

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Wednesday, November 19, 1980

Chairman: Mr. Mandeville

10:04 a.m.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good morning, committee members and everyone. We will bring our meeting to order.

You have the minutes of November 5; they've been distributed. Are there any errors or omissions in the minutes? Is there any business arising from the minutes? If not, we'll have our secretary file them.

On behalf of the committee members, Mr. Bogle and Mr. Strang, we'd like to welcome you to our meeting this morning. I'd like to introduce Mr. Strang to committee members. He's an assistant deputy minister of finance to Mr. Bogle. We'd like to welcome you here this morning.

Maybe at this time I could call on Mr. Clegg to swear in Mr. Strang.

*(Mr. Strang was sworn in)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: It has been the practice of our committee that anyone who has been previously sworn in accepts the oath he has taken, and I would ask Mr. Rogers, Mr. O'Brien, and Mr. Hiesler if they accept the oath they've taken in the past. Thank you.

Possibly, just before we start our meeting, committee members, I could get Mr. O'Brien to make reference to where Social Services and Community Health is in the different volumes, I, II, and three, and to just very briefly outline where they're at.

MR. O'BRIEN: Fine, Mr. Chairman. The general revenue statements in Volume I contain three schedules which provide summaries of departmental expenditures. The summary of operating capital expenditures is in schedule 2.11, and the Social Services programs are shown there on page 2.19 in Volume I. Schedule 2.5 provides a summary by program and major object of expenditure, and Schedule 2.13 provides details of departmental expenditure by object; the Social Services department is found on page 2.26. Also in Section 5 of Volume I we have the financial statements of provincial corporations and the major provincial corporation which is funded by the department and reports to the minister is AADAC. Its financial statements are found on page 5.103. The statement of trust funds is found on page 8.8 of Volume I, which shows the assets and liabilities of trust moneys for which the minister is responsible, such as the child welfare trust.

The detailed statements of departmental revenue and expenditure are found in Volume II at Section 19. Statements 19.1, .2, and .3 are the expenditure statements, and Statement 19.4 provides a summary of revenue. I might also mention that in Volume II the Housing and Public Works statements include, at page 15.11, a statement of the expenditures by the Department of Housing and Public Works on behalf of the department, which were \$12.8 million in the '78-79 fiscal year.

Finally, it might be helpful for members of the committee, to mention the reference in the Auditor General's report to the cost-sharing claim question that he had raised in his report which was found on page 35 of his report, Section 4.2.2.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. O'Brien. Mr. Minister, would you like to make some opening comments so our committee members can get something to get their teeth into and start directing questions to yourself or to Mr. Strang?

MR. BOGLE: I'm not sure, Mr. Chairman, that I need to make any opening comments to give an opportunity to members of the committee to ask questions. I'm sure they have questions that they would like to ask relating to '78-79 and the programs therein. As we've not been given any specific questions in detail, we'll attempt to respond as openly as we can. If there are questions that either Mr. Strang or I are not able to respond to today, we'll certainly do our very best to get that information and report back to this committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Minister. If the questions could then be directed to the minister and he could answer them himself or direct them to Mr. Strang.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I guess I first will make confession that I really have a difficult time sorting out the figures in terms of . . . I don't know whether I'm looking at a total figure of expenditure. For instance, now I'm in Public Accounts Volume II, reference 19.8. In looking at all the different centres that the department funds -- for instance, Westfield, Edmonton, which is 2.9.1 -- there's an estimate here and then an expenditure. Is that the total amount that it takes to operate that facility? Is that what we're looking at all the way down that page?

MR. BOGLE: That, Mr. Chairman, is the operating side, not the capital side, for the operations at Westfield, which is not a contracted facility for the department. It is one we operate directly, as a department, and the employees are members of the public service. As I've indicated, that does not represent any of the capital side; only the operating expenses.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, on pages 19.4 and 19.5, Vote 8, financial assistance to community preventive services, I note that we have 26.5 of the budget unexpended. Are you with me? On page 19.5, financial assistance for community preventive services, and if we look over in the last column under grants, \$5.3 million unexpended.

MR. BOGLE: Yes.

MR. R. CLARK: About 26 per cent of the budget not expended. Was that because there were not applications from Preventive Social Services and other groups across the province?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, the unexpended funds are primarily for health units across the province: the 27 health units, the two boards of health. It could also include . . .

Oh, pardon me. It is under PSS. It does not include the health units. It was for PSS programs that were not funded.

MR. R. CLARK: My first supplementary then, Mr. Chairman, to the minister, would be: Mr. Minister, when I draw the assumption that there weren't enough applications from PSS groups across the province to expend the budget, is that fair? Did the department approve all the PSS applications that came in that year?

MR. BOGLE: I'm going to have Mr. Strang look at that. The inconsistency is that I'm aware that the total funds that we used for PSS do not total the amount solicited. It is both. It must be, because in the current year, for instance, the grants that were given to the 53 PSS areas across the province totalled about \$7.5 million. That was prior to our additional \$1.7 million injection announced on October 1. So the figure on the preceding page has to be a combination of both health units and PSS areas. I would assume -- and I'll certainly check this information -- that that's primarily with the health units, because in the 18 months that I've been in this department, I'm not aware of moneys that have gone unexpended in the PSS area.

If you turn to page 19.12, you'll note at the very top of the page under 8.1.1, day care, estimates \$11 million and expended \$6.4 million. That was one of the shortfalls, and day care, as you know, was originally part of PSS and it was then broken away. Although it's still under community services division, it's not part of PSS iper se. iper se. iper se. iper se. iper se.

MR. R. CLARK: Would it be, Mr. Chairman, possible, Mr. Minister, to get a list from the department of the unexpended funds? What I'm trying to get at here is the question of, on one hand, health units not taking advantage of the assistance which is available from the department . . .

MR. BOGLE: Yes, or . . .

MR. R. CLARK: Maybe I might just finish.

Is it a question of health units not taking advantage of the programs the department's offering, or is it a matter of what was the reason for the day care funds not being picked up, or in fact was it a matter of, you know, some problems within the internal budgeting operation of the department? That's really, really what I'd like to get at.

MR. BOGLE: I'll be pleased, Mr. Chairman, to provide that breakdown for 1978-79.

MR. R. CLARK: I guess the third and last supplementary question I can ask: I assume, Mr. Minister, that in that breakdown, we'd be able to get the listing of the health units which didn't apply, and if there are PSS boards which didn't apply for their maximum and so on. What I really want to get at is, how come?

MR. BOGLE: Fair enough.

MR. L. CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd just like to ask the minister what the philosophy is for the single men's hostels. That's on 19.8. I notice that there's an underexpenditure there, and I understand from news stories that there was overcrowding in a single men's hostel, and why the full budget wasn't spent.

MR. BOGLE: There are two single men's hostels in the province that the province operates directly: hostels in Edmonton and Calgary. There are other hostels that we support on a contractual arrangement with other organizations. The philosophy of the government with regard to our hostels is to provide temporary shelter and accommodation for individuals who either are transient and passing through or have arrived in Alberta, do not have financial support for themselves, are looking for employment -- and in fact many of the individuals who do stay in hostels are in that latter category -- and after a short period of time find employment and move on. The policy of the department with regard to length of stay is that an individual is allowed to

stay for two weeks in the hostel. If, at the end of that two-week period of time, the individual can demonstrate that he has a job but has not yet received a cheque for the work that's been done, the director is empowered to extend the stay for an additional two-week period of time. In addition, if there are some very special circumstances surrounding the individual who is staying in the hostel, the director may, by using his own discretion, provide for an extension. But our general policy is that there's a two-week period of time for hostels.

MR. L. CLARK: A supplementary. Does your department have any plans for expansion in the future on these single men's hostels?

MR. BOGLE: We are looking primarily at the areas where the greatest influx of individuals is occurring, the two metropolitan centres in particular. In the city of Edmonton there is a contractual arrangement with an individual who operates an overflow facility for the hostels. We are looking very seriously at whether or not that arrangement is really satisfactory, or whether there should be an extension to the present hostel facility or a new facility constructed to house individuals. But when the new policy came in regarding the two-week stay, the use of hostels, particularly the hostel in Calgary, dropped.

So, in short, I believe the hostel in Calgary is large enough, although there is a concern about its location: whether or not it's located in the right part of the city. In Edmonton we are reassessing that matter now to determine whether or not we should continue with the contractual arrangement or look for additional beds that would be either part of the present hostel or, in fact, a new facility.

MR. PENGELLY: Mr. Chairman, on page 19.2, Vote 4.4. I wonder if the minister could tell me what vocational opportunities there are for the victims of cerebral palsy.

MR. BOGLE: I can't respond to that question directly. I will report back.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. McCrae.

MR. McCRAE: Mr. Chairman, my question is fully answered. It was to do with the Calgary hostel.

MR. WEISS: Mr. Chairman, I'd refer the minister to 19.9, under Vote and Reference No. 2.12.2, the school lunch program. While I commend the government for the assistance they're endeavoring to support through this program, I'm wondering if the minister would consider looking at and supplementing this in the Fort Chipewyan area in view of the fact that milk in that community is such a costly item, costing more than what we refer to as alcohol, and that the milk is just not available in that community to young people. I'm wondering if, through their program, they somehow couldn't expand it so that it would be available through the family unit.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, earlier this year the hot lunch program was transferred from the Department of Social Services and Community Health to the Department of Education. That decision was made concurrent with the transfer of The Metis Betterment Act to the Department of Municipal Affairs. Therefore any questions as to future plans might best be directed to the Minister of Education. I am aware that there are close links between the department and the Northland School Division because most of the hot lunch programs are in fact operating within the jurisdiction of the Northland School Division.

MR. WEISS: The reason I raise it back through the minister is because we've approached the Department of Education and were unsuccessful in receiving any assistance, either through Northland, or we've even approached people through the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission and asked them if there's any way they'd like to subsidize freight costs for milk into that community, being that they're doing it for alcohol.

So I'm looking for assistance, and I think Social Services and Community Health is the area or the place to look for it, because it meets the needs of the people in that community, because it's their health that's being affected.

MR. BOGLE: Well, I understood the question, Mr. Chairman, to relate to the hot lunch program and that's why I responded in the way I did. If the hon. member is asking about the community in a general way and the cost of milk through both the Hudson's Bay store and the local Co-operative store in Fort Chipewyan, then that's a different matter. Was that the concern?

MR. WEISS: You've clarified it to me, thank you.

MR. McCRAE: I had a question, Mr. Chairman, on the alcohol and drug abuse treatment centres. Maybe I could give a little bit of background. I have a constituent, a very good friend, an elderly woman who has an alcohol problem and, for whatever reason, has gone to Gillain Manor in Victoria, I believe it is. I understand that the provincial government did not support the program there, but had offered to if the British Columbia government would recognize the institution as a qualified treatment centre. I gather that has not happened and, as of Sunday, I was told that the British Columbia treatment centre would probably be closing down as such and would be reopened as a hotel or whatever -- some sort of tourist building. That's the background. The question is as to the extent or where are the areas of alcohol treatment in the province of Alberta?

It was her viewpoint that it was necessary to go outside the province for women to find treatment opportunities. If we could relate that back to the references to AADAC in Volume II.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, to deal with the question first from the general philosophical point of view, AADAC does operate a number of facilities itself, and has contracts with societies or other groups and organizations who operate facilities within this province. There is a fairly wide variety of facilities available across the province. There has been some concern expressed by individuals within the province and by some organizations that there is a need in Alberta for a specialized service that would provide treatment primarily for executives. It has not been our intention or our policy to date to provide service in a different way for different economic groups within the province. However, we have tried very hard to meet the special cultural and social concerns of different groups. In essence, we have funded some purely native alcoholism centres for that very reason. So, in a general, broad way, we do believe that there are facilities in Alberta to meet needs. If an individual has a desire to attend a facility outside of this province then that does give us a concern, and the reasoning for the visit outside the province.

In general, Mr. Chairman, that's the position of the government.

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, my question to the minister is a broad question, but I'm looking at 19.7 for a page of reference.

I guess one thing that I'm curious to know about is the process that one goes through in your department. A lot of the estimates seem to be . . . The money wasn't spent on certain programs, and I guess I'm just curious to know

about the process of setting a budget. It must be very difficult, and I can appreciate that in some specific programs some of the money may not be picked up across the province for some reason or another. But if you just take the 2.3.1, financial assistance to single parent families, there was quite a bit of money not used there. So my question is: what happens to that money primarily?

MR. BOGLE: Well, any funding that's not used, of course, is returned to the general revenue of the province. We attempt very hard to predict the amount of resources that will be required for the various categories within the different votes of the department, and there are 10 votes within the department itself. The primary factors, of course, are with regard to caseload, if you're looking at single parents, and there was a significant drop in the number on the caseload of single parents. I believe that would be a factor, so it's really volume and the actual cost of providing the service. Was the concern more as to: can the funds be used in another area?

MRS. EMBURY: I think you've answered that. If there's money left over it goes back into general revenue, and then I suppose the same occurs if you surpass some of the items that you did spend more money slightly above the estimates, so then that would be picked up, I presume.

MR. BOGLE: One of the challenges that we face and is faced by all departments in government, and I'm sure by all governments across this land, is the lead time that's required in terms of planning a budget. This is a concern that I run into in speaking with representatives of organizations that are asked to submit a budget, sometimes as much as a year and a half ahead of the fiscal year within which the money will be used. It is a lengthy process. One of the things that we've attempted to do is ensure that there's some flexibility, so that if there are unexpected expenses, or a greater demand for a service, there can be an adjustment to that budget, so that it's not something that's literally written in stone that we're not able to respond to in a positive, human way.

MRS. EMBURY: Mr. Chairman, that was one of the questions that I was ultimately getting at, too, because I find that in the community, when you're speaking to people who are involved in the individual budget, they seem to have very little understanding of the process, particularly in the city of Calgary when the money is distributed through the city *per se*. I just hear so much criticism of the province at large, and I guess it's just a matter of constantly interpreting the process to these people.

MR. BOGLE: (Inaudible) trying to ensure that where there are those unexpected surges, either in demand or in expenses, that we're able to respond to those concerns.

DR. CARTER: Mr. Chairman, with reference to Section 19.13 and 19.14, with respect to alcoholism and its ravaging effect on our native population, I wonder if the minister might comment with respect to the general usage of Crowfoot Lodge in Calgary and, with its expenditure of \$93,500, what kind of ratio of persons are going through there. I'm afraid I don't realize whether it's a facility strictly for native women or for men as well. Then, if the minister might comment with respect to any overlap between that facility and the native alcohol services in Calgary which has an expenditure of \$109,500. That one occurs at 9.4.7.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, to deal first with the native alcohol services in the city of Calgary -- and I'm now going by memory -- it's my understanding that the service provided by native alcohol services is software, primarily counselling assistance. They work very closely with the native counselling service to co-ordinate people who are in difficulty with the law, difficulty with neighbors, always where there's an alcohol base problem, whereas Crowfoot Lodge is providing a detoxification service, if you like -- and I'm not aware, Mr. Chairman, that the service is restricted to women only; it was my understanding that it was for all native people -- helping people overcome their problems with alcoholism.

DR. CARTER: Just one further question. Is the minister able to comment with respect to the development of another detox. facility within the downtown area of Calgary?

MR. BOGLE: Not at this time, Mr. Chairman.

MR. L. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, I would like to take you back to page 15.11. It's in the Housing and Public Works part. My question is: are the expenditures in the youth development centres and youth assessment centres capital expenditures?

MR. BOGLE: I would assume that any expenditure under Housing and Public Works would, be in a capital area, either for purchase of land, completing a building and maintaining the same.

MR. L. CLARK: A supplementary, Mr. Chairman. I was just wondering if the budget for the building of the future southern youth development centre would be in this area.

MR. BOGLE: It wouldn't be located in the 1978-79. The capital portion would be under Housing and Public Works. Any operating costs associated with providing the services would be Social Services and Community Health, and the maintenance and upkeep would be under Government Services.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, on 19.2, Mr. Minister, the vote reference is 2.3, public assistance for single-parent families, I note last year there was some \$15.75 million spent. Not that I am advocating that every last dollar has to be spent because it's appropriated, but what I'd like to know is: was this the year that single-parent mothers were re-classified from single-parent families, from full-time social allowance, to the new classification of, I think it was, unemployed employables, and that question of if a mother could stay home with her youngster until 4 months old, and if the mother happened to have two youngsters under a year old she'd be considered to be able to get assistance. Was that one of the major contributing factors to this \$15 million being not spent?

MR. BOGLE: It's my understanding, Mr. Chairman, that that is accurate; that with the change in policy which encouraged single-parent mothers to become employed, or to assist them with a two-year training program -- up to a maximum of a two-year training program -- in a college, technical school, or other facility for higher learning, that policy resulted in a significant drop in the number of single parents who are receiving social assistance.

One other thing I should mention, Mr. Chairman, is that the avenue is open to all individuals that if they feel there is a very special case, if a mother feels there is a reason she should be home with her child, or if there are other circumstances -- for instance, an ailing grandmother in the home -- that

mother has the right to appear before the citizens' appeal committee, make her case, and the citizens' appeal committee has the right to reverse the decision of the department.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, could I ask a supplementary question of the minister? Mr. Minister, I'm asking for three bits of information: if I could first of all have the number of cases where citizen appeal committees reversed the decision of the department on compassionate grounds for single-parent mothers; number two, the number of single-parent mothers who got financial assistance from the department or from the government to further their education during this year; and number three, how many mothers were taken off social assistance as a result of that policy change -- the numbers.

MR. BOGLE: Yes, Mr. Chairman, and I'll add one other bit of information to that. It's really to ensure that the answer to the first question is clear, and that is, how many single mothers appear before or applied to a citizens' appeal committee. I will certainly respond to those four questions.

MR. R. CLARK: (Inaudible) while we're being so fair, I could ask for one more: if the minister could dig in his files and check with the social assistance officers, and if it's possible to find out how many times the supervisors encouraged mothers not to go to the appeal boards. And I raise the question, a certain amount unjust, but a certain (amount) not. A number of supervisors have been less than enthusiastic about encouraging, especially single-parent mothers, after this policy change was made, to go to appeal groups, because I think it's fair, Mr. Minister -- and I don't want to get into an argument here; in fact you weren't the minister at the time -- but there was considerable pressure on the various officers to in fact see that this program showed some pretty dramatic results.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I'll review that allegation and if, as the hon. member has suggested, there is evidence of that happening at the time, or if there are concerns that it has happened in the last 18 months, I'll certainly consider sending out with the social allowance cheques on a given month, an addendum which will clearly state the rights of individuals receiving social assistance, that they have the right to appeal directly to a citizens' appeal committee, and spell out the things that the citizens' appeal committees may review in terms of the departments actions, because I feel so very, very strongly that this is the safeguard built into our system. It's a safeguard whereby our peers, and the peers of the people receiving social assistance, may review decisions made by members of the department and, in a number of cases, may reverse those decisions or alter them in some way if in their view circumstances require that.

MR. R. CLARK: One last question to the minister on the same issue. Mr. Minister, as I understand the regulations now, they are basically unchanged. At present the criteria for qualification for social assistance for a single-parent mother are that if they have a child under 4 months or if they have two children under 12 months, which is a pretty busy situation . . .

MR. BOGLE: Twelve years.

MR. R. CLARK: Twelve years? I'm sorry; it's not so busy.

Then my question to the minister would be this: is the minister prepared to consider making an adjustment in that 4 months, to make that somewhat longer, and has a review been taken by the department to look at the possibility of that?



MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I did make a commitment to, I believe, the Alberta Status of Women, that we would review that matter. That review is currently under way, and it's primarily with regard to the 4-month aspect.

MR. R. CLARK: On the 4-month question. When will that review be finished?

MR. BOGLE: I can't give a definitive time, Mr. Chairman. I can't really say, but it is certainly being looked at at the present time.

MR. R. CLARK: An inside department view, or are there some people outside the department involved in bringing some views to the minister's attention?

MR. BOGLE: I requested the individual and the group who brought the concern to my attention to submit their views. I believe that has been done or is now being done. I've also requested that we do that within the department itself. Once I've got a number of options then it would be my intention to take that before the government caucus committee on health and social services, and any proposed changes would be dealt with in that way.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Weiss, followed by Mr. Stromberg.

MR. WEISS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question has been answered.

MR. STROMBERG: Mr. Chairman, several years ago the department funded a chair at the U. of A. on alcoholism, and I believe a board of directors was set up for that foundation. I am curious to know what was the cost of that chair and has this board -- and it's still there; it's still in existence -- how active it is and if it has an expenditure.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, could the hon. member kindly tell me which page he's on?

MR. STROMBERG: It's been an annual question I ask every year.

MR. BOGLE: Since this is the first of a number of annual times I'll be before the committee, I'll take it as note. I don't have that information at hand. I'd be pleased to respond back to the member.

MR. PENGELLY: Mr. Chairman, this is also on page 19.7, Vote 2.3 on financial assistance to single parents. Does the department have a policy that would offer a supplement to the income of single mothers who have teen-age children, and whose income is inadequate?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, we do try to assist single-parent mothers or other individuals receiving social assistance who are trying to make their own way, and there is a formula that is used whereby after an exempted amount . . . I could provide that information in specific terms if the hon. member would like, Mr. Chairman. We do encourage, in short, individuals who are able to work, to work, and if there is a supplement that's necessary to ensure that the family can sustain itself, then that's provided, and there is a scale that's used for that.

MR. PAHL: Mr. Chairman, my question is from page 7.2 of the supplementary information to the public accounts, details of expenditure by payee. I note that there is an expenditure of \$186,339.61 to A Si Nis Kaw Mi Ni . . .

MR. BOGLE: I'm not sure where the hon. member is. Is it Volume II?

MR. PAHL: Supplementary information. Details of expenditure by payee. Page 7.2.

MR. BOGLE: I'm not with it.

MR. PAHL: If you don't have it, I could provide it later, but there is an expenditure to A Si Nis Kaw Mi Ni Wa Tchi Mis Pe Ni Wa So Wi, and I wonder if you could indicate what that expenditure is.

MR. BOGLE: No, Mr. Chairman. Once I receive the book that the hon. member is basing his question upon . . .

SECRETARY: 7.2?

MR. PAHL: 7.2.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, this is a stab in the dark. I'm assuming it's a school lunch program, but we'll certainly review that matter and either verify it for the hon. member or clarify as to what it is.

MR. L. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, my question is in Book II, 19.2, Vote 2.4, public assistance for the physically handicapped. I'd like to compliment the minister on this program. I think it's a very useful program. What I'm thinking of is that this is the aids for the physically handicapped. What surprises me is the amount that's unexpended in that program, seeing that it's so popular with our older people and handicapped people.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member is aware, I know, that the new aids to daily living program and the assured income for the severely handicapped program are programs which were announced by my predecessor in early 1979, and were implemented during 1979. Therefore they were not in place during the 1978-79 fiscal year.

I should mention that an individual who receives the AISH benefit -- and the maximum benefit today is \$450 -- plus other benefits, medical and so on, if an individual has needs beyond that, has needs to sustain himself or herself or the family, then additional help is provided through public assistance. There are cases where that is happening, but what we ensure is that -- and if we look at 1978-79, if I may, Mr. Chairman, as an example -- if an individual at that time had needs of \$800, if the needs of that individual today were \$800, they would receive the first \$450 through the assured income for the severely handicapped program. There would be a top-up of \$350 provided through public assistance for the handicapped.

MR. L. CLARK: Just one supplementary. The assured income program doesn't come out of this vote. This is just the top-up, as you call it.

MR. BOGLE: Well, the assured income was not in existence at this time. I think you will find in the subsequent years that that figure, public assistance for physically handicapped, will have dropped significantly.

MR. STRANG: Not till the current year.

MR. BOGLE: Yes, that's right. Because 1979-80 we did not get the assured income for the severely handicapped program in operation until the very end of the fiscal year. Therefore the significant drop will occur during the 1980-81 fiscal year.

DR. CARTER: Mr. Chairman, perhaps the minister or the Auditor General could comment with respect to, I guess it would refer to section 19.15, the matter of revenue. I would appreciate some comment as to how we receive, as a province, funding from the federal government, whether it's called tax-point system, or how income is received by the province and the department for programs that are shared or supplemented by federal money. A second question with respect to that would be whether or not the federal government is fairly swift in sending the payments over to the province.

MR. BOGLE: I'll respond first and I'll take the easy part, and then allow the Auditor General to respond to fill in any spots that I've missed.

You'll note on 19.15 that the largest single category is under the Canada assistance plan. That figure of over \$116 million is a cost-shared program, primarily with regard to social assistance, community social programs, which we do cost-share with the federal government. During 1978-79 my predecessor tried to persuade her federal colleague and other provincial colleagues that we should move to a tax credit system rather than the cost-sharing programs. There was a movement in that direction. However, before anything conclusive developed, concerns were expressed and we moved back to the present cost-sharing approach. All of these programs under Government of Canada are cost-shared programs under one Act or another of the federal government and concurrent provincial legislation.

It was brought to the attention of the department by the Auditor General that we should be cost-sharing for native counselling services. That was an oversight on behalf of our department. I responded to that during the spring sitting of this legislative session. We are still attempting to cost-share that program with the federal government and to date have been unsuccessful.

MR. ROGERS: I don't think I can really add to that. I believe it's true that the native counselling services program was sharable. I believe the problem related to the fact that the federal government believed that all settlements had been made and they refused to reopen the case again because no claim had been made at the time it should have been made. I believe that was the situation.

MR. BOGLE: There was one other aspect of it, Mr. Chairman, and that was whether or not the federal government is punctual, and the response to that is, yes.

MR. STROMBERG: Mr. Chairman, to the the minister. Under the vote of social assistance, does your department have any statistics on a per capita basis if social payments last year are on an increase or decrease?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, over the past five years there has been a decrease, not only in the percentage but in the actual numbers of the social assistance caseload. Over that period of time we have dropped from slightly more than a 34,000 caseload to a position today where we are between 30,000 and 31,000 caseload. That compares with our neighboring province of British Columbia where the caseload is approximately 75,000.

MR. STROMBERG: A supplementary, Mr. Chairman. Do we have statistics showing the number of new Albertans in the last year or two who have come in from other provinces and are receiving social assistance?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, under the Canada assistance plan, which was previously referred to in the question from Dr. Carter, we do have an agreement with the federal government, as do all provinces, that we do not

discriminate against other Canadians coming to this province. However, we do have categories in Alberta, and if an individual is deemed to be employable then the same criteria would apply as I described in a response to a question earlier on the hostels, and that is that we expect that within two weeks that individual will have a job and be meaningfully employed.

There are other programs which we operate, some directly through this department, others in consultation with Advanced Education and Manpower, to encourage employables to help people who are deemed to be employable back into the work force.

So I'll be pleased to provide the statistical breakdown that the hon. member has asked for. In general, we think we have a very successful program in this province in terms of encouraging those individuals who are deemed to be employable into the work force.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, my question deals with vote number 6 on page 19.3. Mr. Minister, it's really the treatment of the mentally ill and relates to the question of the hiring of senior professional people. The minister will recall the questions about Oliver last year and similar kinds of problems at Ponoka also, although not to the same extent and didn't receive the same publicity.

My question here, very frankly, is: how are we coming in being able to attract and retain people at Oliver and Ponoka, the two Alberta hospitals?

MR. BOGLE: I wish, Mr. Chairman, that I could describe the situation in a more positive way than I'm able to, because although it would not be fair to describe it as bleak, we have a real challenge. We've been advised by the health care disciplines committee, which is chaired by Elvin Christenson, a chartered accountant here in the city of Edmonton, a committee that provides advice to the ministers of Hospitals and Medical Care, Advanced Education and Manpower, and me, that we are now (facing), and will continue to face, a shortage of professional people in many of the health-related disciplines. At the top of that list are psychiatrists. There's a shortage of psychiatrists across North America at the present time. We're tackling that problem, Mr. Chairman, in several ways. First, we are trying to encourage psychiatrists to come to Alberta from jurisdictions like Great Britain, where there is currently a surplus of psychiatrists. We are not attempting to encourage psychiatrists to come from other provinces where similar shortages occur. On the other hand, if the psychiatrist chooses to come then we're certainly not going to turn him away.

That meets the short-term challenge, but it's not the long-term answer. The long-term answer obviously is to encourage more medical students to enter the field of psychiatry. We are attempting to address that problem through increased bursaries and better support during those training years. The results of that program, of course, will not be felt for a number of years because of the lead time that's required. We are working very closely with the Alberta Medical Association, with the provincial mental health advisory council, and with the psychiatrists themselves.

I have had two meetings now with the members of the psychiatric team from Alberta Hospital, Oliver, and on one of those occasions there was a representative from Alberta Hospital, Ponoka. We are determined to ensure that we're working together, that we're listening to the psychiatrists, and gaining input as to the solutions to the problems that they see, and try to do that in a meaningful way. But I can't hold out any optimistic view of a short-term solution in that area. It's a vulnerable spot for us, and it's a very genuine concern that we have as a government and that I have as the minister of this department.

MR. R. CLARK: A supplementary question to the minister. How many students do we have on bursaries now? Any idea?

MR. BOGLE: No. I can certainly get that information, but I don't have it.

MR. R. CLARK: If we could have it, especially in the area of psychiatrists and the kind of people we'll need at Alberta Hospital.

MR. BOGLE: Yes.

Another area, of course, is the psychiatric nursing, and, as you know, we're recruiting in Great Britain as well and we're trying to increase the number of candidates in our two schools of psychiatric nursing, both at Oliver and at Ponoka. But I'll certainly provide that information as to the number of candidates currently receiving bursaries and/or support through the government.

MR. R. CLARK: Could I explore one other area, Mr. Chairman? And that is: one of the concerns I have had expressed to me by some of the medical professional people who perhaps could make a contribution at Oliver, especially, more so than Ponoka, is that apparently -- and I don't know when -- a decision was made that we would not engage medical professional people in those facilities who would spend part time there and part time in a private practice. What's the rationale behind that, and is it being reviewed?

MR. BOGLE: I believe the decision was made in 1972 when the new Mental Health Act was passed. A concern was expressed to me by some members of the profession earlier this year as to the terms and conditions of their employment. We have moved, I believe, in a very significant way to ensure that individuals who work at Alberta Hospital, Oliver and Ponoka, are given the opportunity to either be on contract, as some choose to be, or to provide a fee for service. But unlike the normal fee for service which is provided by members of the medical profession whereby their rate is based on the number of patients they see, it was mutually agreed that the rate would be based on an hourly figure, and that has in fact been done.

The specific concern that the hon. member has raised is with regard to those individuals who wish to work part time at the hospital and part time in private practice. That is possible now, although we do have in our policy a limit as to the number of hours that the individual may . . . I believe it's the number of hours that can be accounted in a given month in a private practice.

I can't respond more definitively to it at this particular moment than that, but I'll certainly review that question and ensure that there's an answer supplied. I think, though, in short, Mr. Chairman, from the discussions that I've had with members of staff, that the current arrangements that have been made, both monetary and in terms of working conditions, meet the needs of the vast majority of those on staff. It's not to suggest that everyone is 100 per cent happy with everything we've done, but I believe we've come a long way in the last year to meet those needs that were expressed. At least that's the indication I have.

MR. R. CLARK: If I could just make one comment to the minister. While we're waiting for, hopefully, these people who are at university now to finish, do their internship, and then be involved in the program, it would seem to me that an even better source of personnel than bringing people in from the United Kingdom -- with no disrespect to them, either -- would be to perhaps loosen up a bit on the question of private practice. I take it, Mr. Minister, from what's been said, that that's been done somewhat in the past year.

MR. BOGLE: Not in terms of the private practice aspect. However, it certainly has been done in terms of the remuneration that a practitioner may earn. In the past, most of the members of staff: some were on a wage schedule, those who are members of the department and there are some who wish to remain in that way; there was a contract that others had. One of the advantages in changing our contractual arrangement, or by offering one more category and by providing a fee for service based on the number of hours that the psychiatrist spends at his or her work, is that if an individual wishes to work 12 or 14 hours a day, he's being rewarded for it. We believe that that improvement in itself will result in a greater number of hours of professional help being given to the patients at the hospitals.

So there was a movement in that area as a result of our discussions during this current fiscal year.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, then perhaps I might put this question to the minister. Mr. Minister, is it possible for, say, a psychiatrist who is in private practice in Edmonton to spend half a day in his or her private practice and spend half a day out at Oliver, working at that institution?

MR. BOGLE: I stand to be corrected, Mr. Chairman, but I don't believe so. And that's what I understood earlier to be the question or part of the intent of the question of the hon. member as to the policy regarding the amount of time that an individual may spend in private practice and working at the hospital, and whether or not that matter is being reviewed. I have indicated that it's not being reviewed from my perspective. I'll certainly review the matter, though, and ensure that I get a response to the hon. member.

MR. L. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, my question is kind of a general one to the minister. A few years ago there was a program out for people who were unemployed or replaced by the computers in the age group of 50 to 65 years; about my age group, Mr. Minister. I was just wondering if that program was still in effect, or if it had been phased out. Or was it handled through your department? I thought it was handled through your department. He'll lose his position.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, there are employment opportunity programs that we operate and we work closely with the Department of Advanced Education and Manpower to assist employable individuals. The only program I am aware of for unemployable persons is a program that we operate, I believe, in both Calgary and Edmonton. It's called the work activity program, which is to help individuals who have been on social assistance for some considerable period of time. It's to help reorient and retrain those individuals, and we've had some considerable success. I know we work, in addition to the program within our own department, through one of the specific programs of the Department of Advanced Education and Manpower.

MR. L. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, I have one other question I'd like to ask while the minister's here.

Your department runs homes for the mentally handicapped, and we have one in Drum which is a very well-run one, and a very nice home. I don't know whether it's a home; it's more like a school. Some of the kids stay there and some of them don't. They have a board that runs these homes and I was wondering, are these boards strictly volunteer, or do they receive any remuneration from the government? Do they have authority to remove staff, or hire and fire staff?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, I believe the hon. member is referring to homes which are operated by private societies. Those societies have boards, and I believe

in all cases the boards are elected at an annual meeting which is held within the community. Those boards have full responsibility over their own employees as to giving policy directives and other directives that are to be carried out by, in many cases, the executive director or the administrator on behalf of the board.

The funding for those agencies is a contractual arrangement with the Department of Social Services and Community Health, and we try to ensure that in those funding arrangements there are adequate resources provided for the trainees they're working with, for other individuals. Now, some of the contracts cover both sheltered workshops as well as residential programs, and I think the one the hon. member is referring to is the latter rather than the former.

But, no, the boards are able to set policy in the department's contract with the agencies. Of course, we want to make sure that certain standards are met and maintained.

I might just supplement that, Mr. Chairman, by saying that I met with representatives from, I believe, 31 such agencies. I think the agency in Drumheller is Votec.

MR. L. CLARK: That's one of them, yes.

MR. BOGLE: I met with representatives of those groups and organizations on October 18 this year, and one of the exciting challenges that we are working on together is redrafting the policy that we have as a government and that they have as agencies, in terms of providing services to handicapped youngsters and individuals.

DR. CARTER: With respect to page 19.10 and items 5.4.2 and .3, Baker Centre and Eric Cormack Centre, I must admit that my newness to the process bids me raise this question, that under estimates here, these are program elements. This is strictly for the programming and the care within the institution, I assume, and that any capital costing elements would then appear, what, under Housing and Public Works?

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, to the hon. member. Capital improvements would be under Housing and Public Works and maintenance would be under Government Services.

MR. L. CLARK: Thank you. I wonder if the minister could briefly comment upon what stage the development process is at with regard to Baker Centre.

MR. BOGLE: Baker Centre is currently a 198-bed facility. It's the former Baker Sanatorium for tuberculosis in Calgary, and the centre is being phased out as a centre. There will be in its place one 60-bed unit located in the city of Calgary adjacent to an active treatment hospital, and two 30-bed units, one in Bow Island and one in Fort Macleod. Those 120 beds that I've described will be for individuals who are medically dependent. That is the primary category, or the primary qualification. They're individuals who have handicaps or multiple handicaps. The primary purpose will be a medical dependency.

In addition to individuals from Baker Centre, we anticipate that some clients will be transferred from Michener Centre in Red Deer, both to the Bow Island and Fort Macleod centres. I'm now speaking of people from those communities or surrounding areas, so that they may be closer to their families and loved ones.

In addition, we will be developing 148 group home spaces in Calgary and other communities in southern Alberta for those residents who are currently at

the Baker Centre and who are not deemed to be medically dependent and can function in a group home setting. There has been a concern expressed by some of the parents in the city of Calgary who have youngsters in the Baker Centre who would be in that latter category; those individuals able to live in group homes. The concern expressed is that rather than dispersing the group homes around the city of Calgary, they believe there is merit in building a cluster of group homes on the old Baker site. Because of the concerns expressed, we have again reviewed with the Department of Environment as to the concerns of the flood plain and we are working with the city of Calgary, and that is certainly a possibility. There is a steering committee in all three communities that I've mentioned: Bow Island, Fort Macleod, and Calgary, to ensure that there's citizens' input along with the department and the municipalities concerned and the hospital board to ensure that our plans meet the needs of the clients that we're serving.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further questions to the minister?

It looks like we've pretty well covered all the questions, and that has to be an indication, Mr. Minister, that your department is running smoothly. It's very rare that we quit before our expiry time, 11:30, so the tone of the questions indicates that the department is running smoothly.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you and Mr. Strang for attending our meeting this morning.

MR. BOGLE: We'll certainly follow up with the answers to the questions that were posed to us today by members of the committee, and if there were further questions of clarification we'll do our very best to provide that supplementary information.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the committee, I would also like to thank the Auditor General's department and Controller for their input.

Just before we have the motion for adjournment, could we determine what department we'll be dealing with next Wednesday? On our list we have the Solicitor General, the Department of Education, and the Department of Municipal Affairs. We have them in that order: Solicitor General first. Is it agreeable to the committee that we have the Department of the Solicitor General in next Wednesday?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Motion of adjournment in order. Mr. Pahl.

*The meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.*