here, and we had children's services over here. But as the children's service authority boards become up and accountable, become up and functioning, it is time to bring them under the auspices of the department, and that's what we are doing. We feel this is extremely critical and just a key to what we were talking about on the Coopers & Lybrand report. That's one of the strong suggestions that the Coopers & Lybrand report made.

The transition team leader, the time integration, and the programs affected: again, I'll ask Minister Calahasen to comment on that.

The funding model, as I have always stated, will be up and running before April 1, when the first authority receives its official authority, which will be Calgary. So we are tentatively taking the funding model to SPC on March 9, and I am hoping it will be made public within the next week or 10 days after that.

Fetal alcohol syndrome. I'm glad you asked that one. The first question on fetal alcohol syndrome is: what other ministries are involved? Fetal alcohol syndrome is something that Family and Social Services is taking the lead on, but we have had discussions with Health; we've had discussions with Education, Justice, and especially AADAC. This will be an effort that will be extremely professionally done, because programs that are nonprofessionally done will not get results. What I mean by "professionally" is that I don't mean privately done. What I mean is that this is going to be an extremely good program. It's going to target, as I've stated publicly, the prevention of FAS. It's going to target the identification of existing FAS/FAE children. The third point is that it will target the treatment, because quite frankly the treatment of FAS/FAE children is somewhat falling behind what has been done before.

The other question that was asked was on Olivia Calf Robe. Is this a direct result of the Olivia Calf Robe death? First of all, the Olivia Calf Robe death was an extremely tragic death. At the investigation we did on this death, we found that there were some problems with some of the personnel involved. The personnel that had those problems have now been removed from the department. This FAS initiative was not a direct result of the Olivia Calf Robe investigation.

As the hon. member knows, in October of this year the Supreme Court of Canada came down and ruled on a glue sniffing case from Manitoba. What had happened in that case is that a pregnant woman was chronically glue sniffing. The Supreme Court of Manitoba ruled that the department of social services in Manitoba did have the right to go in and cause this lady to be incarcerated and treated for her glue sniffing habit. Consequently, what happened is that this was appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada, and the Supreme Court of Canada overturned this ruling with a strong wording in its decision that all provinces should look at fetal alcohol syndrome and come up with some way to prevent it, some way to treat it. Interestingly enough, in that case, since that lady had stopped sniffing glue, her child was a normally born child. There was no evidence of FAS or any other consequence from the glue sniffing. She went on and became married, and the last word I had is that she was living a healthy, normal life, and this was after having had two previously affected children. So as I stated on Friday in Taber, it would be morally and ethically wrong for this government not to do something on fetal alcohol syndrome when the Supreme Court has given us that direction. For us to hide our heads in the sand would be absolutely wrong.

Page 203, 3.2.7, the residential care: what is happening with regards to that? As you can see, the budget was \$53 million. The actual amount was \$63 million that was spent. What happens with residential care: we attempt to place the children in the most homelike setting possible. The approach is not only better for the child but is usually a lower cost option. In 1997-98 we had a lot of instances where the children were actually put in residential care. We predict that we will not be seeing that high a level coming up. We predict that the caseloads in that particular area, with the residential care, will not be as high in 1998-1999.

On page 212 the performance measure is to stay abuse free, and the question was raised: why don't you put the number of children

who are abused as opposed to the ones that are staying abuse free? I guess this is a basic difference in principle. I'll say the same thing that I said in the Legislature. To determine the number that are abused or neglected while receiving child protection services, you quite simply subtract 100 minus 98.5. We want a positive performance indicator. We want to show people what is actually happening. The target is 100 percent, and this is just common sense. We do not want any children suffering abuse or neglect while receiving child protection services from this department and this government. We are working hard to ensure that that happens. Quite frankly, what you've seen is an increase from 97 percent in '93-94 to 98.5 percent in '96-97, an increase of 1 and a half percent. We still have another 1 and a half percent to go. We are trying extremely hard, and I feel it is extremely important to have a positive target as opposed to a negative target. The other option would be to have a target of zero percent and that would have us at 1.5 percent. I think we're talking semantics. It's our belief that it is much better to have a positive performance indicator rather than a negative.

8:44

The day care centres was the next question, which was a breakdown of centres failing to meet the initiative. We had just last year – and you notice that there has been a significant improvement – put in a much better monitoring system for day cares, and we saw a lot of the day cares go down when we were monitoring them better. Again 80 percent is something that, quite frankly, is not acceptable. That's why our target is 90 percent, 95 percent and ultimately 100 percent of all day care centres meeting critical government standards.

I must say, though, in the percentage of day cares, that to say that there are children in day cares that are being abused, not receiving the proper care is not correct. We hold our day care standards extremely high, and we feel that the day care centres must follow these standards. However, as you can see by the numbers, there still are 20 percent of the day cares that do not. We are working hard to monitor these day cares. We're monitoring any centre that has shown they are not following these standards. We monitor them much closer than day care centres that do monitor these standards, that do follow all government standards. We presently have 30 percent not-for-profit day care centres and 70 percent for-profit day care centres. We feel it's an extremely important role of this government to monitor them and police, so to speak, the standards we have put forward on this.

The family maintenance information system. This is something that we have put in extra dollars for in the supplementary estimates this year. We really feel that this will help track the people who do not receive family maintenance cheques. Again, we feel that this is extremely important. As you know, Madam Chairman, there are a lot of people who do not receive the family maintenance payments on time, or period. We feel that with this information system we will be much more able to track who is responsible, what we can do with this, and ensure that they are enforced.

THE CHAIRMAN: You have one more minute left of this 20-minute block.

DR. OBERG: Okay.

The transition to regional authorities. Actually, Pearl, I guess you can probably do it on the next block.

MS CALAHASEN: Sure. I can do that, yes.

DR. OBERG: The transition to regional authorities, the measures within the business plan. We feel that as we transition to the regional authorities, the same performance indicators must be in place. We cannot have different performance indicators as they apply to children. We cannot decrease what we do. The children's services authorities are expected to keep the same performance measures as we have at the moment because we feel that they are the important ones in keeping track of the children and ensuring they are safe.

Madam Chairman, I have about another six or seven questions that I would be pleased to comment on in the next 20 minutes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is it all right for Ms Calahasen to go ahead with hers very quickly?

MS OLSEN: I guess my comment would be that for any questions that aren't answered now, maybe you could do in writing.

DR. OBERG: Absolutely.

MS OLSEN: That would expedite it, and we all get an opportunity. I've got tons of questions for you, so that would be helpful.

THE CHAIRMAN: So Ms Calahasen should reply in writing then. Is that what you wish?

MS CALAHASEN: That's fine.

MS OLSEN: Yeah. That would be all right.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. All right.

MS OLSEN: It's not that we don't want you to speak. We just want to make sure we get everything out, and then that would be satisfactory for us. Thank you.

I just want to run through a few notes I've made here in response to some of the minister's answers. If you turn to page 254, the first question I would like to ask under regulatory reform is that . . .

DR. OBERG: You said 254?

MS OLSEN: Yeah. In the Agenda for Opportunity. You talk about public consultation in terms of the Regulatory Reform Task Force and say that only a couple of exceptions exist where public consultation needs to occur. So I'm just wondering what those specific regulations are and where you would include the public and consult with the public.

I'm wondering what the specific issues are that are missing from the convention on the rights of the child that prevent this government from being a signatory to that particular convention.

Under the performance measures the minister talks about the "percentage of children who stay free from abuse or neglect while receiving child protection." It relates to keeping children safe. Is this targeted as a whole, where child protection orders are in the home, in foster care? Is there any difference in how you are keeping track of those?

We know that we're moving towards a funding model and the regionalization is going to happen and has been expedited, but there's been no test and pilot of the model. So I'm wondering how we know we're going to be successful applying this funding model when we haven't put a pilot in place, a regional pilot, a pilot for different areas because there are different needs in different areas.

Down to the day cares "meeting critical government standards." I just have a few questions there. We've already reduced the cap on positions available to any one day care entity, and I have some concerns about that in relation to safety and the . . .

DR. OBERG: We increased the cap.

MS OLSEN: Increased. Right. From 500 to - well, I don't know if you've just left it open. So I'm wondering in relation to that what the staff-to-child ratio is going to be. You've reduced the staff-to-child ratio for after school. What was that predicated on? What is the anticipated saving from the removal of the day care operating allowance? There's been some discussion that the numbers are a \$4 million saving, a \$30 million saving, a \$50 million saving. What is the anticipated saving?

8:54

When I look back at the report that was done by CAFRA, they talk about having in 13 percent of two-parent families one of those members of the family staying home as opposed to paying the increased fees. That results in about a \$24,000 a year loss to the family and also a loss to the Alberta tax base. If you took that 13 percent and based it on the average individual income of \$24,000, that's a \$39 million loss overall each year to the Alberta tax base and to the economy. So you may be saving \$4 million in this particular program but the overall savings doesn't pan out. I just have some concerns about that. Also, has consideration ever been given to adopting the CAFRA standards? They seem to be a little more extensive than what exists now for day cares.

Back to the fetal alcohol report and the Olivia Calf Robe report. The Fatality Inquiries Act requires that upon request a copy of that inquiry be sent out to the parents. Under the act when a parent requests to receive this report, that is supposed to be sent out to them. To this date I know that the report went out to the father at Siksika. However, the mother did not receive it, nor did the sisters, who were intervenors in this particular case. So I'm just wondering where the breakdown was.

It just seems like this entire issue with Olivia Calf Robe has been very abysmal. Indeed, it was only due to some checking recently by myself and another person that the foster mother of the two sisters of Olivia Calf Robe finally received that report. That was sent out not through the Department of Justice or the department of social services. They have some great concerns about that. They've never seen that report. So that to me is just a further breakdown. I'm wondering: what are the steps that are taken to ensure that happens? Those discussions for that family to receive that report were done in court in front of the judge. It was specifically requested that they all receive a copy of it, and that wasn't done. So I'm just wondering if you can sort of enlighten us. At what point and how long after do these families receive their reports.

Going down to the proportion of employment initiative graduates not receiving welfare benefits for 12 months, on page 255, I'm just wondering how you anticipate getting more clients job-ready and what strategies you have in place for that.

Going down to the duration of welfare for clients expected to work, what happens if they aren't working? What action does the department take? How do we know that welfare clients are becoming independent? How do we know they haven't moved to another province? What's the tracking process? It's been a month now. When can we expect the Coopers & Lybrand report so the rest of us can see what's going on, especially with expediting the redesign and getting those boards in place? It would be great to see this report.

I want to move now to the actual programs. I'll talk about program 2, income support to individuals and families. I'm just going to rattle through these, Lyle.

DR. OBERG: Sure. I guess we'll get it in *Hansard* and get back to you.

MS OLSEN: Yeah. Sure. Okay. At 2.1.1, program support, is the decrease in this budget line due to decreased caseloads? What is the estimated caseload for this year. What is the expected decline? Supports for independence, the same. Is there a decrease expected in caseloads? What is the estimated caseload for this year?

Vote 2.2.2 is maintenance and recovery. What is the outstanding amount of arrears the government is pursuing? What has been the success rate to date? What percentage of the dollars recovered is paid to the government, and what percentage is paid to the client?

Vote 2.2.3, supplement to earnings. The Auditor General in last year's report stated that a review of this program needed to be done. What departmental review was done? How many files were reviewed? Did the files contain suitable information on plans to further the clients' independence? What is the current caseload for this program? With a stated government policy of moving clients off social assistance and into the workforce, does the government not estimate that the number of clients qualifying will increase? Why does the budget not reflect this then?

Employment and training support. How many clients receive services through this particular line item? Has there been a decrease or an increase, and how do you explain the drop in the number of people requiring this service due to the above argument that you use? Is it simply because of an overall drop in the number of clients?

Employment initiatives. How many clients receive service through this particular program? Has there been an increase or a decrease? What programs are offered through this, and how do they differ from employment and training support?

Shelters for homeless adults. Another note in the paper today: Calgary's having some more problems in relation to mental health issues and placements for mental health patients, who end up actually being the large number of people who are homeless. You've forecast to overspend by \$3.15 million, but the estimate remains the same as last year. Can you explain this? Mr. Minister, you recognized the urgent need in this area by allocating \$100,000 to Calgary in January. We've been fortunate that the weather's been on our side, but with this recognition of a need in this area, it doesn't seem to be evident in the budget. There is no increase. What percentage of persons that access shelters for the homeless are men, are women, are children? What percentage of these are receiving social assistance, are past social services recipients, are unemployed with no income, or are employed?

Child health benefits, 2.2.8, the federal increase since the national child benefit was announced just recently. What savings from assistance payments does the minister estimate will result? What savings will be realized through SFI, and what savings will be realized through AISH? Will we see this change reflected in the dollars contributed to the program for next year? It seems that there's a punitive policy of blocking any gains for families on assistance. Would you consider changing that policy?

DR. OBERG: There's a what, Sue? Could you just repeat that, please?

MS OLSEN: A punitive policy in relation to any gains for

families. We're not allowing families to make any more money on assistance. We're leaving the level where it's at. In relation to AISH families I think it would be the right thing to do to increase the funding to some degree in relation to AISH dollars. Is it possible for the minister to afford to allow social assistance recipients to realize a small dollar benefit now that the federal government has increased its contribution?

Moving down to benefits for people not expected to work, 2.3.3, AISH. What is the expected caseload increase for AISH, and why are AISH caseloads increasing? What percentage of AISH recipients are transferred from SFI?

Moving down to program 3, services for children and families. The Calgary Rockyview Child and Family Services Authority Board has \$150,000. Where is that money coming from? What particular other program area is that money coming from? Will all the money for the new authorities be transferred from the same area for the remainder of the fiscal year?

At 3.1.1, program support, the expenditure forecast is \$206,000 higher than last year's estimates, yet this line has been reduced further. What exactly is program support for? What exactly is it covering?

9:04

Office of the commissioner for children's services, 3.1.2. This area has been reduced significantly, and this brings up a number of questions. Again, where is the funding model? Were these estimates developed using the funding model proposed? I guess that's a concern. If the funding model is not in place, how do you determine what the moneys are that are required from each authority? If it's not, will the estimates be adjusted when the funding model is finalized, and upon finalization will the minister please share the allocations for each region? Would it be possible for the minister to share with us the submissions received regarding the funding model and the standards in monitoring as well? Who will staff of the commissioner's office be reporting to when the commissioner's contract expires? When do the staff contracts in the six regions expire? What will their role be in the transition phase, and how does this relate to the transition committee?

Community services planning, 3.1.3. What exactly falls under community services planning? What staff, what programs, and how do they fit into the transition process?

Just moving on to children and family services, could the minister provide like last year a breakdown of the FTEs in each program and, in addition, a breakdown of the qualifications of child welfare workers, if the minister has the information available? It would also be useful to have a breakdown of the qualifications of staff in contract agencies providing children's services. In relation to the increase for contract services that just occurred for outside of the government, I'm just wondering what particular line item that is coming from. I see that intake and investigations have increased, and I'm just wondering what the rationale is behind that.

In-home family support. I have some concerns about in-home family support. Sometimes children should be in secure custody because they're very difficult to handle at home, and then we end up putting them one on one in-home. That doesn't work out, and it's known within a few hours it doesn't work out. Then we end up with the child back on the street or doing whatever the child chooses to do until the child comes to the attention of the police or another agency again. What number of families receive help through this program? How many families have had their children apprehended at some point and then returned with support? What is the cost per family and per child? How many

of these children who are returned with in-home support have been in secure custody and then returned?

Adoptions. There's a small increase in adoptions. What profits do search agencies realize in doing a search for an adoptee or a birth parent? What is the average per request, and what is the lump sum total profit?

Foster care: we've seen an increase there. I guess I have a couple of questions. Could the minister provide us with a detailed budget for this area? What is spent on recruiting foster families? What is spent on training? What is spent on support to families? Is there anything spent on respite care, and how many staff work in this area? What are their roles and responsibilities? What is their training? What is the breakdown of the number of foster families and their skill qualifications, the number of children requiring foster care and a level of care determined they need, and the breakdown of placements matching the skills of the family to the needs of the child?

A couple of other questions. Where indeed is this government at in relation to the gay foster parenting concern? What policies have changed? Are there any written directives, written policies as of yet, or are they word of mouth? What can we expect around the corner here from this government on the position it's taken already?

Also, in relation to foster parents, I would like to know what this process is, so if you could clarify that for me. I've had recently an aboriginal family who lost their foster children, whom they'd had for nine years. Those foster children since October have been in four different foster homes, and it was due to an allegation. The allegation was not substantiated, and the police have no interest in this family. Yet this department wants to pursue this with the family, and they want to ensure that the family goes to mediation and that they'll come out with some conditional agreement. If these claims have not been substantiated, then my concern is that we risk losing good foster parents. Once the police have no interest in pursuing alleged child abuse or neglect, then where is the department with that? I have some serious concerns around that, given the bureaucracy and the fact that this particular family is told that they now have to pay half if they want any say in an assessment before they can again take on foster children. They've had to get a lawyer; they've had to pay out of pocket. So maybe we could get some answers to that.

THE CHAIRMAN: That concludes the opposition's first hour. Now it's the government members' first hour. Any people with questions?

Mr. Cao.

MR. CAO: Thank you, Madam Chairman. First of all, I commend the two ministers and their staff for putting together an excellent business plan. It shows that the government has the accountability and strategy to handle our tax dollars, which is a very appropriate program here.

My questions regarding some of the items in detail. If you look at item 1.0.5, it shows that the budget of the deputy minister of children's programs has been reduced from \$1.3 million to about \$960,000. That is about \$400,000. Does this have anything to do with the new regional authorities coming onstream?

Related to that, I also look at 1.0.6. The assistant deputy minister's office, adults' programs, is looking at an increase in budget next year. What is the increase intended to fund? Another question relating to that too is from 1.0.1 through 1.0.4. These are small increases, but the concern, I could say, is that small steps could add up to quite a big thing. These are the small increases in the four budget items under ministry support services

that relate to the two ministers, the deputy ministers, and the standing policy committee. I wonder what these increases relate to.

Also, I look at element 3.1 in detail. The budget in program 3.1, program support, services for children and families, is going down by about \$4 million from 1996-97. My question is: are these staff cuts, or what is happening there? Also, money is moving to 3.3.1. I wonder whether the \$1 million will be the maximum administrative spending, or could the authority's costs grow beyond this amount?

Element 3.2.9. Spending on the early intervention program is dropping down to \$17 million from \$19.5 million. Now, how will this reduction be managed?

I think I'm probably concise enough on those points. To sum it up, I think the excellent business plan here gives me confidence that we are doing the right things and we are just heading in the right direction.

Thank you.

9:14

DR. OBERG: Thanks, Wayne. If I could very quickly answer some of them. You mentioned – and this is what Sue or Linda actually mentioned as well – the increases at 1.0.1, 1.0.2, 1.0.3, and 1.0.4. What those increases are due to is the wage increases. So actually the budgetary apart from wages is exactly the same, but because of the recent settlements and potential settlements, we have seen the salaries go up. That's why the budgeted number goes up as well.

The other issue that you brought up was on program 3. You talked about EIP, and perhaps I can leave that to Minister Calahasen to quickly go over.

The other thing you had talked about was the million dollar assistance from regional authorities on the administrative funding. They can grow on this. We're hoping to keep the administrative costs in the children's service authorities down to exactly what the number is at the moment. What we're looking at is actually a 2.6 percent figure, which is what the authorities are working on right now. What we're attempting to do is allocate the resources appropriately, and what I mean by the term "appropriately" is that some of the smaller regions have a critical mass, so to speak, when it comes to administration. Some of the larger regions have an economy of scale, and what we will do is try and marry that, come up with the best way, keeping within the 2.6 percent cap.

I think you had some questions to Pearl as well.

MS CALAHASEN: If I may, Madam Chairman, I'd like to answer some of the questions.

When we're talking about 3.3.1 and 3.1 elements, Wayne, you were talking about the program services and how the money is going down and whether or not there are staff cuts. I think one of the things when you're looking at it is that the reduced budget in these areas actually reflects the progress toward implementation of the various child and family services authorities. As you realize, region 4 has been one of those. We're planning that within the next month or so we should be able to start seeing the rest being appointed, and eventually the phaseout of the commissioner's office will occur as we move towards the children's services authorities. So that money will flow to them rather than staying in an administrative capacity in the department. So I think when we're looking at the savings that show up, \$1 million has been reallocated to cover the '98-99 cost of authority operations. I think this is really important as we move towards regional authorities assuming control and responsibility.

The other one that you were talking about is 3.2.9. You were

talking about the early intervention program and its dropping to \$17 million. Actually, what we did was we had certain amounts that were allocated for the first three years. In the first three years there was \$50 million allocated. I think there was \$10 million, \$20 million and \$20 million, and in the first year we didn't even use the \$10 million. We only used a very small amount. In fact, I think it was in the \$900,000 range. In the second year we only went up – I think it was to \$13 million. In the third year we were up to \$17 million to \$19 million. So this year we're very lucky to have had \$17 million given to us to be able to continue to work towards early intervention programs. Those will be assessed based on the outcomes as to what they've been able to do to be able to see what it is that we're wanting to accomplish as we move towards regional authorities. I think that's really an important perspective when we're looking at that specific area.

Madam Chairman, I don't know if you want me to address some of the concerns and issues that have been brought by previous speakers, but if I may, I would like to do that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Perhaps a few minutes.

MS CALAHASEN: Okay, when we're talking about mission statements – and I think this is a really important question. The mission statement that we have says, "Help families to be responsible and accountable" as the beginning. One of those areas is probably the basis of what regional authorities have been going towards to be able to look at what needs to be done to help families and children. I think that sort of sets the stage in terms of what it is that we are intending to do with the regional authorities as we move to community-based services.

The outcomes and the goals. There was a question as to when are we going to tell us. I think what we have to know is that the outcomes and the goals are going to be rewritten with community partners in '98-99. I think it's a real important part to be able to look at that. When we're talking about community-based, it means they have to be involved in this whole prospect too.

Maybe I'll continue on as we go.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MS KRYCZKA: I just had questions regarding a couple of programs, Mr. Minister. On page 204, program 4, overall spending in the services to persons with developmental disabilities will go up by \$14 million to total about \$265 million. My first question is: what is driving these costs? A supplementary question to that has to do with line 4.0.3, the Michener Centre. The budget was going down in previous years. I understood that people were moving out to the community. We were talking about that just the other day in long-term care review. Why is this spending now going up? I see just \$1 million. A supplementary: what is the budget for Assistance to Persons with Developmental Disabilities Provincial Board. It looks like almost \$1.5 million. What is that intended to cover?

I had another question on another page, another program. Would you like me to ask that first? Carry on? Page 206, 6.0.2, under family and community support services, overall a \$5 million increase. How do you plan to use the new money? Then my supplementary: despite the overall increase, will any existing municipalities lose funding? The second supplementary is: how does the new allocation formula work?

That's all I have to ask this morning. Thank you.

DR. OBERG: Thank you. Perhaps if I could take a stab at those.

The \$265 million: what we're seeing in persons with developmental disabilities is twofold. First of all, we're seeing individual case costs going up. What you're seeing is that the actual cost of a lot of the medical devices, so to speak, has increased quite significantly. Second of all, we actually are seeing an increase in caseload also. That's what is resulting in the increase of close to \$15 million, actually \$20 million when it comes to the budget from last year.

9:24

The Michener Centre costs are going up for much the same reason. We're seeing an increase in salaries. We're seeing an increase in the actual costs of running the facility. The clients are still moving out. We're expecting the population to go down. What is happening is things are getting old there – they aren't quite as efficient as they used to be – salaries are going up, just the overall costs, which are leading to the Michener Centre costs going up.

Your third question, Karen, was on the FCSS funding, what we are planning to do with the \$5 million. First of all, when you looked at the FCSS program, there had really been no change in this program for probably the last 20 years. They were done on 20-year-old populations. One of the issues, as you know, is that over the past 20 years in Alberta there's been a huge change in where the population is. We have moved a lot from rural to urban, and the population redistribution has occurred. Unfortunately, the FCSS funding did not look into that. What this \$5 million will do is change to a new funding formula that the FCSS groups wanted to put in. It's funded on the basis of median income, and that is what that group came back to us with, and we think it's going to be good. There will be no losers. That's one of the really important aspects of this formula, that there will be no losers. Some of the municipalities – Calgary is a good example. I believe it goes up 2 and a half million dollars with regard to this. This is purely a function of population moving into Calgary from the rural areas. The other thing the \$5 million does is bring 10 new municipalities into this. So this is something that has been looked upon very favourably by the municipalities.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

There being no further government members who wish to pose questions, we'd now revert to the second hour for the opposition.

The minister has indicated he would like to answer a few of Ms Olsen's questions before going on to the next speaker. Okay.

MRS. SLOAN: May we restrict that to a certain period of time?

DR. OBERG: Sue asked me about 9,000 questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: The maximum would be 20 minutes, but I'm sure he won't take a full 20 minutes.

DR. OBERG: Yeah, I'll try and talk fast. Perhaps what I could do is ask the hon. minister to answer some of the questions first.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. I really appreciate this. There are a lot of questions that were asked relative to the transition and what's happening to children's services. One of the questions I was asked was on the transition, that there was not explicit information available. I want to be able to answer that, what has been happening in the past while, because it's an important part.

The transition planning has been going on for a long time now. Ever since we started working with children's services and the

steering committees, they've been planning in terms of what they want to take over and how it's going to be done and have really worked very hard and diligently to be able to do this. We've been actually putting a lot of transitional matters, including the sequence of timing of the transfer of responsibilities and resources from the department – we've also looked at a transition plan that was to be jointly developed by the authority and operation staff of the department to ensure that community-based delivery is implemented in an orderly fashion and that children and families are assured of continuity in services. I think this is an important perspective as we begin to look at some of the things that have been questioned by both of you today and otherwise.

When we talk about a number of the other areas where transition has been working, we've been looking at staff transition. What do we have to do with staff? The repositioning of the department. What do we need to do to be able to ensure that whatever happens, there is a structure to be able to look at what we're doing? Regional transition: certainly for those regional operations planning staff has begun and the services and supports have been looked at to see how it can be done.

The funding transition was another issue, and I think this is an important perspective as we move forward. We get a lot of questions on the funding, and this is one area where we really want to ensure that the community at large has been involved in any consultation that has occurred relative to what we need to ensure that the funding will be available.

When we're looking at community board development, there's been significant work that we've been doing with boards and specific to the steering committees to look at the development of boards and how we're going to make sure they assume their responsibility.

There are still many issues that need to be looked at. We've got some 46 issues and activities that have to be taken care of, that must be completed prior to the move to community-based delivery. We feel we're in a pretty strong position to be able to ensure that whatever happens, they're going to be ready to take this on.

The steering committees have certainly been involved in all aspects to ensure that whatever is going to occur in the community is going to be good. The transition team members that we've been working with – Paula Tyler has been our chair. We've got a lot of really great people from the department and the Council of Regions representation as well as our deputy minister, who has been involved in the transition.

I know it's going to take a long time to be able to get some of these going, but our region 4 has already started the process. They are our first ones, and we're finding that everything that has been planned to date has really served well and effectively for the communities. We know that as we move forward, it's going to continue to even be better.

When they were talking about team leaders, the team leaders are definitely Paula and Dave Steeves – and we've been working in that area to ensure that whatever is going to happen will continue – as well as John Lackey, who is our commissioner. He's been working very hard with the steering committees to ensure that whatever we do is going to be the best that's possible.

There were some questions relative to the departments involved in integration. We have five ministries that are our partners under our children's services initiative: Health, Education, Justice, AADAC or Community Development, and of course Family and Social Services. We are trying to ensure that whatever happens, the integration occurs. In a few areas we've been able to do that by our involvement in the business planning process. As each department brings forward its business plan, we've been there to

ensure that they outline the goals and activities and strategies and outcomes to ensure that whatever occurs, we have a portion of the children's services to ensure that this smooth and effective transition occurs and that integration continues to occur.

One of the other areas that I think is really important – and I congratulate my colleague the Family and Social Services minister – is the FAS and FAE. That definitely is going to be one that crosses all the different areas. It includes Health, it includes Justice, it includes Education, it includes AADAC, and it includes Family and Social Services. That one sort of attracts all areas and all departments.

The other one, of course, is child prostitution. That's exactly the same kind of area, and I again congratulate my colleague in that respect because he's brought that forward as one of the ones that could be dealt with as an integrated matter.

[Mr. Cardinal in the chair]

The other one, of course, is children's mental health, which is another issue that crosses all borders, and we have to be able to deal with that from a child's perspective.

There were questions relative to the funding model. The funding model has gone out for consultation. We've received the information, and we are now going to be able to ensure that whatever happens, we are listening to the people who have brought forward those concerns and their concerns to address the issues that have been identified.

The standards model is still out there. It's not completed yet. We are still requesting information from people, and once it comes through, I'll definitely provide that information for the members.

THE ACTING CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Pearl.

Lyle, I believe you have some answers.

DR. OBERG: Sure. Thanks Mike. If I can, what I'll do is just very briefly touch on a few of the questions that you put forward, Sue, and the rest of them can be picked up in *Hansard*. I think that would probably be the best way to do this.

You had mentioned the convention on the rights of the child, and we will get back to you with our rationale on that. I touch on that with Linda's questions as well.

Day care, the increased cap to 500. What we have decided is that if there is a good day care that is providing good day care capabilities to people, they should not be limited by the number they can have, purely by some arbitrary number that is brought out. We have decreased the cap. We feel that we have control enough over these agencies by our inspection powers, by our powers to go in and ensure that they are operating in a good way. The other thing to keep in mind is that what we're probably talking about in relation to this are the for-profit day care agencies. Presently 70 percent of the day cares are for-profit; 30 percent are not-for-profit. We feel that if there is, in the worst case scenarios, a price setting or a price-fixing because there is one agency that is doing it all, there is ample room for not-for-profit day cares to come into the fold.

9:34

The anticipated savings in day care. The anticipated savings this year is zero. The anticipated savings next year is \$4.4 million. The *Edmonton Journal* in its ultimate wisdom managed to screw that one up totally, but that is what the anticipated savings are.

The other thing I must comment on is the individual day care

costs. It is important to note that some of these day cares, all things being equal, all funding being equal, should actually be decreasing the amount they're charging their clients. We have an example in Brooks where the actual increase should be \$4 per month, yet what they have done is increase the day care rate \$70 per month retroactive to January 1, despite the fact that this program is not coming in until April 1. Everything else being equal, as I say, it should be \$4. I had an extensive conversation with the owner/operator of the day care and talked to her about this, but the bottom line is that she is using the government change in regulations as an excuse to increase the amount per month. I'm not saying that the increase wasn't justified, because quite frankly the owner/operator was making absolutely zero on her day care. However, to do it on the back of the government and the change in regulation without being up front with it, I believe is wrong.

[Mrs. Laing in the chair]

The CAFRA standards. Certainly we will take a look at them, Sue, and if there are any there that we feel we can adopt, we certainly will. I must say that the same people lobbying against our changes in regulation are also lobbying against the CAFRA regulations. The CAFRA regulations are a higher form of regulations in day care than what we presently have. A lot of the private, for-profit day cares are lobbying against getting these brought in.

The Olivia Calf Robe case. First of all, I must remind the hon. members here that this was a case in 1995. That often isn't brought out. This was a case that quite frankly – and the hon. member has brought out some issues with it – was mishandled. There are probably two or three different areas where this could have been handled better. What we did is we took a look at this. The people involved were dismissed where there was obvious incompetence, and we will ensure that this never happens again. There were some issues such as this lady – as she was 17 years old, I believe – was taken and put in a foster home without any information being given to the foster parent first. Quite frankly, that is inexcusable, and as minister I will not tolerate that happening.

The issue about the information. I will certainly take that as a request and talk to the Department of Justice and find out why this didn't occur, especially when it was court ordered. As you know, the medical examiner's office falls under the Department of Justice, and it is their responsibility to release these reports and get them out. I'll certainly find out what the issues were around that case for you, Sue.

The strategies for job readiness. We feel that this is one of the most important aspects of this department, and we are certainly moving in that direction. We work with Advanced Education and Career Development very closely to get the people that are on welfare out into the workforce. We try and individualize each particular case so that they can optimize their own attributes towards working.

The welfare clients, the expected-to-work clients. The question was: what tracking mechanism are we using to follow these clients? The big issue we have here, actually, is the privacy of the clients themselves. Once they are off welfare, we have no way of tracking them, and that's due to the privacy issue with the Ethics Commissioner. Absolutely in a perfect world we could follow them. Roughly, the only thing we can track is whether or not they come back onto welfare.

The Coopers & Lybrand report. It will certainly be ready, we're hoping, within the next few weeks. It's a very big report.

It brought out some issues that we need to deal with internally, and when these issues are done we will be bringing it forward.

You asked about decreasing SFI caseloads. We're budgeting \$37,000 to \$36,000. Thirty-seven thousand was the budget in '97-98; '98-99 is \$36,000.

The shelters for homeless adults. Again, a very interesting and large topic. The bottom line on this is we spend the amount of money that is needed. That's why we were \$3.1 million over-spent. We're a department that has the ability, because we're very caseload dependent, to move the funds around so we can put funds into the areas that need more. Just as an aside, when we gave the \$100,000 to Calgary, which allowed them to open up the new shelter for the homeless, the head of the Calgary homeless shelters basically said they were the only city in North America that had the space so that anyone who was homeless could come to the space. That's what that hundred thousand enabled us to do. I went and inspected those facilities. I saw what was going on, and the amount of work that they do is absolutely amazing. I would recommend to any member to go down and actually see the Calgary homeless shelter and see what they're doing. It's absolutely great what they're doing. As I say, with the extra \$100,000 that was put in, they've stated that there should be no one on the street, as there is space available.

National child benefit. You talked about savings from the national child benefit. There are no savings. One of the deals, so to speak, that we signed with the federal government is that if there were any savings, any changes in the program, these funds have to go back to helping children. What we've done is we've taken the \$10.2 million which is prorated from July 1, which is why it isn't \$17.5 million, and put it into a low-income child health program. So we feel this is something that is very good as well. The other issue raised actually by the NDs the other day, which I believe is alluded to in this question, is the issue that there actually will be a savings to the province of Alberta. For example, if the fund is \$770 by the federal contributions, the provincial contribution will go down \$50. As I said, first of all we are going to keep SFI payments exactly the same. Any dollars that are freed up we're using towards the low-income child health benefit.

Another issue was the AISH caseload. We're anticipating an increase from 21,600 to 22,200. The reason for the increase in cases is something we are looking at. Quite frankly I find it extremely hard to believe that in some months we're seeing an increase of 100 people on assured income for the severely handicapped. To put that in perspective: in many months there is an increase of 100 people, 100 severely handicapped people, in Alberta. I find it very difficult, being a physician, to come to that realization, to come to that conclusion.

The Calgary children's authority. Where is the funding coming from for the administration? The money is coming from the commissioner's office that is being wound down.

Contracted agencies. Where are the funds coming from? The line items – it is integrated into children's services as well as to persons with disabilities. So, just as an example, the dollars are integrated in 3.2.3, 3.2.5, 3.2.6, 3.2.7, and 3.2.12. On the children's side of things, on the persons with disabilities equally: they are filled in there as well.

9:44

The foster parenting. Sue, you brought up some specific individual issues, and if you give that to me in writing, I would be more than happy to take a look at it and find out what's happening. I can't respond on individual circumstances or individual issues, but I'd be more than happy to respond if you

write that to me.

You had a lot of other questions, specific questions that I couldn't write down fast enough. So what we will do is when *Hansard* comes out, we will give you all those answers as quickly as we can.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Next opposition member; is it Ms Leibovici?

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: You have 20 minutes.

MS LEIBOVICI: Okay. If I may start with some generals first and then move into the specifics. In looking at both Budget '98: Agenda for Opportunity and the government and lottery fund estimates, I find that we're still not moving towards a model of systems delivery that focuses on early intervention and prevention. What, in fact, we have is an after-the-fact system of delivery of services. If I may give the minister a suggestion, what he might want to look at is developing a branch within his department much like we see in Labour where there's a – and I was just trying to find the exact name. It's an issues development branch that looks at what some of the trends are in the field of labour, that also looks at how we can avoid labour strife within the province of Alberta as well as looking at if there are issues within the department. They get called in to help deal with those issues.

The reason I'm saying that is that I think we have a lack of a social conscience, a department that looks at the social economy and deals with the social deficit that we see within the province right now. I believe the department that it most likely would rest in is probably Family and Social Services, if you look at broadening the definition of what Family and Social Services does. What it's become is a department that delivers welfare. What it's become is a department that looks at dealing with children who are in foster care, after the fact. What it's become is a department that looks at dealing with victims of family violence as well as victims of prostitution, after the fact. I would like to see the department become much more proactive in its ability to deal with a variety of issues.

When we also look at the information and the recommendations from the Growth Summit, they were in a sense specific when it looked at what the social economy had put forward. What it did say was that the province needs to adopt an early childhood development model because, as we all know, early intervention – and as they put it, a solid development strategy to support children as they grow – is what's required.

They had some actions which I would like to draw the department's attention to because in fact they have not been addressed in the budget. The words are there, but the actions are not there. They're on page 78 if you wish to reference it within the final report of the Alberta Growth Summit. What it talks about is "nutrition must be emphasized," and there must be hot lunch programs. What it talks about is that by the year 2000 there has to be a Head Start program for children when high-risk situations develop, and it "should be available to all children by 2005." It talks about making "the services of professionals such as speech therapists, psychologists, nurses, librarians and aides available in [all] schools." It says there should be "Child Abuse/Family Violence Intervention Teams available across Alberta as soon as possible and in place by 2000." It actually says to "re-establish Day Care/after school care standards and funding." It says to "strengthen the role of the Children's Advocate to represent all

children and report to the Legislature." Interestingly enough, it also suggests that we "reduce the number of regions for children's services to six or [at least] to the number of health care regions" so that they're coterminous. There should be "two Centres of Excellence for children's services" introduced and "areas of government departments serving children [should] ensure a seamless delivery of services."

Now, when they talk about the areas of government – and I looked in the Agenda for Opportunity – it seems there's one area of government that's been left out of the government departments. That's Education. I've noticed that there is reference to becoming integrated with Advanced Education and Human Resources Development Canada. There may have been reference to Justice, but I'm sure that the minister can let me know if that's the case or not. But the areas of government that need to be integrated when we're looking at services to children are of course Health, of course Education, and of course Justice as well as Family and Social Services – and I don't see that within the document – and also to fully implement the four pillars of the redesign of children's services.

Now, when I reference back to the goals and also to the vision of the department, what's interesting is that one of those four pillars is not mentioned, and that's early intervention. We talk about the integrated community-based delivery service, and with that what I would like to see is a reintroduction of the family grid that this government had put forward approximately six or seven years ago. I know the minister is well aware of that family grid, but I would like to see it. Again, I see this department as being the social conscience to look at how that family grid is put in place across all departments in government, not just Family and Social Services. I would like to see that reintroduced. And I'd like to see within the budget documents, if not some other documents the government could put forward, how the services in government and the legislation in government are in sync with the family grid.

When I look at the goals, it talks about "preventive" somewhere here: "Encourage and support preventive social programming in communities." Again, it doesn't talk about early intervention as one of those four pillars. So I would like to hear some specifics from the minister as to where those programs are, what the dollars are that are attached to early intervention programs, and what the long-range plans are for the department, again looking at what some of those recommendations were from the Growth Summit.

The other part that I think this department needs to address, because again I don't see where else in government it's being addressed, is the interrelation between the social factors, if we want to call it that, that have an impact on families and on children and also seniors. It's interesting. I know that this department is not responsible for seniors; Community Development is. But when you look at Community Development, in fact they don't deal with the kind of work that seniors require, which is: what happens to them after they've been abused? What happens to them when they've been abused in their families? Who do they go to? What agency in government does a senior who needs social service intervention go to? I don't see that anywhere here, and maybe that's me just not knowing, but I think that needs to be addressed. There's a gap in services for seniors.

What I was heading towards was the idea of this department with regards to the social factors that affect the kind of services that you have to deliver. One of those factors is poverty. What, in effect, is this department doing to recommend to other departments, or again as a social conscience of this government, to find ways – and I'm reading this out of the Growth Summit report –

“to reduce, and eventually eliminate, inequities such as poverty”? One of those, of course, is looking at the minimum wage, and one of the other actions in the Growth Summit – and again the government can look through this – was to look at instigating homemakers' pensions. Those kinds of actions in fact would help to address the issue of poverty and would in fact perhaps help address some of the issues like nutrition of children in schools.

9:54

Now, if I can go to some of the specifics and some of the more specific questions. If I can backtrack just a little bit, when we go back to 2.2.2, maintenance and recovery, as well as the issue – I know maintenance came up in one other section of the votes as well. We are seeing in our constituency office an incredible increase in the number of maintenance enforcement cases where individuals are owed, and usually it is single women who are not necessarily on welfare. When I looked at the standards, as it were, or where you would like to be, what you talk about, your goals, your performance measures, is: “proportion of single-parent welfare cases with child support orders.” Again, I recognize that Justice deals with the parents that are not welfare cases, but would it not be more efficient to have one area looking after maintenance enforcement as opposed to splitting up the families based on whether they are receiving welfare or not? Is there any ability to ensure that the reforms that are being put forward in maintenance enforcement can be fast-tracked and that the rate will be higher than – and I'm not sure what it is in Justice – 65 percent in terms of recovery? I had one individual on Friday who's owed \$71,000, and she is not the only person I've had in my office that is owed that kind of money.

The other issue that I'd like some clarification on – and actually you will be receiving a letter from the constituency office on this as well as with regards to adoptions – is that I've had a number of individuals phone directly asking: what is the situation; are we going to open up the adoption records fully? I recognize that's a policy issue, but it's causing some grave concern amongst some of my constituents who feel that there should remain a veto on their records.

Now, when we look at 3.2.7, residential care, it's disappointing that the estimate increase does not match the forecast expenditure for last year. Can the minister inform us how many residential care spaces there are in the province by region? How many of these have been added over the past year? Can he also let us know what the numbers of children requiring residential care are? Are those numbers increasing? If so, what are they, and what is the age breakdown of children in residential care? Specifically, what services are they receiving, and are those services integrated and seamless?

Early intervention programs, 3.2.9. Could the minister please elaborate on the formula used to allocate early intervention dollars to each region, and specifically what risk factors are used and how are they weighted? What is the breakdown of dollars received per region? Is this a model similar to the funding model proposed by child and family services? Would he please share all feedback he's received regarding the effectiveness of the EIP funding model?

Also, there may be issues around who receives and which program receives funding. If the number of programs that meet the program requirements exceeds the dollars available in a region, how is that determination made with regards to the funding? Is there any security? Are there any assurances to agencies that they're going to receive the same dollar amount that they received the past year? If there are unspent dollars in one region, will they be transferred to regions with an abundance of programs that meet requirements? If not, what happens to those

unspent dollars?

Day care programs, 3.2.10. Why has there been a funding decrease, and can the minister provide a detailed budget for this program outlining the dollars spent on operating allowances, dollars spent on subsidy, dollars spent on staff, and in which areas? What are the FTEs for the department in each position, specifically the number of licensing and monitoring employees per region and the breakdown this equals? In the breakdown, how many centres per licensing and monitoring staff in each region? What savings is expected to be realized through the elimination of the operating allowance, and will this be redirected to day care programs specifically and in what form? What is the department estimate of the number of new families that will qualify for subsidy, and how many staff is the department hiring to accommodate this increase? Has any progress been made in extending the subsidy program to families who are seeking employment? What calculations has the department done to determine what the cost of this would be?

Prevention of family violence, 3.2.12. Currently, the funding to women's shelters covers 65 percent of the basic needs is my understanding. The additional money that's allocated, however, will not address the 8,000 women and children who were turned away from shelters last year. If we can project to this year, then there will be a significant number as well that will be turned away. What portion of this item is set aside for education and prevention programming? What increase in funding would be required to ensure that every woman and child who was turned away last year would now be able to access the services? In other words, if you took a base of 8,000, which was last year's turnaway rate, and applied it to this year's budget, what would the dollars required actually be? Will the envelope provided in the new funding model to the regions be calculated using current spending or need as identified in turnaway areas?

Protection of children involved in prostitution, 3.2.13. I understand that you've provided \$5.2 million over three years for that program, and I congratulate you on that. This year that allocation is approximately \$500,000. That seems like a small amount of money, especially when you look at that being the initial start-up. You would think there would be more dollars allocated at the front end as opposed to over the next two years. The question is: what will be the allocation, then, for years two and three? Is it divided in half? On what basis was the decision made that it would be \$500,000 for this year and some kind of split on the \$2.35 million for the next two years?

I also have a concern that I'd like the minister to address with regards to the children who are now apprehended – well, actually there haven't been any apprehended. The ones who are placed in situations such as hotels when they're taken off the street: I'd like to know what kind of supervision is available for those children and what plans are made while they're taken off the street, so to speak.

Assistance to regional authorities, 3.3.1. If you could provide a detailed outline of what will be provided for out of this vote and what exactly is provided for with this vote. One of my key concerns with regards to this area is: with the commissioner now no longer being present, who is actually going to co-ordinate the regions that are going to be set up? There has to be a line of responsibilities somewhere. It's not good enough that it's the minister, because I know the minister is busy and ultimately will say, like the Minister of Health does: it's not my decision; it's the decision of the regional health authority. So there has to be someone who's in charge who can deal with the day-to-day and ensure that the regional authorities are effective and can do the job they're set up for. I know that the others have expressed concerns

around the regional authorities, whether they in fact will be able to deliver the services, and questions around what "community" actually means when we talk about the community delivering services. I have grave concerns with regards to that.

10:04

DR. OBERG: Perhaps we could start off with minister Calahasen.

MS CALAHASEN: Well, thank you. There were some really good questions that you've brought to our attention, Karen. When you were talking about they're being too reactive and proactive, one of the things we heard as we were going through the planning phase is that people wanted to be more in a proactive position than a reactive. That's why they've been planning everything they've been doing, to be able to deal with that. I think that's one way to be able to look at it. But when you say that there should be a branch looking at issues, I think that's a really important one as we move forward in this whole process. Of course, one of the visions I've articulated to Bettie Hewes is that we have to look at centres of excellence, of how we can deal with that in terms of research and looking at proactive movements rather than reactive. I was really pleased to see that she advocated that quite vociferously.

Regarding integration. You discussed integration, and I wasn't sure where your reference was from, because you said that we missed out Education and Justice. I don't know where you found that, but I would appreciate knowing that. In everything that we've been doing, we have made every effort not to leave out any of the departments, because every one of us is responsible for families and children. Therefore, whatever we do, we have to look at the integration component. So if you can identify that for me, I'd like to deal with that even to a greater extent.

Regarding the four pillars, that's also an area you said we were missing: early intervention. The four pillars are definitely early intervention, community-based, aboriginal children, and of course the integration, which are the pillars we've been working with. One of the things the communities have come forward to us with is that very strongly they have indicated we must work with the communities, that the regional authorities must be the ones who will address these four pillars, and that anything in terms of planning they have to look at. Now we're looking at when they start doing their business plans, they have to ensure that these are going to be included.

The other one that I think is really important is that when we're talking about the repositioning of the department, we're looking at providing a more co-ordinated, cohesive capacity to research so social scanning can become more proactive rather than just reactive. I'll leave that to my colleague to address because that's within his area, but that's an area we've also been involved in to ensure that that occurs.

Regarding the regional authorities, they will be held accountable for putting the pillar of early intervention into place through their business plans, as I indicated, and will be monitored for that by the province and by the department. There must be a shift to early intervention in the future. There must be a shift, because that's what they've been telling us, that's what we want to see, and that's what we're going to be pushing for so that they bring that forward in their business planning process.

You indicated early intervention. You asked a lot of questions relative to that. I could barely get all the questions, but if I miss any, I will certainly deal with that. Early intervention in the long term will be funded through the funding model. You asked about the factors and the formulas. There are four factors that we're using. One is the number of children zero to 17 in an area, the

low-income families, single parents, and aboriginal children. The amount the boards will be responsible for – and this is really important, because I think whatever they do, the boards will be responsible for making allocations. They'll be responsible for establishing priorities and of course making the best use of the dollars they'll get in our global budget.

A question that you asked was on unspent dollars from one region to the other. There'll be a provision for each region to be able to look at what they want and what they will spend, but I can guarantee that they'll probably spend it all. The minister has the capacity, whether it's through Family and Social Services, to move around dollars, if he sees fit, in terms of some of the areas where there will be need. But basically what we want to do is to encourage good management in every area and to deal with those issues that have been identified through the community planning process and thus in the business plan.

Those are some of the areas. If there are any I've missed, I'll certainly go back and check those. I'll have the minister give his answers to some of the other areas.

MS LEIBOVICI: Can I just refer to my reference?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. Go ahead.

MS LEIBOVICI: It was on page 251 in the Agenda for Opportunity document, where it talks about employment and income programs. I didn't notice that any other departments in any of the other areas were addressed in terms of integration. I might just add that when I looked at the vision, it talks about prevention. It doesn't talk about early intervention. That's why I brought that up as one of the four pillars that was missing when we looked at the goals of the department.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Mr. Minister.

DR. OBERG: Thanks, Pearl. Thanks, Madam Chairman. I'll very quickly run through a couple of points. Your whole idea about becoming more proactive: that's certainly what this department is for. This department is very interesting in that it has a line it has to walk. There's a Child Welfare Act that we have to fulfill. We have to undertake the provisions of the Child Welfare Act, and there's no ifs, ands, or buts. What we then do is if there are any dollars left over, if there are resources left over after doing that, we certainly put them towards being more proactive. The early intervention program is one. This may be some of my bias, but probably one of the biggest ones that I see will be the fetal alcohol syndrome program. I see that as making a huge difference, but certainly your point is well taken on becoming proactive in this department.

Integration. The hon. minister has spoken to it to a great degree. Probably the most difficult task we have is integrating between departments. A lot of the departments have developed in silos, have developed in stovepipes. To break that down has become a tremendous task not only at the department level but also at the service delivery level between the RHAs, the school boards, and the children's services authorities. So this is one of the challenges that we recognize we have, and we are moving towards breaking that down.

The point on the Family Policy Grid. I agree. I agree completely that the Family Policy Grid is a great document. I think we should bring it back, and we will certainly strive to do that.

The issue on family maintenance. Your point is well taken.

What we're looking at is monitoring the payments within our particular aspect. What we're seeing is that with families that are on SFI, if they had their family maintenance cheques given to them, they wouldn't be. These are people that are not receiving what the courts have ordered, and consequently they're going to SFI in order to get their funds. We believe this is wrong.

Your point about family maintenance being in several departments. Again the lead department is Justice. However, we have our aspects that we need to as well.

The early intervention program funding. The one thing I must say is that it is not divided up on a regional basis; it is divided up on a program-by-program basis. What we are attempting to do is find the most beneficial programs and put that funding towards that. There are no assurances that a program will continue indefinitely. The reason for that is that they have to put in performance measures; they have to put in performance indicators, outcome measures. If they do not meet these, if they are not seen to be having a positive result, then they will not be renewed.

The savings realized in the operating allowance for day care. This year there are no savings. It is transferred completely over to the child care subsidy. Next year there will be a savings of \$4.4 million.

With regards to your family violence comments, the one thing I would say is that we fund 65 percent of beds, not necessarily the basic needs.

The second thing is on the turnaway rate. Certainly we want the turnaway rate to decrease, but what must be remembered is that if there is a woman who is in an abusive situation, they are not sent back to that abusive situation. They are put up in hotels, or they are put up in other forms of shelter.

10:14

Children involved in prostitution: \$500,000 this year to basically get the program up and going. We still feel there is some study that needs to be done. We need to look at the different ways of doing it. The budget will be \$2 million next year and \$2.7 million the year after that.

The decision on children's authorities and someone in charge is an excellent point. One of the issues with the regional health authorities has been that the minister has delegated out a lot of his responsibility. The responsibility for the Child Welfare Act has not been delegated out; it is still the responsibility of the minister. The breakdown for the minister responsible for children's services is that she monitors the governance, and my department looks after the day-to-day concerns of what is happening, including the budgetary items.

I've attempted to gloss over a lot of stuff, and the reason for that is that we can get back to you from *Hansard*. I realize you have more questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

As the second opposition party is not here, then we would let the loyal opposition continue until 10:30.

MRS. SLOAN: Just returning, then, to some specific general questions. The minister did not respond to the questions with respect to the deaths of children in care and the concerns raised by the Children's Advocate and the opposition.

DR. OBERG: If I can, just on that . . .

MRS. SLOAN: Actually, I would be happy – my point in raising it, Madam Chairman, is that I would like a written response to the questions to ensure that that is incorporated, as well as a response

to the question around freedom of information requests. We have not received those specifics, but we'd be pleased to receive them in writing.

Another overall concern with respect to the ministry's business plan and budget is the lack of targeted goals, policies, and programs for the aboriginal people, specifically aboriginal children. We know that that population comprises over 40 percent of the child welfare caseload, yet we fail to see specific targets again within this year's plans. We question that, given that many of the indicators don't appear to reflect that the circumstances and the environments in which these children are being raised are improving.

Also, in the last fiscal year the minister has made public statements with respect to an investigation of his department exploring some mechanisms or processes to establish fetal rights. We have not seen those incorporated in the business plan. There have been no further public statements made. We would ask whether or not the ministry is continuing or intending to pursue that and, if so, what the process will be.

The minister will recall that I wrote a specific letter asking, in relation to the money reduced from day care and early intervention funding in the last fiscal year, where these dollars were reallocated in the '98-99 budget. I would propose that if you took those reductions from the last fiscal year, it almost equates to the money which you have proposed for new funding this year. But there was never an amended budget provided publicly after those cuts were made, and to date there are still no specific references as to where the operating allowance reductions and the early intervention reductions went.

I think it's relevant also, with respect to the budget and funding, the lack of the funding model being in place, proceeding, or at least being released with respect to the regional authorities and regions. We are aware that certainly one organization has proposed that within that funding model there should be envelope funding and that specifically there should be an envelope of funding for children with disabilities. The Alberta Association for Community Living has proposed that, in conjunction with population-based budgets, envelope funding should ensure that funds be available for HCS, while the population funding formula does not. They reiterate that the funding model framework, regardless of the population framework for determining funding, should recognize and honour the needs of children with disabilities and their families.

We see no incorporation within the budget that an envelope process is being considered, nor is there any reflection that a holdback fund, which is also being proposed by advocates for handicapped children's services, be created to compensate regions for unexpected or extraordinary expenses, including children with disabilities who have high cost needs. The position they articulate is that regional authorities should provide the necessary funding regardless of the costs associated with meeting the needs of children with disabilities if the child is eligible for support. At a regional level a family with children who have high-cost needs should be treated no differently than any other family. There is no clarification of this within the budget business plans, and we would ask for that clarification in writing from the minister.

I would like, then, to move perhaps just to the point under program 4, disabilities, to ask specific questions with respect to services to persons with developmental disabilities. What has the department done in response to the Auditor General report citing concerns over monitoring procedures? Could the minister please share the monitoring procedures with the developmental disabilities boards? We would also ask: what vote is the money on the regional developmental disabilities boards transferred from? I

would also appreciate a reply to that in writing.

Then moving to program 5, advocacy and guardianship. Philosophically we would register some concern with respect to the change in title. The department's philosophy and ideology with respect to the Children's Advocate in the future remains unclear, specifically with respect to the regionalization of children's services. We are extremely concerned that the office of the Children's Advocate has been subjected to a decrease in funding despite the fact that the office is forecast to overspend. With increasing caseloads in child welfare and given the role of the Children's Advocate to investigate and advocate for children, how can a decrease be justified?

THE CHAIRMAN: If I could interrupt for a minute. Ms Barrett is here, and she said that she needs about five minutes, so if you could wrap up in about two more, Mrs. Sloan. Okay?

MRS. SLOAN: Well, actually I believe we still have five minutes on our last hour, so I'm prepared to wrap up.

THE CHAIRMAN: Their 12 minutes comes out of your hour.

MS OLSEN: Well, it's unfortunate she's late.

THE CHAIRMAN: I know, but she's asked for five minutes.

MRS. SLOAN: Just for the record, then, I think it's important to say that in our last hour the minister and deputy minister have taken 30 minutes, so our questions have been significantly reduced. But I'm pleased to comply with the chair's ruling.

THE CHAIRMAN: All right. You have a couple more minutes to finish off, please.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you. Reading from the Children's Advocate report in '96-97, under the heading "Prevention and Fiscal Restraint," it's important to put on the record verbatim what he has said:

While we know this to be an important consideration for families, we have allowed a rigidity to creep into our public assistance policy which insists that our most vulnerable families, single parents with young children, seek gainful employment no matter what their circumstances. Such a policy seems to lack fiscal sense, let alone compassion. I have intervened in situations where families who were no longer able to provide the basic necessities of life for their children were threatened with having to relinquish them to Child Welfare. Senior officials have always exercised judgment in such circumstances and assisted the family in question. In some instances Child Welfare funds were used to provide the families with the basic necessities of life. In others, an exception was made to ensure that the SFI program met their needs.

I still see no addressing, either singularly or generally, of the recommendations and issues raised by the Children's Advocate; specifically, other serious issues surrounding the services for 16 and 17 year olds, the tracking of deaths, and a number of others.

Also, I would just like in conclusion to cite from a couple of fatality inquiry recommendations, specifically the fatality inquiry of John Ross McKinnon, which made the recommendation that a fatality inquiry report should be organized such that they can be easily identified and recovered by subject matter and recommendations. I have not seen concerted action with respect to the department on that matter. Also, we see in that same report that it was proposed that regional authorities make way for suicide prevention training and incorporate that as one of the standards in

the future regional authorities. I guess we will have to wait to see if that's been incorporated in the document, as we have not seen those standards as yet.

10:24

I think the minister tried to rationalize that with Olivia Calf Robe it was judgment and error and that the responsibility lay mainly with employees. We see the errors made within that as only one example. There are a number of examples, a number of recommendations on which we have not seen concrete actions taken. I would also for the record say that recommendations under have not been publicly addressed and that they should be so. I think that at this stage the department needs to put those things and the actions they are taking on the record, before the regions are formed and that process unfolds.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ms Barrett.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Under 2.2.8, the child benefit program, I'm wondering if it would not be more feasible just to eliminate the health care premiums for those people, considering the amount of bureaucracy they already have to go through. The pitch I'd make to the minister is that the \$18,000 annual income threshold is pretty low and argue that the benefit program should kick in at a rate much different than \$18,000, the maximum being the \$18,000.

Under line item 3.2.9, the early intervention program. It's down now to \$17 million, and I don't understand why it would incur a 15 percent cut when one considers that we're talking about prevention, which is ordinarily much cheaper than fixing up problems after the fact.

I also notice that the administration fees for family day homes remain intact, but the operating allowances for day care centres are going to be cut this year and then eliminated next year. All of the day care centres are arguing that this will be damaging to them. It may force some of their clients to seek out cheaper alternatives in the unregistered area of day homes.

Under 3.2.13, the money that's being allocated to help out the children involved in prostitution, as per Bill 1. It's half a million dollars, \$500,000. I believe that when the initiative was announced, the government said eventually there'd be \$5 million being put into the support services, and I wonder over what period of time that might be. I'm not arguing that there's just half a million; maybe that's just start-up. Also, are other departments involved with the funding of those follow-up services?

One more point, the \$3.3 million more into planning; that is, developing the regional authorities. Has the minister considered going with the six-region policy such as we have for adults with development disabilities instead of the 17 regional health authorities? Take it away.

DR. OBERG: Thanks, Pam. Maybe what I'll do is give you some very quick answers.

Child health benefits: yes, the benefits will go up. What we have done with the first \$850 million that has been given down is we have determined the best way to affect the most people, and that is why there is a percentage co-pay. Don't forget that what we're doing is giving something to people that have not had anything before. With the second payment, that was announced in the budget, of \$425 million and \$425 million, we expect to see one of two things: either the number of people expanded or the benefits expanded. That's what we will be doing with the second \$850 million as it comes in.

The early intervention programs and the reason that they've gone down \$17 million. The program was initially funded at \$50 million; we're now up to \$54 million. These funds will be rolled into the regional authorities. Quite frankly, some of the programs were not meeting the outcome expectations that we initially saw, and we felt that \$17 million was the correct amount to put in that.

Day care operating allowance. We are moving the dollars from the day care operating allowance into the child care subsidy this year. Some day cares that you're hearing from, Pam, if I may, are complaining when in actual fact they're going to be seeing an increase in the amount of dollars they are bringing forward. What we're trying to do, as I've stated several times, is we're trying to make more money available to the lower income people who require child care and take it away from the higher income. A good example is there's one day care that will receive an increase of approximately \$10 a month per child, yet these are the ones that are still complaining. So take it with a grain of salt, Pam, and we'll get back to you with the other issues.

MS BARRETT: Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. That concludes the hour. There being no indication of further questions from the government members, then I could entertain a motion for early adjournment, pursuant to Standing Orders 56 and 57 that the designated supply subcommittee on Family and Social Services now conclude its consideration and debate on the 1998-99 estimates for the Department of Family and Social Services prior to conclusion of the four-hour period allocated. This requires unanimous consent. Who would like to move it for me? Mr. Johnson. All in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MS LEIBOVICI: We've got more questions.

MS OLSEN: We have, but we can't use the government members' hour.

THE CHAIRMAN: You can't use the government hour anyway.

MS LEIBOVICI: It should be unanimous.

MRS. SLOAN: We'd like to register our opposition.

MS LEIBOVICI: We're registering our opposition; it's not unanimous.

THE CHAIRMAN: To closing early? But you can't use that government hour.

MRS. SLOAN: Thirty minutes of our hour, Madam Chairman, were used by the minister.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, then we have to sit here and the government uses the time. That's the other option.

MRS. SLOAN: Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: We should have a break.

[The subcommittee adjourned from 10:31 a.m. to 10:46 a.m.]

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. I'd like to call the meeting to order. The first on the speaking list is Mr. Cardinal.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman, for giving me the time. For my first question I'll refer to page 215 of the '98-99 government estimates. I can just get this in *Hansard*, and if you want to answer this later in writing, I don't mind if you do that. You don't have to answer it now.

My question is under revenues, page 215, in relation to transfers from the government of Canada. I notice the estimated dollar figure on that for 1998-99 is that \$338,300,000 will be transferred, and that's not exactly the total because there are other smaller amounts under that area that I won't mention. When you compare that with the 1996-97 transfer – the transfer in '96-97 was \$411,301,000 – that is approximately \$73 million that the federal government is no longer transferring for social support programs in Alberta.

From what I understand, since the program changes started back in '92-93, that transfer is over \$100 million. I just wonder what direction the federal government is going. Are they going to continue reducing the federal share of social support services in Alberta to the point where there is no money anymore from the federal government? Could you give me some indication on that? It is a very important issue. When one jurisdiction opts out of an agreement and takes out \$100 million from social support services, of course that can create a lot of problems for our budgeting process and balancing our budget. You can give that to me in writing if you want or answer it at a later time.

The other issue is in relation to child welfare, specifically the increase in the caseload. A number of questions have come up this morning. As minister when the welfare reforms were put in, one of the areas we had indicated was to ensure that children's services provided support to try and keep the family together as much as possible and the child at home. We had initially indicated and planned that the number of apprehensions should not go up drastically, but the number of home support agreements would go up until we dealt with the issue of poverty and getting people back on their feet and independent and self-sufficient. I haven't seen anything anywhere as to what their actual breakdown is. Are the home support agreements going up, or is the number of families apprehended going up?

The other issue I'd like to mention is the issue of the budget itself. I know that back in 1992-93 the budget at the time for child welfare was, I believe, \$165 million. I notice that the highlights included on page 211 indicate that the child welfare budget is now over \$240 million. So that's over \$100 million increase in this short period of time. I've also had a concern in that area. One of the concerns I brought forward a number of times is that half of the children in care presently, the 12,000 or so that are on our records, are aboriginal children who someday may be the responsibility of the federal government and the First Nations. The First Nations' objective, as far as I know, is that they do eventually want to take over the delivery and administration of services to all their children, on and off the reserve, and that would include one hundred percent federal funding and also federal legislation to allow the First Nations to be able to deliver their programs. I feel that is one area we have to try and manage as we move forward in restructuring child welfare.

We want to make sure that whatever structure we put in place, we keep in mind that five years from now 50 percent of the caseload may be gone to the complete administration of the aboriginal First Nations, including funding from the federal government, including legislation. So as we move forward, we'll make sure that is part of our plan. In five years that may happen. Five years from now, we may only have half the caseload we're projecting at this time because of that takeover. That not only will be a saving of children and families, but they'll be saving in

dollars and many frustrations for the First Nations themselves and the taxpayers in Alberta.

I just want to briefly touch on another issue. Because the child welfare and the whole social support issue is a very complicated issue, it's a very complicated process, there doesn't seem to be, you know, one complete answer to resolve all the problems we have in that particular area. I just wondered if the Liberal caucus that's here today would provide a copy of their social policy – I mean, there's a couple of leaders here – to the department so we can take the good parts of their report and integrate them into our report so we can have, you know, a good report at the end. If it's available, I wouldn't mind seeing a copy of it myself.

So those are all the questions I have. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Madam Minister, do you wish to respond now or in a minute or two? We have another speaker.

MS CALAHASEN: Do you have another question?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MS CALAHASEN: I want to talk about the children's services, if I can. There were some questions that were brought, and I'd like to highlight those.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

LeRoy Johnson next.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chairman. My question to the minister is more of a general nature. In the establishment of the children's authorities there has been much talk about partnerships and co-operation between the various departments, including Justice, Education, Health, and Social Services. The talk all sounds very good, but I'm wondering in more specific terms what initiatives you have in mind or what plans you have in mind to encourage these various departments out in the field or out in the areas to actually get together and co-operate and establish co-operative programs that will be for the good of everyone in the community.

In my own constituency I know there was a pilot project undertaken in Wetaskiwin, the Wetaskiwin children's services, in which this has been undertaken and actually done in the last few years – and done very successfully, I might add – where the various departments have co-operated certainly to the benefit of the children and everybody in the area.

Is this something that's just supposed to happen, or what is your department doing to push it along and make sure there is this co-operation that will take place?

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Are there any other speakers? Questions?

Okay, Madam Minister.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you very much. As a matter of fact, there have been some questions which I think deserve answers. There were a lot of questions relative to the early intervention program, and then I'll go down through some of the other areas that have been identified.

I know that Pam – and she's disappeared again. Oh, sorry. Pardon me. Pam asked some question relative to the early intervention project. As I identified earlier, the early intervention program was actually started April 1, 1995. Our hon. Member for Athabasca-Wabasca was the fellow who was in charge and

really had a good vision looking at early intervention. He identified \$50 million from his department to be put into a three-year program starting from April 1, '95, and onwards. On April 1, '95-96, we had, as I indicated, some \$900,000 that was used up in the first year. That basically was all that was able to get out. In '96-97 there was something like about \$13 million. In '97-98 there was \$17 million to \$19 million. We're still working to see how we can increase that. We were unable to get any more than what was identified.

10:56

In 1998-99 basically that was a totally new group to be able to work within the new dollars that would come forward. We were very lucky to have achieved the \$17 million. So that will be rolled over to the communities as they move forward in the regional authorities. I was very pleased to see that come forward, because I think when we're looking at early intervention, that's probably one of the biggest things that we can do, to look at intervening early before we deal with a crisis, which I think you have identified, Karen. I think those are the kinds of things we want to be able to go forward with.

Relative to some of the other questions on early intervention, all programs are presently being reviewed. One of the things we're looking at is: have they been effective? Are they effective in what they're been doing? Have they accomplished their outcomes? Are they working? Those I think are really important, because the community wants to see things work, not just put money in where it's going to disappear and not do anything.

Are they consistent with government and department goals in improving the lives of children and families? That was a key issue. I think it was identified by yourself, Karen, at one point. Are they really working to be able to look at how we're going to improve the lives of children and families? That is definitely one of the questions we do have as we're monitoring and evaluating these projects. Most are working; some are not. I think \$17 million should be enough in this next year. If we continue in this same vein, I think we'll be able to identify and work with those issues as we go through.

EIP dollars were for what we call demonstration projects of what can be usefully done and carefully done in helping support families and children. Three hundred and sixty million will go out through the funding model and the reallocations. Actually any reallocation can be made within the large envelope. When we're talking about the \$17 million, I really strongly believe that the communities are even going to be more proactive than we have been. They're going to look at early intervention projects. They will have that opportunity to be able to do whatever it is that they want, to look at preventative and early intervention approaches rather than just dealing with crises.

The initial kind of feedback I have received from the preliminary service plans has just been excellent, the projects that they've identified and actions and activities and strategies that they are now coming forward with. I do believe that as we move into the business planning phase, we're going to see some of that happen. I just have such faith in the communities when they start to realize what they can do with their communities. I for one believe that it's not only going to be \$17 million; I think they're going to be able to utilize a lot more than we've ever given.

One of the areas that I think it's really important we emphasize – there are always goals and outcomes. One of the things I have heard consistently from communities is that the goals and outcomes need to be developed by the department in partnership with authority boards. They don't want us to be out there ahead of them identifying those when they are actually going to take the

lead in the communities. They are very strong in coming forward and saying: "Let us be partners in this. After all, it is a partnership. Don't you guys go ahead of us and make these outcomes and goals set by the department when in fact you want us to be able to drive them. We would like the department to be involved, but let us be part of the process." That I think is a really key message I'm hearing as the minister responsible for children's services. In my view, they will help determine what will be in the communities.

I think the biggest part they bring out is that a mechanism has to be put in place to be able to deal with the other portions, which are the PDD boards, as you identified, the regional authorities, and even school boards and health authorities. How are we going to be able to pull those together? That's the mechanism they are now trying to make sure is going to be identified. But they're the ones who are driving it to see how it can be done at the community level. As a politician who was not truly as involved as I am now as the minister, I didn't see that at the time, but I'm beginning to see that even more so as we move forward and as we start to get the communities taking over control and authority. It's really a difficult one as we move. It's kind of hard to see that portion, but they've been working on it for the past three years, almost going on four years, and I see some really drastic ideas coming forward which are very positive. So I for one really believe that we are starting to move in a direction that they want us to.

What's my future role? That was the question? What's the connection between the minister without and the Minister of Family and Social Services, and what am I going to be doing? I want to talk about that. I thought my job was done once we got the regional authorities up and running, but the more we began to look at some of the areas where we needed to and the people in the communities started telling us what has to happen out there, they were coming forward and saying that no, my job isn't done, there's still a lot more work to do. I think the one area that is really quite prevalent in any discussions I have is that they see a strong relationship to the authority board overseeing the governance of functioning, which I think you've highlighted to me in past discussions, Karen, if I can recall.

It's also working with other departments on the whole issue of integration. Integration is probably going to be our biggest trial, and I know that the Minister of Family and Social Services has identified that as one of the challenges we have. It is a challenge. When you're looking at ways to be able to get various departments to work together for the benefit of children and families, it's very difficult when you've been used to looking through pillars and little, you know, silos. So it's a most difficult one as we start to move in that direction, but it's starting to come. As I identified, one way was to be able to look at: how then do we deal with it from a perspective as a minister? First of all, through the business planning process that has been going on in government. I certainly go to every one of those meetings to be able to identify that.

I think the Premier's speech in January certainly gave a big boost in terms of integration. I believe as you read the Speech from the Throne that that is weaved throughout the whole speech in terms of the integration, working together, children's services. It's weaved throughout, and I haven't seen that happen in a long time in any Speech from the Throne I've been involved with, and I've been here for at least – how many now? Three? Four? No, I guess it's eight now, going on eight. That's a long time. Oh, my God.

I think it's also ensuring that the boards live up to the principles and practice of the four pillars, which I think is one of the crucial components. The four pillars certainly have driven the communi-

ties. It's important for us as government to ensure that those four pillars are going to be dealt with in the manner they want them dealt with, and I know that that's one of the things I have to do. I have to ensure to oversee that the transition is smooth and effective. That will happen in the next while, but it takes a long time. It will take a little while yet. There are some challenges we want to make sure we deal with, and I think those are areas that we need to be able to work on.

The other area that I've always been questioned on is the standards. When we went out to talk to people about what kinds of standards we wanted in the children's services, we wanted to make sure that whatever we did, we incorporated the feedback from the communities. There are standards that we as a province use presently. I probably can file those if you want. These are the present standards we have. We've been working with the communities to find out what it is that they want to see. One of the most important parts of standards is that they said: we want givens to be part of the standards; there have to be givens that we follow, but let us also have some flexibility. We have to make sure that whatever standards we have are based on what we've got plus what they want to be able to incorporate into their standards, because every community is not the same. My communities are certainly not the same as Calgary.

So when we're talking about standards, we must be flexible to be able to address this, and I think those are the kinds of things that I've been hearing quite strongly, that we have to be able to get some of this out, and people will see what we have based right now and what they're going to be doing. That information is now coming forward, and certainly we'll give that information out as soon as we finalize the kinds of standards we have. I think there's still some possibility to be able to come forward and identify some needs. I know that you've brought some concerns forward as a team as to what standards have been identified as needed, and I know we're looking at what needs to be done in the final document.

11:06

When we're talking about the funding model, the funding model committee, which was made up of provincial and community representatives and stakeholders, has identified certain areas. They've gone out and talked to various people, looked at a number of resources, and I want to talk about those resources. When we look at the sources of data that were used to be able to identify what needs to be done for a funding model, the primary sources were the Stats Canada '94 studies; the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, 1996; the Stats Canada census data, 1991; the Population Research Lab – and I know you know about that specific one – updating 1996 population projections and regional adjustments; the Alberta health premium subsidy data, which was March 1996; the 1995 statistical report and provincial summary, the Alberta women's shelters; a variety of studies from 1989 to 1996 on various children in need factors. When this question came up, I went out and found out which resources were being used and to see if they were outdated. There were some 34 resources that were utilized during the process, and there were some 30 out of the 34 that were 1991 and above for data, which isn't bad, because when I look at the census, the last census was in 1991, I believe – right? – and now we're going on to other census data. It's not outdated from that perspective, and I think that's a really important one as we begin to look at what needs to be done in funding.

That funding model isn't complete yet. Once we take it forward and get some consensus from our colleagues, we certainly will provide that information to everyone. It's based on the

information that has come from the various regions: anybody who wanted to provide information and anything that needed to be done relative to that.

As we're moving forward, I'm excited. Communities can finally decide what they want to do with their children and families. To me it's finally allowing people to be able to determine their own destiny in the community-based system. I feel strongly that the community is ready. They've been telling us they've been ready. I don't think we've listened as well as we should have, but we are doing that now, and I commend my previous colleague as well as my present colleague and of course our Premier for the way we've been able to carry out some of the things the community has wanted. It's still a lot of work. It's not going to be an easy task. But I feel strongly that when communities have bought into a system, you cannot stop them once they've been involved. I think that's a very important part.

There were some questions relative to some of the information on encouragement of integration. All departments and authorities will be part of what we call developing the business plans so that services and true co-ordination of integration will occur. I want to commend John at this point, because what he's done is through the almost four years he's been involved in the planning phase, he's really pulled the community together to be able to bring it to the point we're at. It hasn't been an easy task, but it's been a fun task according to what he's said to me. He's dealt with communities; he's dealt with individuals. He's dealt with people who had dreams and visions of taking control and authority over their children and families. I think that's a very important perspective, because as we finish this – what do we call it? The beginning of the end?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The end of the beginning.

MS CALAHASEN: The end of the beginning, the end of the planning and the beginning of a new era in terms of responsibilities now coming, and I think that's a real important perspective as we look at that.

If you look at some of our estimates – and I don't know where they're at right now. But when you look at the funding for shelters, that has increased, and that will now go over also to the regional authorities. That I think really identifies some of the needs that the community has brought forward and identified as concerns, and I think that's a very, very important part.

Handicapped children's services. We've also identified some funding, and that'll just be rolled over again to the regional authorities to be able to manage and to be able to do as they see in terms of some of the things that are needed.

An area that I think is really important is the establishment of children's services, and LeRoy brought this up. What initiatives specifically? We are working on a variety of initiatives to be able to look at the integration component, as I indicated, but also the communities are the ones that are probably doing it much better than what we've been doing. That example that you have is an excellent example. Out of the four pillars, however, they have not included the aboriginal component, and I think that's an area they're working on. I know that I've given them that as a challenge, to be able to look at that and how you include the people of aboriginal descent to be involved in that whole component. I think that's a really important perspective, because our four pillars are basically that, and the rest of the community has got a really great mix when we're talking about professional people. Then we need to be able to include some of the other components of the four pillars, and they are starting to work in that vein and definitely want to see how we can get that going.

The co-operation. We're really working hard on that one. David Steeves has now been seconded to me to be able to look at the integration component and how we're going to move forward in that integration. He's been shaking the trees out there with the various authorities as well as the various boards and the community generally and with our projects to see how we can even increase that profile much more and how we can involve them in a meaningful way even more so. If you have any further ideas, I'd appreciate that.

I could use your support as we move forward in the budgeting process so that when we go to our colleagues' budgets – Justice, Education, Health, Community Development – we'll be there together to be able to say: we need you guys to be involved, and you guys give us some ideas as to how we can do this. I think those are the kinds of ways that we can all be involved in terms of the budgeting in how we can get that integration component and how we can get that co-ordinated focus of how we can do that and specific initiatives which I think will be very, very key to the success of what your group has been doing really well and even more successful as we move forward.

Madam Chairman, I think I've covered most everything in terms of the children's services. I appreciate the opportunity to be able to identify what I think my role has been and what my role will be, and as we move forward, we all need your help, every single person here, because you are a family member, you are a community member, and as we move together, this will be the best thing that's happened for children and families.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Madam Minister, for an excellent overview and good answers, I think, to the questions that have been asked.

Now, I would like to ask the opposition members if they are willing to entertain a motion for adjournment at this time, or we will continue on. We have until 14 minutes to 12. This would still be the government block. So if you're willing to entertain a motion for early adjournment, then we would entertain that at this time. If not, we'll continue on with a second round of questions.

MS LEBOVICI: We shouldn't stop anyone from having the opportunity to ask questions, so we can continue.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.

Karen Kryczka, are you ready?

MS KRYCZKA: Yeah, I just had a few questions to ask the minister. My initial question that I asked, I'm not sure I heard the answer. It was program 4.0.7, the board. The question was: what is the budget, which was close to \$1.5 million, for Assistance to Persons with Developmental Disabilities Provincial Board intended to cover? I just wanted to see if I could get an answer on that.

MS CALAHASEN: We will get Duncan. Duncan, do you want to talk about that, or do you want me to? Maybe you can deal with that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, the officials are allowed to answer in the absence of the . . .

MS KRYCZKA: I just have two other quick questions. Do you want me to cover those also?

MS CALAHASEN: Sure.

MS KRYCZKA: Okay. Also program 2 and the point was 2.3.3. There was an increase of \$5.5 million from what I could see, assured income for the severely handicapped. How would you explain why the increase in assured income for this group?

Going over to program 3.2.13, protection of children involved in prostitution. The new funding of half a million: what is it intended to cover? What initiatives would this amount of money cover?

What I've done is sort of leapt from one program to another.

11:16

MS CALAHASEN: I'll ask the deputy minister to answer those because that's within Family and Social Services.

MRS. DAVID-EVANS: Thanks, Madam Chairman. Starting with the half a million dollars that you're looking at for the child prostitution area; I think that was your last question. We intend to consult with the community in order to ensure that the supports are in place to make that legislation come about. We're presently in the process. MLA Forsyth is starting the process to meet with the community members. That will include police from certainly the two large cities. As the process evolves, there will be an identification as to how best to utilize those dollars. Perhaps it's for some secure treatment beds; perhaps it's for a certain kind of program, that kind of thing. So we would want to make sure that what is necessary will be planned over a three-year period and that the kind of supports the community feels it needs in order to ensure that this legislation can be implemented well will be put in place.

You had a question around AISH and, I believe, why it was growing. Certainly we're seeing, Madam Chairman, a very significant growth in that area, and it's for a variety of reasons, including in some cases parents who are getting older who are very concerned about taking care of their children who are, of course, adult age. So we're seeing some of those folks come into the system that we haven't seen before. With the improvement in medical technology, we're also seeing that some of the persons with developmental disabilities are staying in the system, are able to live a lot longer, enjoy a longer life. There's a cost increase to that, to keep them in that situation as well. We've also seen an increase in the problems when we have people born with disabilities. In past years they weren't able to stay alive. Now with the kind of technology we have, they're certainly able to stay there. We also have a program in Alberta that is a good program. We do see in-migration also affecting those figures. So those are some of the reasons. Certainly it is increasing and certainly continues to be worrisome for government.

I just need to check on your first question with regards to what the dollars will be used for for administration purposes. All the dollars that will flow to the community boards will indeed flow through the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Provincial Board. So all the community boards will receive their allocation, and it is the provincial board that we will hold primarily accountable to ensure that there is protocol between regions to make sure that people have the services available that they need. It is that group again, the provincial board, that we will hold accountable to ensure that outcome measures and standards are implemented. We will also be working with them for monitoring and evaluation purposes. For all those reasons the provincial board certainly will have to have a level of dollars to make sure that they can implement the program as it's required. We will be working very closely with them, as well, and we see that relationship to be an excellent partnership. The long-term vision that they will be able to develop for persons with disabilities together with the community looks very promising.

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Wayne, do you have a question?

MR. CAO: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I guess my question again is going to be more specific. I want to refer to some elements in the estimates. On page 202 of the estimates, reference 2.1.1, the ministry is planning to reduce spending significantly from the '97-98 forecast for program support. Is this related to staff reductions due to dropping welfare caseloads?

My next question is in reference to element 2.2.1. If the staff reductions are primarily covered under program delivery, could you tell us how many staff cuts you are anticipating in this area?

MRS. DAVID-EVANS: Thank you. Madam Chairman, with regards to reference 2.1.1, actually the primary issue there is the computer costs for the welfare program of \$3.7 million. We've managed to amortize that by the end of 1997-1998, so we won't have to carry that forward any further. So that makes up the largest portion of the reductions. The balance of the reduction does relate to costs incurred for staff separation packages. Again, we won't expect to be doing that further. So the remainder then is the caseloads as we saw in element 2.2.1.

Madam Chairman, the second question related to staff reductions under program delivery. We're anticipating that the area will be reduced by 80 full-time equivalents. We're using attrition and redeployment opportunities instead of layoffs to do that. As we have increases in other programs, such as in child welfare, those staff that are qualified and, indeed, want to move over to do another part of social work are then hired into those positions or, if you like, transferred into those positions. So we're looking at a comprehensive human development strategy in the department so that we can reutilize staff in a capacity that is reasonable and doesn't in fact impact in large significant layoffs.

MR. CAO: Madam Chairman, can I? I still have a few more regarding this.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. CAO: I guess again going into detail with elements 2.2.8 and 2.3.3, we see that the budget for child health benefits is \$10.2 million. Will this amount grow over time? Okay; that's one question.

The second question regarding this is on 2.3.3. There is an additional \$6 million budgeted for the assured income for the severely handicapped, or AISH, over what was spent in 1997-98. What is the driving growth in spending in this program?

My third question, referring to 2.2.1 under capital investment: what is that \$9 million budget intended to cover?

Thank you.

MRS. DAVID-EVANS: Madam Chairman, with regards to those questions, certainly the health benefits plan at this point in time is \$10.2 million, and we recently heard, as the minister mentioned, the federal government taking a look at that and announcing, in fact, that there will be two more successive years of approximately \$400 million introduced into the system. The \$10.2 million is really 17.5 annualized. So certainly for the 1999-2000 year you will see an increase, and at that point in time you will also see the additional increases given by the federal government.

As the minister indicated earlier, we'll be reviewing how to best utilize the dollars from that, and it may in fact be to increase the level of the dollar value of income for families that would be eligible. Right now it's at 18, and we could look at it as higher.

Also, some of the programs are partly cost-shared, and maybe there's an opportunity to reduce that cost-sharing level. There would be those issues to look at. So we will certainly be continuing to consult with the community to make some determinations on that one.

11:26

MS CALAHASEN: Maybe you want to talk about the computer system also.

MRS. DAVID-EVANS: Yes. Your last question – actually, maybe I'll just answer your middle question first. Your middle question related again to some of the services.

MR. CAO: AISH.

MRS. DAVID-EVANS: Yes. That would be the same answer I provided just a little bit earlier, again looking at a tremendous increase in the population that's not able to work.

With regards to your last question, that was on the \$9 million in there for capital. The minister has announced taking a look at the whole income and employment program redesign and looking at a comprehensive approach to all the income service programs that we have. The \$9 million is there for the requirement to upgrade the computer and the software systems that will be necessary to bring that whole package together.

So, Madam Chairman, that's the bottom.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Any further questions? If there are no other questions, we can ask Ms Kryczka again.

MS KRYCZKA: I'm over on program 2, and I'm just wondering if you can explain – I could make some assumptions I guess. Elements 2.2.4 and 2.2.5, employment and training support and transitional support under supports for independence, see decreases of \$6 million each, yet employment initiatives is an increase of \$11 million. So one almost offsets the other. I'm wondering if you could explain just what that means, the differences in these programs? Is it just some shifting around?

The other question I was going to ask had to do with program 3. Again I was making an assumption. I just want to clarify the reduction in the budget in two areas, 3.1.2 and 3.1.3, the office of the commissioner of services for children and families and community services planning. Is that because of winding down and going forward with the new initiative there?

MRS. DAVID-EVANS: Madam Chairman, taking the last question first, indeed the community planning process the commissioner has been involved with is definitely winding down. Minister Calahasen is expecting the service plans to all be in by the end of March, and that really winds up the community planning process that the commissioner was hired and in fact planning to do. Therefore, you do see a reduction in those dollars occurring over that period of time. There is some cleanup work, as it were, so that's why it doesn't cut down to zero immediately, and that cleanup work will be carried out throughout the budget year. We do anticipate a significant reduction in the dollars moving from that area to the administration of the authorities as they come up and running.

MS KRYCZKA: May I ask one more question on that. Will they be downsizing that office? I know a few people who work there. Will they be going somewhere else?

MRS. DAVID-EVANS: Madam Chairman, certainly some of the individuals in that area have employment contracts, as well, that are up. In other cases, again, as the department is going to reposition itself, there's an opportunity for people to move into other capacities if indeed their qualifications and their desires are such that that would work out for the department. We are looking at opportunities for some of them, and some of them will be finished with their employment.

MS CALAHASEN: As we move into a repositioning, I think that will identify where they can go if they're going to go somewhere else. Also, as we move into a repositioning of the department, we're going to find out where everybody will have to do different functions as we go forward, especially as we're moving into the transition phase. In that transition phase we'll have to be able to deal with the issues as we're going towards that governance by the regional authorities. So it's coming together in that respect, and each one will identify their specific duties and areas of strength to be able to deal with that.

MRS. DAVID-EVANS: With regards to the first question, Madam Chairman, you did ask – looking at the dollar value – for employment initiatives, and they are kept the same level. But the reason for that is because the caseload that we now have is really becoming harder to employ, and we're going to have to spend more money to make those folks job ready.

You also asked about employment training. Because the caseloads are going down and the employment training is just a category under there, the employment training caseloads therefore go down as well. It's just that all of them are moving down and so is that, but the amount of dollars that the ministry will be maintaining for employment initiatives will remain the same because of the higher level of need for that population that's there in the caseload now.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any further questions?

MS OLSEN: We'd just like to raise a point of clarification on an issue of process and procedure. My concern is that previously deputy ministers in any of my other committees have not spoken, at least not replaced the minister of the particular department. With no disrespect to this deputy minister, I'm concerned that we seem to be going all over the place with these committees. The rules and the process are not the same for each committee, and I think that needs to be clarified through the House leaders to the Clerk, and moved forward. As I understood from a year ago, on the committee I was on, the deputy minister wasn't even allowed to speak at that time. So we need to get some clarification. My point is that the minister has left, so he's now being replaced by the deputy minister. Under what part of the process is that allowed to occur?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, the assistant here did check with the Clerk and he said it was all right for officials to respond. So we are operating within the rules that are currently existing. Now, perhaps this is something that the House leaders will have to certainly address.

MS OLSEN: My concern is not that the deputy minister is responding; it's that the deputy minister is replacing the minister. I have some concerns around that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, the department officials are still here, so the minister is still represented.

MS CALAHASEN: Well, another thing, Madam Chairman. I think it's important to know that when the Minister of Family and Social Services isn't here, I'm also the designated minister. I've asked the deputy minister to respond on some of the more intricate issues. I know that under designated subcommittees of supply, when we first negotiated the rules, the opposition wanted the department heads to come forward also to provide more information. That's the rationale for having department heads involved at this level. I know in the other it's not, but in designated subcommittees of supply that was definitely one of the rules that I know you guys were very strong about. I think that's an important perspective.

MS OLSEN: My argument is not with the fact that the deputy is actually speaking; it's the fact that the minister is not here and he is indeed the minister responsible. Clearly, as you stated, you have no authority. You have no funding ability and no budgetary requirements. We now have the deputy minister sitting in place of the minister responsible, who indeed has the budgetary authority. So that's my question. I understand from my colleagues that in other committees indeed the department heads have spoken at the request of the minister. In this case, the minister isn't here, and it appears to be a replacement.

MS CALAHASEN: If the minister is not here, and even in the House, I am the designated minister. So if I ask the deputy, then basically I have the authority to ask the deputy to respond. He's not available, so therefore I become the person who can designate who speaks at that point.

MS OLSEN: Fair enough. That's your argument. I want to see the whole point clarified through the process.

11:36

MS CALAHASEN: I think that's something further in terms of what needs to be done in clarifying what need to be the rules and regulations identified, because the original rules and regulations certainly state that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. We have about seven minutes to go, so if there are no more questions, we'll just sit until the time for adjournment comes.

MRS. SLOAN: Just one further procedural matter that we would like on the record but will also seek clarification from the House leaders in regards to. With respect to the time for the third party and the length of ministers' responses in the designated committees of supply, we had the instance today where the third party was not represented, came in late, and then subsequently interrupted the Official Opposition's time with respect to that. We also saw the minister formally and the minister without portfolio take approximately 50 percent of the second hour of debate time, and we would like those inconsistencies and inequities addressed as well by the House leaders.

THE CHAIRMAN: I believe there is really no time limit on the actual response time, although both ministers were very good about not going over 20 minutes together, so it was a combined time of 20 minutes, and they did follow that format. After all, the whole purpose of this is to get answers, and doing all of it by writing doesn't give the answers to questions that have been raised that are very important for maybe more immediacy, so I really feel that they answered appropriately in that time.

The other one: apparently there is no ruling on that, so that's something that would have to be decided with House leaders. It's up to the call of the chair, and perhaps you could yell at me for making that decision.

MRS. SLOAN: Just on that point, I think the fact that the time had already been forfeited, because indeed the third party wasn't here and represented, and we were prepared to speak for that 12 minutes is a point that needs to be clarified.

MS CALAHASEN: Madam Chairman, I think it's important that these things are dealt with through the House leaders. They're the ones who came forward with the rules and regulations and the process and procedures as identified. I think it's an important perspective for each of us to be able to bring those to the attention of our House leaders and that when the next negotiation occurs, you bring that up with your House leaders.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, I agree.

I'd like to thank everyone very, very much for attending the meeting today, especially the department for doing the yeoman's service – they gave some very excellent answers – and everyone for participating. We still have about four minutes to go, so perhaps we could look at someone getting ready to move the adjournment motion. Who would like to do that?

MS LEIBOVICI: In four minutes' time.

THE CHAIRMAN: In four minutes' time.

I think today there's been an excellent exchange of information. I think that's the whole purpose of the designated supply committee, so I hope we'll all keep that in mind. I'd like to commend the minister for her answers and the Minister of Family and Social Services for his answers as well and the staff for their good contributions.

Thank you very much.

MS LEIBOVICI: If I may, Madam Chairman, it's unfortunate that the process can't be flexible enough so that if there is time for the opposition to continue to ask questions, we can do that as opposed to being restricted to one hour, and an hour, and an hour. If we blocked off the three-hour period or the four-hour period, then this should be a free flow. I recognize that that's something you can't change. It needs to be the House leaders.

THE CHAIRMAN: We have followed the format as much as possible.

Okay. We're ready to entertain the motion for adjournment.

MR. LOUGHEED: I'd like to move that under Standing Order 56(a) and (b) the designated supply subcommittee on FSS conclude discussion on the 1998-99 estimates of the Department of FSS and rise and report.

THE CHAIRMAN: All agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: So moved. The committee stands adjourned.

[The subcommittee adjourned at 11:44 a.m.]

