

[Chairman: Mr. Martin]

[10 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: If I could bring the meeting to order, we'll get started. Just before we get started, on the last day we agreed on a schedule, and I've had to make some changes on that. I believe everybody was notified that we'd have the Solicitor General today, Mr. Chambers on November 9, and Mr. Hyndman on November 16. So we just had to change the first two around, and I take it people had word of that.

The other thing is that the minutes from the last meeting are not ready yet. I believe some of my recommendations that came from our meeting in Toronto were sent to the government members, plus the transcripts of the meeting, and the minutes will be there the next day.

Immediately, I'm going to do a couple of things on request. Before I introduce and have the Solicitor General speak, there is one aspect of the Solicitor General's report that the Auditor General had reported on, and I thought it appropriate that he make comments about that first. Then we'll turn it over to Mr. Harle. Mr. Rogers.

MR. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I would draw attention to the fact that section 20 of the Public Accounts, Volume II, of 1981-82 is the place where the accounts of the Solicitor General will be found.

But I want to draw attention to one item in the March 1982 report, and that dealt with the Department of the Solicitor General new correctional centres. Our finding, reported in the opening paragraph of the report, was that "The accounting records and financial control systems established at two new correctional centres were inadequate and ineffective." It's to be found on page 27 of the Auditor General's report. Based on our findings we made a recommendation, and the way in which that recommendation was dealt with by the department will be found on page 13 of the responses submitted by the Provincial Treasurer last month.

I just want to say in passing that in the course of our work this year, we have examined the steps taken by the Solicitor General's Department and find them to be very satisfactory. We're very satisfied with the progress made and with the steps taken to correct the situation reported in the last report.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Rogers. I'm sure that's good news to the Solicitor General. Now I'll call on the Solicitor General to introduce the people with him, and if he has any opening remarks, to go ahead.

MR. HARLE: Mr. Chairman, is it a practice to stand or just remain seated?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just remain seated.

MR. HARLE: Thank you. On my immediate left is the deputy minister of the department, Mr. Rheel LeBlanc. Next to him is Mr. Peter Schmidt, who is the director of finance and administration in the department, and next to him is Aslam Bhatti, the financial planner.

Mr. Chairman, I perhaps would refer members of the committee not only to the public accounts but of course to the annual report of the department, which contains a wealth of information concerning the achievements during the year and the work that is done. I'd also refer hon. members to Alberta Hansard of May 13, 1981, where the estimates of the department and the planning that was going on related to that budget year were discussed in detail.

In the corrections side, I think we were able to handle an ever-increasing number of

inmates that were sentenced by the courts. That placed a considerable amount of pressure upon the officials in the corrections system. It resulted in an increased demand for funds, and we were able to basically meet the needs that year.

In the law enforcement area, I think the highlight of the year was the entering into a 10-year RCMP contract, and hon. members might want to ask some questions in that area.

In the motor vehicle side, we were in the planning process of designing and coming up with the system which you are now seeing us enter into; that is, the staggered licence plate system. There will eventually be a new system for trucks. All the planning for what you are now seeing today was well under way during the '81-82 period.

With those few comments, Mr. Chairman, I'd be quite happy to take any questions that the members of the committee might have.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I'll call on Mr. Weiss first, followed by Mr. Nelson.

MR. WEISS: Mr. Chairman, I guess I have the opportunity to kick off first. I have two actual questions: one relates specifically to the Solicitor General's expense, and the other is of a general nature that is of prime importance to rural communities.

In particular with regard to the municipal assistance grant, there was a lot of concern last year with regard to the contract, especially in view of the additional costs that it would have created for the communities. I wonder if the minister would expand a little with regard to the tenure of the contract and if there actually was an increase, as was indicated by an awful lot of the municipalities. They were very afraid that they couldn't carry on with the expense, and I understand some are looking at the possibility or feasibility of going into their own forces. I would certainly like some comments with regard to that.

The second one, Mr. Chairman, is not in the particular budget but it should be, and I'm concerned because it relates to court services to remote rural communities. I use a specific example in the small community of Conklin, Alberta. A person might receive a \$30 infraction in, say, the surrounding areas of Lac La Biche; it costs him \$400 to pay that \$30 fine — having to go in on a one-day train trip, spend two days in a hotel, plus all the expenses, or coming into the city. It just is not right that in our day and age we should have to expect people to be out this kind of fee and expense and the problems it creates in the family — a loss of job in most cases, because they're unable to keep their job in having to go into the community and pay the infraction.

I wonder if there can't be some expanded services into these remote, isolated areas. We can have a travelling judge or magistrate go in and, on a one day every two week basis, accommodate these people. I think it's just unrealistic, unfair, and I'm very critical of it. Maybe I sound a little strong on it, but I just don't think we're being realistic today.

MR. HARLE: Mr. Chairman, responding firstly to the last item, I believe it more properly relates to the Attorney General's side of the administration of justice. There is the tag system, of course, for the smaller offences which can be dealt with by mail. Perhaps if the member would let me take that question as notice and see whether there are any implications in the question for the Department of the Solicitor General, it would give me some time to respond.

MR. WEISS: Mr. Chairman, that's what I'm referring to, because in most instances they won't allow them to pay the fine. They insist, either through the provincial force or the RCMP, that you have to appear in court. Most of these people would just rather plead guilty, pay the \$30 fine, and get on with it.

MR. HARLE: Mr. Chairman, in response to the hon. member, I think he has directed the

question to the Attorney General's Department, and it does not involve the Solicitor General's Department.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're saying you'll get back to the member if there is anything. Okay.

MR. HARLE: On the RCMP side, Mr. Chairman, we did enter into a contract on December 11, 1981, and it resulted in additional costs, not only to the province but to the municipalities that have municipal contracts. The scheme of things that was settled upon by Alberta along with the other provincial governments that enter into RCMP contracts, was to have an ever-increasing proportion of the cost of RCMP service paid by the province and the municipality.

I think it's fair to say that the federal government's plans would certainly suggest that they are anxious to get out of some form of municipal policing. This is particularly true for the large municipalities. As far as Alberta is concerned it would involve Grande Prairie, Red Deer, Fort McMurray, St. Albert, Sherwood Park, and there may be others where populations are starting to rise.

I think there's also an indication that the federal government wish to keep the RCMP as a national force. They want to have their presence in all provinces. They have developed significantly what they call the federal side of RCMP policing; by that is meant the policing of federal legislation, which falls under their jurisdiction. They have in fact increased the number of personnel dedicated to federal matters. Nevertheless they are certainly anxious, and I would anticipate in the next round of negotiations in, roughly, 1991, that we will see more pressure to change the present system and to pass more of the obligations of policing, particularly in large municipalities, onto those municipalities.

The actual accounting period of '81-82 resulted in an increase of \$1.44 million over and above our estimates, which were covered by a special warrant. Obviously at April 1, we did not know what those costs would be because the contract wasn't signed until December and was retroactive to April 1. So there was an increase in cost to cover the provincial share of the increased RCMP contract that year.

The implications for the municipalities was the same. They had to pay an increasing share of costs. Under the law enforcement vote, we make grants to municipalities with RCMP contracts at the rate of \$12 per capita. That's been in place for two years now and has not changed, other than the fact that the per capita implication means that as municipalities increase their populations we have increased the grant, but the per capita sum has remained unchanged. I've met with several municipalities on that topic. They would like to have an increased grant; however, in light of the current financial circumstances, I would not hold out very much hope.

We are looking at whether or not we can improve the formula. In the past two years we have said to a municipality: if your population goes down, we would still pay the same amount of grant that you got last year. I don't think we can continue that. If a municipality has had a reduction in size of population, I believe that in the next fiscal period we will have to say to that municipality that we can no longer pay the same grant as you got the year before. That will place some additional concern upon those municipalities that in fact have declines in population.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any supplementaries Mr. Weiss? Okay.

MR. MUSGROVE: Is that \$12 per capita a contribution towards the cost of the RCMP or to a municipal police force?

MR. HARLE: It is an unconditional grant, but for police purposes. In other words, the municipality has to bear the cost of the municipal contract, and we assist the RCMP

municipalities with a \$12 per capita contribution. It goes towards paying their costs. On average, those would work out to be about 20 per cent or 22 per cent. As their costs increase, that percentage is declining, and I recognize that problem.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Nelson, followed by Mr. Moore, and then Mr. McPherson.

MR. NELSON: I have a number of areas I'd like to deal with. I'll take them one at a time and, if possible, get back in.

First of all, I'd like to know if the Solicitor General has determined how his department might handle the area of personalized licence plates, which has just been addressed in the House — when they might come on stream, the cost, the administration of that, and so on.

MR. HARLE: Mr. Chairman, I welcomed very much the discussion of that particular topic in the Legislature at this fall sitting, and have of course noticed that the resolution was passed. As far as planning goes, with the old computer system we simply could not have handled personalized plates. With the program planning that went on during this fiscal year under consideration, we did expand our computer system so as to be able to make some arrangements to include personalized plates if in fact the government decided to enter into a personalized plate system. No decision has yet been reached as to whether or not to bring in a personalized plate; however, the recommendation from the Legislative Assembly is going to have a bearing on that. I anticipate that as personalized plates have been a very successful venture in some jurisdictions from a point of view of raising revenue, it will in fact be implemented.

The final decision, of course, relates to how much to charge for the personalized plates. We're looking at all the jurisdictions to see what sort of charges are being made for personalized plates, and the ballpark figure that has been mentioned is somewhere in the neighborhood of \$120 or \$150, plus the annual registration fee. Some provinces are a little less than that; some are at about that level. It is intended to be a program which would raise additional revenue.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Nelson will help me out, because I have this vice-chairman here watching me all the time. We were out of order, but I will let them go as long as they can plausibly deal back to the public accounts.

MR. NELSON: Mr. Chairman, that happens to be a part of public accounts considering the revenue it will probably generate to the government. I appreciate the answer from the Solicitor General.

The other area I'd like to touch on briefly at this point is regarding the Check Stop program with the police throughout the province. I'd like to ask the Solicitor General what encouragement he's giving both the RCMP and the municipal police services with regard to this Check Stop. Is there any additional funding that may be available to the services to continue with this program and to encourage the increased manner in which the police are using it?

MR. HARLE: Mr. Chairman, I think hon. members will recall that Check Stop has been a very successful program. Police forces are encouraged to make use of it. It's a program that operates throughout the year. The statistics that I've seen and could produce for the committee, if the committee wishes them, indicate the number of vehicles stopped in each month throughout the year and the number of Check Stops operated in each month throughout the year. It has been, I think, very well accepted by the general public.

We do have advertising periods when people advise us on how best to communicate the Check Stop program, and we obviously make use of the Christmas period for advertising. Unfortunately, that has created an impression in some people's minds that

we only operate Check Stop at Christmas time; that's not the case. However, it does get a vast amount of interest at Christmas, perhaps indicating that people do respond to advertising at that time of year on this subject, with the result that the police forces have seen an actual reduction in the number of impaired drivers at that time of the year. In that sense, it certainly seems to have accomplished its purpose. It's a matter of how many dollars are to be assigned from the provincial revenues to advertising the program. That is basically where most of our dollars go. Each police force, of course, dedicates its own staff, its own dollars, to using Check Stop.

Many arguments are made that police forces can do an equally good job without Check Stop by merely enforcing the impaired driving laws every day or whenever they need to be enforced. However, I think the public has been very accepting of the need for a very high public profile, which Check Stop has produced, and for that reason I think it should be continued.

MR. NELSON: One further question, Mr. Chairman. It relates to the Solicitor General and the police departments, as to what input he has had from these departments relevant to the area of seat belts and whether or not some encouragement has been given by these departments to the Solicitor General for the mandatory use of seat belts, and also as to what the Solicitor General may be considering in that area and what cost might be attributable to the advertising of the mandatory use of seat belts in vehicles.

MR. HARLE: Mr. Chairman, I think one of the communicating problems that we have in a number of areas is what department is responsible or what ministerial responsibility applies to what subject matter. In the case of seat belts, it comes under the Minister of Transportation, and I have not been involved, in a portfolio responsibility sense, in seat belts. It is true that police forces have been very supportive of seat belts, because of course they see the results where people have not used seat belts and might have suffered less injury or had a life saving situation develop had a seat belt been used. I'm very aware of their interest in the seat belt matter.

MR. R. MOORE: I have another question for the minister, but now that we're on policing I have a few questions in this area. When you mentioned the RCMP 10-year contract signed, no doubt at that time you reviewed the cost benefit, if you want to call it, between utilization of municipal police, highway traffic people, related to the cost of the RCMP. I wonder what you could comment on how we benefited, or did we benefit financially, or what was the reason that you went with the RCMP contract in relationship to enforcement of traffic regulations?

We have our own highway traffic people. They're out there, and they basically look after the trucking industry. The RCMP is there, and I think in my own mind, and in a lot of my constituents', it's a very costly item to have highly trained police like the RCMP out there doing traffic and speed violations. Could you sort of enlighten us why the decision was made not to expand the municipal police and the highway traffic people into this area and use the RCMP in criminal areas and such as that?

MR. HARLE: Mr. Chairman, there's always a debate on what way is the best to enforce traffic. One point of view says that you can use a man or a woman with less training to do routine traffic work. A contrary argument is that a lot of basic police work is done by police that are on the traffic detail. For example, in my own constituency I had a situation where a store was broken into. The owner of the store was unaware of the break-in. An RCMP officer on traffic detail stopped that vehicle, obviously saw a collection of articles in the vehicle, investigated that circumstance, and in fact not only recovered the goods that were stolen but laid charges. The argument is that a lot of routine criminal work is done by virtue of the fact that the RCMP is on the highways and byways at night and at other times when such occurrences happen.

Going back to the other side of the question, one can say, well, why can't an Alberta Highway Patrol do the same? Of course the answer is that you then get into circumstances of dual policing. On the one hand, you have a police force dealing with the enforcement of the law. If you have another police force acting in the same area, doing enforcement of the law, you get very different standards. Our whole philosophy of our existing Police Act is to avoid duplication as much as possible because of its impact upon the citizen. The citizen doesn't know who is responsible for what, different standards are applied, and there is resulting confusion. The whole impetus of our present Police Act was to avoid such duplication.

So while there is a debate, I have taken the position that the RCMP can handle traffic work, should be handling most of our law enforcement areas, and that one can separate out trucks for the Alberta Highway Patrol. One can live with that small amount of duplication on the highway, but we shouldn't extend it. That is basically the position we've taken.

As far as the RCMP contract was concerned, I think you will get a big debate as to whether the federal government benefited or we benefited. The federal government argues that we got more benefit than they did. We would argue that it is good to have a national police force in Canada. My feeling is that our citizens support and want an RCMP force.

MR. R. MOORE: A supplementary, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, on the question of police again, the county police deal with the rural areas where RCMP aren't usually patrolling. They are in control of those areas. Yet I find that their area of authority is very, very limited. They are there just sort of as a security person that can phone the RCMP. That's my opinion.

What is the thinking of your department on that? Do you think this is the role they should play, as sort of watchmen, or should they be given more authority inasmuch as they are in the area not usually covered by the RCMP, and they have to then go to another police force to come in and support them in case there is an immediate problem?

MR. HARLE: Mr. Chairman, the policy is set out in the Police Act. Such county forces are not police officers. They might call themselves that, but they are not police officers. As I indicated, the whole philosophy of the legislation is to avoid duplication of police forces. It is true that some county administrations have developed a by-law enforcement officer and have applied under the Police Act for special constable status to be able to deal with certain matters of restricted jurisdiction. They should work in co-operation with the existing police force, which in rural areas is the RCMP. The RCMP has concerns about some of the county forces that have taken over and are doing more and more work which comes almost to true police activities. We are presently reviewing the Police Act legislation, and I think one of the things we must resolve is the definition of what is or is not police work.

MR. R. MOORE: A supplementary, Mr. Chairman. When we look at the police as a whole — going back to the contract, and this is just a question of information really on the contract that was signed. In my constituency we live in a very heavy growth area; the population is growing fairly fast. Over a 10-year period, does this allow for communities to request further RCMP under the contractual arrangement, or are we tied into X number of coverage for that 10-year period? Is that negotiable year to year?

MR. HARLE: Mr. Chairman, that's a very valid question. When we entered into the contract, the notion was that we would have a better handle on being able to request from the RCMP additional police officers. For the provincial contract, I think there is no basic problem except, because it has an implication for the federal budget, there has to be an agreement between the federal government and ourselves as to the increase in

numbers of personnel required.

For the municipalities, however, there seems to be a different concept in the mind certainly of the federal government. It is very reluctant to provide us with additional personnel for the municipalities. I think the hon. member will recall the situation that developed at Hinton, when Hinton decided to no longer use its own police force but to acquire an RCMP contract. As that occurred at the time of the negotiations for the present contract, we were eventually able to persuade the federal government to provide that municipality with RCMP officers. The federal government has indicated quite clearly that it would be most reluctant to add to its budget as a result of additional communities exceeding the urban municipalities, exceeding the 1,500 population that requires them to decide whether they establish their own police force or have an RCMP contract. I hold out no encouragement to such communities to see new RCMP contracts.

Basically, that's it. It does have a financial bearing on the federal government and, we would regard, has some economic benefits to have an RCMP municipal contract, because of the sharing of the cost and the fact that they get a grant from us. The fact that obviously the RCMP had the training: the smaller municipality couldn't think of trying to operate training programs. The ability to advance: once a policeman has joined such a small force, how does he or she advance from the point of view of a career. The small municipality doesn't offer those types of opportunities, whereas an RCMP recruit does see a career, advancement, and an extremely good training program. So we do have some current problems on that very question.

MRS. KOPER: Mr. Chairman, my question to the Solicitor General is regarding the correctional services in our province. First of all, there is close to a \$45 million expenditure in manpower alone in this division, and I wonder if you could tell me how many people that amount of manpower serves. How many people are in our correctional institutes?

[Mr. M. Moore in the Chair]

MR. HARLE: Mr. Chairman, the annual report shows the average daily population of the correctional centres, and this includes those who are on temporary absences. An average daily population for that fiscal year was 2,513. The actual number that were in a facility on an average daily basis was 2,268, which was a 19 per cent increase from the previous year.

MRS. KOPER: A supplementary, Mr. Chairman. I am wondering if there is any trend at all. Is this an increasing number per year?

MR. HARLE: Yes. Throughout the budget period of '81-82 under consideration, we did see increases stretching through into early 1983. However, since then there has been somewhat of a decline. It is too early for us to calculate the average for the current period of '83, but the numbers of daily populations that I'm seeing had gotten up to around 3,100 and are running at about 2,740, 2,750, 2,790. We've actually been down to 2,690 for maybe one day. So there has been some easing of the numbers in the system, and we can only put it to the current economic situation in the province.

MRS. KOPER: A supplementary, Mr. Chairman. Do you have any figures on the success rate of the program support services for the correctional services?

MR. HARLE: When one talks about success, I think one has to be very, very cautious about claiming success in the correctional system. Recidivism is a big issue in the correctional system all over the world. We see a recidivism rate of about 35 per cent. However, I wouldn't like anyone to be misled by that figure. That is recidivism as

showing up by having an individual previously in our system out, and then coming back into our system. In point of fact, one has to look at it in a much larger picture. The recidivism rates are 60, 70 per cent, because obviously the next time someone who might have been in our system shows up, it might be in Saskatchewan, Florida, or wherever.

The recidivism rate is a very hard thing to get a handle on. It's unrealistic to think of recidivism from the point of view of only those people who show up back in our system, because that looks very low when you compare it to what the various observers of the corrections scene talk about as rates of recidivism. Nevertheless, even though it's so discouraging, I think the emphasis of our correctional system is to strive in all ways we can to rehabilitate.

MRS. KOPER: A supplementary please, Mr. Chairman.

MR. VICE-CHAIRMAN: You've had two supplementaries, and we have quite a long list. I'll put your name at the bottom of the list, if that would be okay.

Mr. Stromberg, followed by Mr. Lee and Mr. Gogo.

MR. STROMBERG: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Last year your department implemented a cost-saving by axing a number of licensing agencies in Alberta. I would like to know how many dollars were saved in this program and if it is still being continued. Perhaps as explanation, in a number of communities in rural Alberta there was a licence issuing agent. Notification was given last year that due to centralization, use of computers, et cetera, these would be dropped. There was considerable opposition to it in both my constituency and in the minister's constituency. In some places they were kept and in others they were dropped. How many were dropped, and what was the saving?

MR. HARLE: One would have to take a look at the figures with some care, and I could produce them. I haven't got them here. Let me say that in terms of the total number of private issuers, the total number of private issuers has in fact increased. What has happened is that the treasury branches have requested us to take over the operations. Instead of establishing a government office, we have gone to tender and established a private issuer wherever there was a treasury branch and wherever we could interest someone in taking on a private issuing office.

We did have some very small private issuing offices decide to close. Where that happened, I got requests from the communities as described by the hon. member, and accommodations were made for those types of situations. However, there were some where the private issuer had so little business to do that it just did not interest anybody else in taking on the job. Those were in fact closed.

MR. STROMBERG: A supplementary. How many of those were closed?

MR. HARLE: There may have been about a half a dozen, but I would have to check our figures.

Perhaps, Mr. Chairman, I could just supplement that answer. We presently have 137 private issuers, 11 motor vehicle department offices, and 61 treasury branch offices.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, I want to ask the Solicitor General with regard to the Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Fund. It seems to me in the past year or two that, first of all, there was a deductible put in that had not been there prior to that. As I recall, the motivation was to somehow lessen the claims on the fund. At the same time, as I recall, the premium that comes from licence plates went up 100 or 200 per cent.

First of all, Mr. Chairman, I wonder if the Solicitor General could give us an indication of what that experience has been in terms of the solvency of the fund, from the point of view of both revenue and expenditure.



MR. HARLE: Mr. Chairman, we did implement the \$200 deductible to move the program closer to an insurance concept. As I believe you are aware, one of the principles of insurance is to insure that there is not an occurrence of the claim insured against. It's a well-recognized principle that if you insure against something, it encourages the event to occur. To prevent that, all insurance companies operate deductibles to place some responsibility upon the insured to look after the things insured against. We were receiving a lot of claims, and it was a growing area where people were claiming under the accident fund that an accident had occurred, particularly as a result of a hit and run and of course we had the area of the uninsured driver.

Shortly after I became minister, we increased the fee from \$3 to \$5 for the accident fund claim. At that time, that seemed a reasonable way to try to cover off the losses. We had borrowed money from general revenue, about \$4.5 million plus, in order to pay out the claims. We've turned that around as a result of the increases in fee and the deductible, with the result that we were able to refund to general revenue the approximately \$5 million that was borrowed. The fund has now increased. I think the latest figure is about \$18 million in it.

That's got to be looked at from the point of view that we are seeing, shall we say, an increase in the value of personal injury claims, and there are a lot in the process of going through the courts. We're a little unsure as to what the actuarial basis of the fund is from the point of view of the claim's experience. But it has been turned around and is certainly in the black, at least for the immediate present. Whether that will remain so depends, of course, upon the size of the personal injury awards that we have to pay.

MR. GOGO: A supplementary, Mr. Chairman. In view of the great surplus, perhaps the minister could consider lowering it by \$1 next year, to get from that \$4 million deficit with regard to the \$8 million surplus.

The supplementary is really a question of process. My understanding is that if my automobile is damaged, an apparent sideswipe on a city street — I cannot determine who did it and following a report to the police they can't determine. I can then make a claim on the Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Fund. If, however, it's discovered who did it, I cannot make that same claim without a judgment.

It seems to me that I, as a citizen who has purchased — to quote the minister — insurance for a \$5 bill on my licence plate, am thereby prevented from making a claim on the fund until such time as I obtain a judgment from a court against that person who damaged my car. That entails perhaps legal costs and so on. I have some difficulty with that.

Could the minister advise how many complaints he's had in that regard? Is he giving consideration to reviewing that process where a citizen in Alberta paying a premium of \$5 on his plate cannot obtain repairs to his car under the claim fund without first obtaining a judgment from the court?

MR. HARLE: In response to the member, Mr. Chairman, that's true of the insurance system. Insurance companies don't pay out claims unless action is commenced and the courts have had an opportunity to decide the liability and the amount of the claim. So I see nothing wrong with the principle of having to sue in order to prove the case, and the fund pays the claim where a proper case has been established.

We are looking at the fee of \$5 because of the turnaround that we have been able to achieve on the fund. We are looking at privatizing it — in effect saying to the insurance industry, why don't you design a policy that will cover this and we'll cover only the remaining situations.

I really don't think that we should be operating a system whereby people can merely make claims for government funds to repair their vehicles without in some way establishing a right to those moneys.

establishing a right to those moneys.

MR. GOGO: The final question follows on the previous one, Mr. Chairman. There have been incidents where someone has damaged somebody's car and then left the jurisdiction of the province of Alberta. The claimant is then faced with the problem of seeking a judgment in another province. If you consider \$500, \$1000, or \$1500 damage to a car, I'm sure it is virtually impossible to seek a judgment in an Ontario court to have your car repaired here in the province of Alberta where the damage occurred.

It just seems to me that it's grossly unfair — maybe it's a communication problem — to put the onus on the citizen, who thinks and believes that if his car is damaged by someone who doesn't have insurance, the Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Fund will repair it. Could the minister again respond to: is that an area where his department is prepared to review the policy?

MR. HARLE: We have had the odd situation where that has occurred and, where we can verify the facts, payments have been made. But again, it's a question of the real area and difficulty that all insurers have: if you insure against a risk, you encourage that risk to occur.

MR. VICE-CHAIRMAN: Mr. Clark, followed by Mr. Nelson, Mr. Musgrove, Mrs. Koper, Mr. Lee, Mr. Stromberg, Mr. Shrake. We have quite a list here, so we'll try to hold it as brief as we can so we can get all the speakers in this morning.

MR. CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll be brief. Mr. Gogo certainly brought up one of the areas that I wanted to deal in, because it does seem that there is a great delay in getting this judgment satisfied for a person who's had their car smashed on the street, even though they don't leave the province. That has happened in my area.

I would like to ask the minister another question, though. When the grants are given to a municipality, does that include all types of policing? For instance, does it include the Alberta Highway Patrol, or is this budget over and above these people who are locally known as "purple petes" out there in the rural areas?

MR. HARLE: Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure whether I fully understand the question. We do not provide any grants to municipalities for their by-law enforcement officers and special constables. We only provide an unconditional grant to the municipality for police forces. In the case of the RCMP, it's \$12 per capita. In the case of municipalities like Edmonton or Calgary, that establish their own municipal police forces, they are paid \$18 per capita. We provide no moneys at all for by-law enforcement officers or special constables.

MR. CLARK: But the Alberta Highway Patrol officers are paid out of your budget, over and above that?

MR. HARLE: That's right. In the budget, we have the budget of the Highway Patrol. It is true that we get requests from local municipal councils to enforce the weights on highways. Where we have enough personnel to be able to do so, we do listen to their requests and enforce the weights.

MR. CLARK: Just one other question, then. It has to do with the new correctional centres. I would like to know from the minister if any of the funds have come out of your budget for the construction, or redesigning to meet requirements, of the new youth development centre, that is now nearing completion in Strathmore. Or are they coming from the Department of Social Services and Community Health's budget? Where are they coming from at the present time?

MR. HARLE: Mr. Chairman, the decision between the two departments — Social Services and Community Health, and the Solicitor General — has not been finalized. Nevertheless, we do anticipate that the facility at Strathmore is going to be involved in the switch from one department to the other. We are looking at the costs of making certain changes to that institution in order to be able to meet the requirements of the federal Young Offenders Act legislation. We have been meeting with the school board in the community with regard to the provision of teachers. We are looking at the population that would be in that institution, which is coming down to about 48 and which will probably involve 75 staff. But I re-emphasize that we have not made the final decision but are expecting that that could happen.

MR. CLARK: Has progress on that facility fairly well come to a halt until this decision is made?

MR. HARLE: I understand the construction is virtually completed.

MR. NELSON: I thought maybe we'd heat the conversation up a little here. Usually I'm the one who starts it, anyway. I'd like to get in the area that Mrs. Koper was discussing relevant to the provincial institutions, but in a different light. A number of constituents have often asked me why these institutions in some cases are called a picnic ground or hotel. As we all know, incarceration is not a pleasant thing for anybody. However, if we continue to create a hotel atmosphere, how are we going to discourage further people from coming into — in other words, repeat — these institutions? I've been through one of them, and the atmosphere in these places is kind of loose. I'm just wondering how, when we create an atmosphere of pleasantness inside, we expect people not to be encouraged to return.

MR. HARLE: Mr. Chairman, I would like the hon. member to attend conferences on corrections. There is always a discussion of this topic. I guess one has to say: what is the situation in Alberta, Canada, and what are the alternatives? If you have poor systems, inadequate systems, overcrowded systems, you have the potential for riots as in New Mexico. You increase the risk of brutality within the system. Sure, it might in one sense provide a discouragement, that people would not show up back there. However, if you went to those jurisdictions I think you would find their recidivism rate is just as high, or higher, than what we have.

As I indicated, our philosophy has been based on making every attempt to rehabilitate. We have done everything we can to meet the correctional standards that have been developed not only in Canada but in the United States. We are certainly not anxious to have overcrowded facilities. We have found that if you have a well-equipped institution, we do not create the possibility of brutality within the institution, which can set up a potential for riots. I think the record shows that if one measures that type of response which inmates have used in other jurisdictions, you have not seen it here in Alberta. I would consider that a plus. What I would consider to be minor criticism, that we treat inmates as human beings, to my way of thinking is not a remark that I can put any credibility on.

MR. NELSON: A supplementary, Mr. Chairman. In light of the Solicitor General's comments, does he have any record as far as the number of repeaters that are entering our jails, either from the system here in Alberta or from other systems within the country, and the number of people that have been in the system who may not have returned?

MR. HARLE: Mr. Chairman, when I responded to Mrs. Koper, I indicated that we have a

35 per cent rate, which relates to people who have been in our system, have been released, and then have returned for some reason. As I indicated, I don't think that can be used as a statistic for recidivism.

If you say to me, what about people who might have been incarcerated anywhere else in the world, who now show up in our system? I'm sorry, I can't give you that kind of statistic. The reason is that, first of all, we would have to rely on the inmate telling us where he has last been. I would suggest that such information would be very suspect and unreliable. If we had to check out everybody from around the world, it would be a horrendous cost to gather that kind of data.

Recidivism is a problem in corrections, for us and around the world. Because of the nature of our programming, I suggest that we are doing everything from a modern correctional approach to try — and I use that word in its full meaning — to rehabilitate.

[Mr. Martin in the Chair]

MR. NELSON: Mr. Chairman, I have a whole slew of questions and possibly could create some debate with this, but I will hold those for the time being. If the minister is interested, I would like to take him up on his offer.

MR. SZWENDER. Mr. Chairman, a supplementary to the minister on this topic. I was wondering if the minister could help me reconcile a difficult question. I appreciate the importance of creating atmospheres within an institution that would be conducive to rehabilitation or safety, as was mentioned. I have constituents who are prison guards, who tell me that they find it very difficult to explain to their families, or even to themselves, that the prisoners eat food that is far better than they could ever afford to serve to their families. I am just wondering how you answer these people, these constituents, who are trying to earn a living, when people who are incarcerated and who have lost their privileges are at least eating at a higher level than people working for a living.

MR. HARLE: Again, Mr. Chairman, I regard that sort of criticism with a great deal of interest. I am not sure precisely where it comes from. Let me say that our food costs are in the range of 98 cents to \$1.10 per meal. If you regard those kinds of measures of costs, along with the basic principle that we follow the Canadian Food Guide on nutrition — it is true that we bulk buy meat, and it produces some steaks, which we use. We produce a lot of food in our own gardens, operated by inmates.

We are certainly not trying to be inhuman; we are trying to set standards. There is no doubt that there will be inmates who receive better food in the institution than they do at home. I am not sure that just because of that, we should lower our standards.

MR. SZWENDER: Mr. Chairman, my final comment is just an observation. I think it's the perception that the public has created, through the media possibly and through other comments. Of course your explanation is totally valid. But maybe this is something that the department could look at, to dispel this perception that inmates are being treated better than the general population.

MR. STROMBERG: Two years ago I had a tour of the provincial jail at Fort Saskatchewan. I asked to go through the kitchen, I saw what they were preparing, I saw the list of menus, and I was surprised to see barbecued pork chops. I am pretty darned lucky of my wife gives me pork chops, let alone being barbecued. I thought that was going a little overboard. I wanted to make that observation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think it's been answered by the minister. We will accept the observation and go on to the next question.

MR. MUSGROVE: Mr. Chairman, I understand the funding to municipalities for police forces. This has to be rural municipalities. As I understand it, rural municipalities get no funding but are policed by the RCMP as part of the federal cost of policing. Is that it?

MR. HARLE: Yes, Mr. Chairman, that's correct. The Police Act provides that an urban municipality — and "urban municipality" has been defined so as to include Sherwood Park, which is one of the aberrations we have to deal with in the province of Alberta — is policed by the RCMP. Rural municipalities do not pay anything for police service, and it is a sore point with those urban municipalities that have to provide their own policing.

MR. MUSGROVE: What about the provincial police force? Is that covered out of the provincial budget?

MR. HARLE: That's right.

MR. MUSGROVE: One supplementary question, Mr. Chairman. As far as county or municipal by-law enforcement officers, what is the responsibility of the RCMP to follow up on a charge that these people have made? Sometimes the RCMP are kind of reluctant even to get involved with the enforcement of by-laws in counties and municipalities, to the extent that they say that the by-law enforcement officers are — they don't want to get involved with their charges, either.

MR. HARLE: Yes. The RCMP does not want to get involved in what they call non-police work. They do not regard by-law enforcement as police work, and that is why some municipalities have engaged the services of by-law enforcement officers in order to enforce by-laws. The police are prepared to enforce those by-laws that relate to what you might call police-related activities; that is, speeding or traffic. Most often it relates to that type of by-law. But municipalities have developed all kinds of by-laws with offence sections that really have nothing to do with what is normally taken to be police work.

As I indicated, we are looking at our legislation in the Police Act to try to see if we can define what is police work. It's not a term that has been adequately defined in the past; there really was no need to do so. But because of additional costs and the fact that rural municipalities have wanted to see their by-laws enforced, they have developed a potential group of people who not only enforce by-laws but in some cases have special constable appointments.

MR. MUSGROVE: A supplementary. As I understand it, a by-law enforcement officer can't make a charge on anybody. It has to go through a police force of some kind.

MR. HARLE: I don't think so. It is true that they very often come to the police to assist them in trying to prosecute some of these offences, but that again goes back to the fact that police forces have to be trained. If you're going to have a by-law enforcement officer, the municipality has to develop some way or system of laying the charge and getting it before the court. It's not up to the RCMP or the municipal police force to carry those sorts of things forward. There may be an easier way of doing it, for example, for the city of Edmonton, because of its resources in dealing with its police force and its by-law enforcement officers, and how they proceed to lay charges.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Musgrove, I'll put you down again. He already nicely got through four supplementaries on me. I'll put you down at the end. Mrs. Koper.

MRS. KOPER: A very brief question. I realize it involves a very small amount of money, but it's regarding the revenues from the maintenance charges for the correctional centres. It appears that the correctional centre in Belmont is able to obtain a substantially larger amount of revenue than, say, the one at Fort Saskatchewan, whereas obviously the Fort Saskatchewan centre is much bigger. I wonder if there is some explanation for this, and whether or not this could possibly be reviewed.

MR. HARLE: The explanation really is quite simple. In the case of Fort Saskatchewan, it is of course a residential system. The inmate is incarcerated there and doesn't have an opportunity to get out of the facility. Belmont is an entirely different facility. It's moving towards what you might call a halfway house style of service, whereby the inmates in Fort Saskatchewan are then moved to Belmont, where they receive encouragement to find a job and go out into the community and work. When they do in fact get a job, they are then charged room and board. Our recoveries are related to recovering something for the room and board while they are earning normal wages in the community.

MR. LEE: Through the Chair to the minister. I'm trying to determine from the statements here what portion of the municipal police assistance grant or innovative policing subsidy would apply to dealing with the problem of vandalism. Or is that the area to look for expenditures?

MR. HARLE: I suggest to the hon. member, Mr. Chairman, that that's a very difficult cost accounting program to be able to pick up. Most vandalism is handled through the local police forces. For instance, particularly with vandalism in schools they very often develop a program with the local school board to attack that problem. It very often involves resources from the local police force, whether it be the RCMP or the municipal police. We do have about \$1 million in our current budget that relates to what can be called preventative policing. Innovative policing is part of it, and also the Check Stop program. So it's broken down in our budget into two items: Check Stop and innovative policing.

The innovative policing aspect of it relates to the preparation of materials which can be used by police forces in various crime prevention programs, and part of it might go into the area of vandalism. I believe we produce a brochure on vandalism. But of course where vandalism is a specific problem in a jurisdiction it is attacked specifically, and a lot of it relates to school-related vandalism.

MR. LEE: A supplementary, Mr. Chairman. I'm aware of a special task force that has been struck in the city of Calgary, and it's now been in effect for about a year and a half or two years. They have attempted to duplicate the initiative taken by some municipalities in eastern Canada that have been extremely effective in identifying the extent of the problem of vandalism. I must say that one of the revelations of these studies has been that, generally speaking, in the past we haven't been aware of the incredible cost of vandalism to all the various agencies of the municipality. The task force has developed a number of recommendations and is in the process of implementing them.

My question is: is the minister specifically responsible for vandalism against property of the provincial government? If the minister is not, then who is? Does the provincial government have a program for dealing with vandalism — identifying the cost and taking steps to prevent it within the provincial administration?

MR. HARLE: Mr. Chairman, as far as police activity is concerned, it really falls within the jurisdiction of each police force. For example, for the city of Edmonton it would be the city of Edmonton police force if it were provincial property; in the city of Calgary it

would fall within the jurisdiction of the local police force.

There is nothing in this budget that relates to vandalism. I suggest that the hon. member might like to address that question to the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services, as to whether they have any specific programs or do something with local police forces. The only area that comes under the jurisdiction of the Solicitor General is of course the security in this building.

MR. LEE: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Stromberg and then Mr. Shrake.

MR. STROMBERG: Mr. Chairman, I wonder what percentage of your prison population is in there purely or in part due to alcoholism.

MR. HARLE: That's a tough question. Various estimates have been made. Some suggestions have been made that it is about 25 per cent, but obviously that cuts across all kinds of offences. I certainly wouldn't want that number to be taken as being purely offences involving alcohol.

MR. STROMBERG: My supplementary. Does the minister have an idea of just how many dollars are being spent within the system for the rehabilitation of people, related to alcoholism? The staff that's working in there with this problem of excessive drinking — how many dollars are being spent in that one given area?

MR. HARLE: I would have to respond later in terms of how many dollars. Suffice it to say that in every institution, there is always an alcohol treatment program. We make use of services that are, for example, part of the Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission. So it may not show up as a dollar item in this budget but of course would show up somewhere in the total government system. We do not want to duplicate services. We would prefer to make use of the Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission resources in order to attack this problem, for the very obvious reason that as these people are released, we would hope that they would continue in some program which had been started while incarcerated.

MR. STROMBERG: A third supplementary. Perhaps the minister could also, some time later on, indicate how many man-hours are used within the system in rehabilitation of alcoholics.

MR. HARLE: I suppose, Mr. Chairman, we could come up with some estimate, but I would suggest that it would be a very expensive operation to try to isolate that type of man-hours, considering that, as I have said, we have programs in all the institutions. We make sure that inmates are aware of these programs, and we use outside services where those services are available.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You want to make a suggestion?

MR. STROMBERG: Perhaps I could reword the question. On any given day, how many people are working on this problem of rehabilitation of alcoholics?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can I make a suggestion? Perhaps that information isn't readily available. If I could ask the Solicitor General if they could get together as accurate a picture as possible for the member, send it to me, and I'll make sure it is sent out to all the members. Would that be acceptable to you?

MR. HARLE: I welcome that suggestion, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Next I have Mr. Shrake.

MR. SHRAKE: Mr. Chairman, this is a question that was asked of me by one of the councillors in one of the small towns around Calgary, and I said I'd bring this up. As I understand, we actually give some fairly healthy grants to the city of Calgary, also Edmonton, and so on. They have a very good administration set-up for police: the training programs, recruitment programs, and everything is in place. Has any thought ever been given to seeing if they would do the training and co-ordinate between, say, Calgary and Strathmore to the east, High River to the south, Airdrie to the north, maybe Cochrane to the west — having the city of Calgary train and assist these municipalities with police to handle some of their problems rather than depending on the RCMP, or have them go into their own little police program?

MR. HARLE: Mr. Chairman, there are 10 urban municipalities in the province that have their own police forces. Obviously, the cities of Calgary and Edmonton are the largest. There are some of the smaller cities like Lethbridge that have their own, and there are some towns like Barrhead and Lacombe that have their own. That's all included in the 10 that I've described.

The existing system of training has been to rely heavily upon the training available in the cities of Edmonton and Calgary. So where those two cities have training programs under way and if they have any vacant spaces, they make those spaces available to whichever of the other communities have someone available who wants to take that training. Right now, of course, all training has ceased. I believe neither city is doing any training at the present time, so there's just no training.

The city of Lethbridge operates on a slightly different system. They have made use of the community college program for police training, which is obviously of a more academic variety. Then when they recruit people who have graduated from that program, they do some of their own in-house training.

All of the training that I've described pretty well relates to what you might call introductory level training. Beyond that the RCMP, through the Canadian Police College and the Regina depot, does make additional training available within police forces. That is available, of course, to all communities that have police forces.

MR. SHRAKE: A supplementary question. There's quite a bit more than just the training. There's the administration and quite a few other costs which a big system just absorbs while in a smaller system it becomes very difficult. Have we ever thought of going like we have in the . . . A study has been done, and Calgary and the surrounding satellite cities and geographical areas are looked at as a sewer and water area, a region. Have we ever looked at doing that in a policing region, where the city of Calgary police, with their administration in place to take over, say, Strathmore, High River, Airdrie, Cochrane, maybe even stretching to take in Okotoks, Turner Valley, Black Diamond — these areas which are quite readily serviceable by the city of Calgary police. Have we ever looked at that, with a view to maybe a little bit of savings in expense for police protection?

MR. HARLE: Mr. Chairman, to the hon. member: ever since we went into the negotiations on the RCMP contract, and even before that, the department has continually had under review the whole area of policing, including police training, and what new or alternative forms of policing, such as regional policing, might be used sometime in the future. So the answer is yes, we have looked at those sorts of alternatives. We have looked at alternative training models, other than the present system of Edmonton and Calgary basically supplying training for recruit purposes. The



whole area of what we should be looking at in the future as to the way we police is something that I have been spending a great deal of time on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have Mr. Musgrove and Mr. Clark.

MR. MUSGROVE: Mr. Chairman, I don't like to belabor this by-law enforcement officer, but it was my understanding that for a by-law enforcement officer to, say, serve a recognition of — let's talk about somebody breaking a road ban. He couldn't subpoena that person to court. That had to go through either the RCMP or the provincial police force. Is that a correct assessment or not?

MR. HARLE: It is a subject that has been on the agenda of the chiefs of police meetings that we have with the various chiefs of police, including the assistant commissioner, K Division, RCMP. There may be some requirements in the Criminal Code and a criminal procedure that is involved here. I'd have to take the question as notice if you want to proceed further with it. However, I go back to the basic statement that enforcement of by-laws is not a police function.

Depending on what type of road ban it is — where it is a provincial ban, of course, we use the Alberta Highway Patrol. There have been occasions when we have had sufficient manpower and time and have received requests from a local jurisdiction to enforce a road ban, a weight problem, that Alberta Highway Patrol officers have been involved. But again, it comes back to the basic theory of police work. There shouldn't be a duplicate service. Enforcement of most of the by-laws is not legitimate police work. If a rural municipality wants to enforce its own by-laws, it has to do so with its own resources.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. It's my understanding that in the Drumheller institution, which is a federal institution, they teach courses, and one of the more successful courses they teach is cooking. The students prepare many of the meals that are consumed by their captive clientele. When they prepare these dishes, many of them are dishes used in some of the better restaurants. I was wondering if your provincial institutions have such a course, or if they haven't, if they've ever examined putting in such a course as that. When these people are released, they would at least have a trade they can go to that they can use, and it should save some of the expense within the institution.

MR. HARLE: Mr. Chairman, the overall answer is yes, we do have a system. It works like this. One of the realities of our program is that because we only have inmates serving a time of two years less a day, and the vast majority are in the three- to six-month range, we obviously can't operate a full-scale program such as might be possible in the federal penitentiary system. But a lot of our corrections facilities have contracts. The main one is VS Services. They use inmates in food preparation. As far as I'm aware, we've had some success in the fact that at the end of the period of serving their sentence, these inmates have gone into apprenticeship work with VS Services and are fully employed in that endeavor. Because of its importance to the operation of a facility, it is one of the more highly paid inmate incentive programs, and there is really good training available.

So we do operate that basic philosophy — modified because of the short period of time most inmates are in the system. They are encouraged to work in the kitchens and to become interested in food service, and we've had some success stories of inmates who, after serving their sentence, have gone on and taken that on as an occupation.

MR. CLARK: Just one quick supplementary. Could you inform us how many of our institutions have Versafoods contracting their food needs?

MR. HARLE: Eight of 10 institutions have Versafoods Services.

MR. CLARK: That leads to one more supplementary. Have you done a comparison? First, I would like to know if the other two that don't have Versafoods Services have contracts with other similar people or if they're run in some other different way. Is there any way of comparing the costs of Versafoods Services to some of the others?

MR. HARLE: Mr. Chairman, the work of cost comparison was started and done during the period when Helen Hunley was Solicitor General, and was shown to be very cost-effective. We believe it is still cost-effective from a point of view of comparison with the two institutions that still have institutional service. We're always looking at the possibility of expanding the notion of contract service. I think Lethbridge and Peace River still have their own institutional service at the present time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's nobody else if you want to supplement. I don't have anyone else. You looked like you did.

MR. CLARK: I guess Versafoods are in many of the hospitals. We've done a comparison in the hospitals, and it wasn't very favorable. It started out as favorable, but it didn't end up that way. I was just wondering if the minister could do a comparison on the facilities that are still using their own food services against that of what Versafoods is today.

MR. HARLE: One of the factors that goes into the cost of food is our own produced food. We make extensive use of that. We do of course require Versafoods to employ our inmates in their kitchens. So when you factor in those kinds of things, it does become a little more difficult to get comparisons. However, as I indicated a little earlier, when our food costs are in the range of 98 cents to \$1.10 per meal, I really think it has been quite effective.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are there any more questions? Seeing none, as chairman I would like to thank the Solicitor General and the staff for a very informative session. I know it's a busy schedule and we do appreciate your coming before our committee. Thank you very much.

I take it, then, that at 10 a.m. next Wednesday, November 9, Mr. Chambers will be here. Would somebody like to move adjournment? It's been moved. All those in favor? The meeting is adjourned.

[The meeting adjourned at 11:48 a.m.]