

Title: Wednesday, May 27, 1987 pa

[Chairman: Mr. Pashak]

[10 a.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd like to call today's meeting of the Public Accounts to order. Please note a change to the agenda. The agenda circulated had approval of the minutes of April 20. That should of course be May 20. Is there a motion to adopt the minutes as circulated? Moved by Mrs. Mirosh. Are you agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. I think people want me to build a list of names already. Okay, let me just get a few names down then.

MR. ALGER: Let's go alphabetically.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Holy smokes! Everybody is really keen this morning. I can't believe it. Gosh, and we've got a very popular guest today. I haven't even had a chance to introduce her yet. I hope I've got them all. Let me just run through the names that I've got to date, and if I've left any one out, please indicate. This is the order: Laing, Mirosh, Harry Alger, Nelson, Bradley, Musgrove, Ady, Brassard, Moore.

MR. FISCHER: Did you miss me?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Fischer.

MR. FISCHER: How come I'm not first?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, you put your hand down before I saw it. Does anybody object if I move Mr. Fischer up to the . . . [interjection] There, somebody has objected. Okay.

This morning we have with us again Ken Smith with the Attorney General, and our guest this morning is . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Auditor General.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I mean the Auditor General, sorry. We're starting off on a great note. Today I'd like to welcome the Hon. Connie Osterman, Minister of Social Services. I understand that when these accounts were completed for the year 1985-86, the Department of Social Services also included occupational health . . .

MRS. OSTERMAN: Community health.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Or community health. That's no longer a responsibility of Mrs. Osterman. So I'd appreciate it if you'd keep your questions today just to Social Services, because I think it would be unfair to ask her about an area she no longer has responsibilities in. So I'd invite the hon. minister to introduce the guests she's brought with her and to make any opening remarks that she might like to.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Thank you, Chairman, and good morning to everyone. I get the sense immediately that while the committee is very serious, it's also relatively informal, and so we will have possibly a little chit chat back and forth. First of all, I would like to introduce two colleagues from the department that are with me this morning, who I'm sure have a lot of detail in their respective heads. One is Barry Burgess, who is the acting deputy minister, and Brian Elliott is the director of financial op-

erations and budgets, if I'm correct there.

So it's a pleasure for me to be here this morning and acknowledge the presence of the Auditor General. I was concerned for a minute when the chairman said Attorney General. I wondered if it was even getting more serious than I thought. I acknowledge the assistance the Auditor General's department has been for us and note that I am sitting in Mr. Martin's chair. I'm sure there are all sorts of jokes about where the cabinet ministers sit, and I'm looking at colleagues sitting in places they probably are unaccustomed to except for Wednesday mornings. But I don't intend ever to occupy this chair, other than in Public Accounts.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Minister of Advanced Education indicated that he thought the chair slopes slightly to the left. It made him a little uncomfortable.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I have righted that, so to speak, Mr. Chairman.

I was minister for approximately six weeks of the particular fiscal year that is under review, and I think it would be important for me to highlight briefly some of the initiatives of that year. On the list -- and obviously that would be, I think, especially highlighted by the former minister -- would be the whole area of child welfare. You know that there was a new Child Welfare Act that brought many, many changes to the delivery of services and the various priorities with respect to child welfare. It has been described by those who were there and began the whole initiative in the beginning of the transition. We've got approximately a time frame of five years in terms of implementation, and as we put one foot in front of the other, I think we can see the changes that have already occurred.

That year saw the appointment of a Children's Guardian, and two years later we are already undertaking a review of that particular office. A lot of interesting things have occurred, and one of them that borders on more than interesting is the possible conflict, in a legislative sense, in terms of where the Children's Guardian is effectively the boss, so to speak, and where in fact other regulatory authorities come in. A number of those things I think have to be addressed and sorted out, obviously in the best interests of children, not in the best interests of the minister or the bureaucracy.

That same year saw the transfer of a number of our folks under the Young Offenders Act. So we see some changes even in a budgetary sense of the uptake of the programs because of a number of people no longer being the responsibility of the Department of Social Services. There was a postadoptive registry established that year. I'm not sure I have with me this morning -- maybe one of my colleagues will -- information as to how well that has been working, but certainly I know I receive a number of letters from people who are seeking family and are looking to whatever mechanism the province of Alberta might offer for a possible reunion of the family.

The relationship also with respect to agencies delivering services for Social Services began to undergo a significant change that year. I think a lot of people who have been familiar with the services of the department will know that prior to that, most of the financial transfers, I understand, were done by way of grants. We now are into contractual arrangements that I believe have proved beneficial to both the providers and the department themselves in establishing what precisely is expected and what it is that we're paying for.

The procedures in the Public Guardian's office were

changed, and although I understand that didn't necessarily take on a high profile, there were hearings across the province, and those people who have reason to interface with that office, in particular private guardians, would have seen a change in procedures and I believe to the betterment of all concerned.

I think hon. members will also note that there was, with the exception of the social allowance area, a continuation of significant growth in most of the program areas. That indicates more needs being discovered, in some cases an expansion of programs, possibly a better understanding by the public of what it is that is offered under our various programs, and of course those who fit within the criteria, their application, and their beginning to receive under those various program areas.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, as I mentioned before, a number of comments by the Auditor General in my view have -- well, I'm not sure we are happy about having to be commented upon. It's fair to say from my perspective that especially coming to such a massive department with a huge transfer of funds in a whole host of ways, directly to citizens and through program areas, any comments that are made -- if they put fire to a number of people's feet, I think they're very appropriate and very helpful because we do have probably a jockeying for position and a desire by various departments to be seen as the department that should receive some priority if we're talking about an updating of systems and the need to purchase equipment and so on. And Social Services is no different from any other department in that we try to make the case for what we believe to be a better operation, a more efficient and responsive and accountable operation. When the Auditor General makes comments in that regard, it is helpful to us, because a lot of times it does speak to the need for additional funding for the department to effect the changes that are necessary.

Maybe I'll hold making comments on the individual recommendations. Members may want to get into those, and I'd be pleased to comment. Mr. Chairman, that's about my overview. It's been very brief for a very large department, but I look forward to the members' questions or comments.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, hon. minister. Maybe it would be helpful for you to know that what we're trying to do here is not look at policy so much but at expenditures during that current year in terms of policies that were previously approved by the Legislature. What our members will hopefully do will be to indicate specific expenditures within the Auditor General's report. That seems to make the meeting go a little more efficiently.

So with that, I'd like to recognize Ms Laing.

MS LAING: I'll give you the page of what I'm talking about. In volume 2, page 21.8.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I'm having a hard time hearing the member, Mr. Chairman.

MS LAING: Okay, page 21.8. I'd like to look at expenditure 3.1.2; it's just about an inch down. I see a reduction from the estimate of \$3.2 million to the expenditure of \$2.4 million. I'm wondering what the reason is for that significant reduction of about 25 percent.

MRS. OSTERMAN: May I respond immediately, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MRS. OSTERMAN: To the hon. Member for Edmonton Avonmore, that relates to a brief comment I made in my overview, and that was that there have been some significant changes in the delivery of services for children. In particular there would have been a large transfer of responsibility to the Solicitor General's department. So we would have had a lesser number of children that we would have had responsibility for, and I think that would be the main bulk of the reduction there.

MS LAING: Okay, thank you. I'm looking then down at vote 3.3.1, child welfare services, corporate. It went up from the estimate of \$500,000 to just over \$2 million in terms of that which is expended. So that's a really huge increase, and I guess I'm wondering what "corporate" means and why that change.

MRS. OSTERMAN: For the information of the member, at that time, because of the new Child Welfare Act, there was put into place a child welfare implementation project. That was the beginning of what I described as the five-year project that would have to manage all the changes that would be required, not only in a corporate sense but right across the province with respect to the delivery of services and the acknowledgment of what the new Act would have required of us. Of course, that would also incorporate training in various areas.

MS LAING: Okay. I'm wondering why it's designated "corporate." Who were the individuals or who was receiving that money? Was it spent within the department, or was it contracted out or fee for service? I'm wondering what the word "corporate" means also.

MRS. OSTERMAN: That's normally in reference to the head office, so to speak, the initial core here in Edmonton. Corporate does not normally refer to the regions, though obviously services are delivered to the regions from corporate. So we're talking about head office personnel and the team that would have been in place to effect the changes.

MS LAING: So that would not involve fee for service or contracting out?

MRS. OSTERMAN: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: With the agreement of the committee, I'd like to move Mr. Brassard up to the top of the list. He has a school class coming in shortly. Is that agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Brassard.

MR. BRASSARD: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, committee members.

I'm looking on page 21.2, Madam Minister, vote 2.8, and I see the total authorized expenditures were \$461,720,000 and some for social allowances administered by the province but only \$458 million was spent. I guess my question was just why there was an underexpenditure of \$2.8 million in social allowances when the province was really experiencing not necessarily a downturn in the economy but certainly a tightening up, particularly in your portfolio, as you see it. Could you explain why

that money would not be spent? I'm not recommending that it should be.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I think that in terms of the budget process, obviously far in advance of the fiscal year beginning, there has to be an estimate made. A whole host of factors would be taken into consideration in terms of the economy and so on as to how many would be expected to have to access the social allowance system. If the hon. member will recall, last year we went for a huge special warrant that had to look after just precisely the opposite case to what we're looking at in this particular fiscal year.

In the '86-87 fiscal year we had far more people come forward. It's a demand-driven program. When people fit the criteria for the program, we must deliver the financial and other benefits. In this particular year not as many people came forward as had been estimated, and therefore the moneys were unexpended.

MR. BRASSARD: I see. Now that you've had an opportunity to certainly get your teeth into this portfolio, do you find that you will be able to estimate much closer? Do you feel that you can predict trends in this area more readily than you could in the past or your department could in the past?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Well, obviously the department would use the information that comes from a number of areas that is provided really in an economic sense from outside our particular area. In this particular fiscal year, I think if you're looking at the overall amount that was expended, there's only a .6 percent factor of difference, and I believe that's probably just very, very good in terms of projections.

With respect to how many people in a global sense in any one year, if we could do that prediction as accurately as we'd like, that would be great. But I think all hon. members know that so many factors that affect our economic scene are beyond our borders, and that certainly is a factor just in the previous year's scene that we probably will be talking about next year. I can't guarantee at all that the information that's provided to us, in terms of the various factors that will be taken into consideration, will be any better. I think if one picks up the financial papers, reads all the forecasts of the various so-called learned people, you will discover a great many predictions, and they're not alike at all. Somehow we are in a position of having to choose what we believe to be reasonably reliable estimates and then basing our estimates on those estimates.

MR. BRASSARD: Finally -- and I should have started off with this -- I'd certainly like to commend you and your department for the direction you're taking with your department, because I think that's certainly the most responsible reaction I've seen. But I guess more than any other department -- I'm certainly not advocating that you should spend all the money allocated, but particularly in the social services area, do you feel an obligation to spend the money that is allocated to your department by budget? It would almost seem that there are so many things to be done in this area.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Perhaps we're in a way getting out of order in the sense that we're not dealing with the expenditures for that year, but if you want to make a brief response to his questions ...

MRS. OSTERMAN: I will make a brief response. I think that

first of all, in the demand-driven programs where very specific criteria are set, I believe that whether it's underexpenditure or overexpenditure, we are in a legislative sense commanded to deliver the program. There are other areas that a budget is allocated; people in need come forward and ask for assistance. It's not necessarily mandated in the same way. Unless extraordinary circumstances were to arise, it would be my view that the department should try its best to allocate what has been put forward in the budget sense fairly, and this should be our first criteria: to be responsible to meet the budget and to take those resources and allocate them fairly on the basis of what we think the need is going to be.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The next person I recognize is Mrs. Mirosh, but before I do that, perhaps I should just explain to the large number of guests that are in the gallery at the moment that this is a meeting of the Public Accounts Committee of the province of Alberta. We're looking at the ways in which this government spent money during the fiscal year 1985-1986, and we have with us as a minister the Hon. Connie Osterman, who is responsible for Social Services. So we're asking her about the ways in which her department spent money during that year.

Mrs. Mirosh.

MRS. MIROSH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To the hon. minister: I too would like to congratulate you for a job well done over the past year. I think this is one of the most difficult departments to deal with, especially in a time of recession.

I want to refer to page 21.7, vote 1.0.15. The budget for management information and systems services went from its estimated [\$6,607,529] to an actual expenditure of \$8,162,517, which is a substantial increase. I wonder if you could explain to me what the major reason was for this large and unanticipated jump in expenditures.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Well, I'm not sure whether it was a requirement of the time in terms of a change in how payments are made for systems, but in this particular case it is my understanding that there was prepayment in this particular fiscal year for a service to be received.

MRS. MIROSH: What new expenses in management information and systems services were incurred to warrant an overexpenditure of \$1 million? Is that the answer?

MRS. OSTERMAN: The entire amount of the increase is effectively explained by the prepayment. There wasn't any addition or any new services. It was a prepayment for service.

MRS. MIROSH: Okay, that's all. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Nelson.

MS LAING: May I ask a supplementary?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, yes, there's room for one supplementary on that question.

MS LAING: I'm wondering what service was prepaid.

MRS. OSTERMAN: The electronic data processing equipment. Basically, most of that is a service and so on purchased from

Public Works. So Public Works should have had a positive entry in that particular year. You might ask the minister about that if he happens to come in.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Alger's up, but since he's just coming in, I'll turn to Mr. Nelson and let Mr. Alger in after.

MR. NELSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, would like to welcome the minister to participate this morning.

During the last while we've had numerous concerns raised regarding sexually abused children and what have you, and I'm sure we all recognize that this thing happens in the province. We don't like it, and we try to make corrections. Certainly Calgary is no different than anywhere else. I would like to know what the minister has done in Calgary in the past and the opportunities for the future as far as the situation in Calgary. What funding is being made available and has been made available to the child sexual abuse treatment centre in Calgary for the overall assistance to these circumstances that unfortunately happen?

MRS. OSTERMAN: The member has raised a very important policy and program area. I can't be as precise as I'd like to. My colleagues may be able to help me, but I recall last year, just early on in my tenure -- I believe it might have been after the end of the particular fiscal year that's under consideration -- we reallocated resources in the child abuse area. I'm wondering if one of my colleagues can help me with the amount, but I believe it was in the neighbourhood of an additional \$400,000. I'll double-check that figure.

MR. ELLIOTT: Mr. Chairman, the region also received a child abuse co-ordinator position that fiscal year to co-ordinate the activities within the region. I'm not sure if the position was filled during the fiscal year, but the resources were made available.

MR. NELSON: Yes, thank you. In essence, the ability for treatment for sexually abused children has been improved. Could you identify what number of agencies we now have in Calgary for this treatment?

MRS. OSTERMAN: I will probably have to ask my colleagues for some advice here. But I would say this: when we identified the additional funds last year, a call literally went out to various interested individuals and organizations to present to us the type of programming they believed might be appropriate and effective. That would give us an opportunity to do some evaluation rather than if we were to, on a provincewide basis, be looking at additional programming. I think it is wise to first of all have some experience, if you will, with particular areas -- and I know there are some members who are more familiar with this than others -- to try to glean what we believe would be the most effective. There were a number of individuals and organizations identified in the Calgary area. I think I'm going to have to get back to the hon. member with the specifics, but I know there were several.

MR. NELSON: Yes, Mr. Chairman, it's certainly a very positive sign that the government is looking after this situation to a great degree, at least in Calgary, and I'm sure other areas of the province.

I would just like to ask a supplementary question. There

have been reports produced by the city of Calgary, and I also believe the city of Edmonton social service department, with regard to food banks. I'm just wondering what the department did in Calgary to solve problems identified in the Calgary report, where people were slipping through the cracks, et cetera. Has the department been able to associate the circumstances of people using the food banks back to the Social Service department so they get better assistance?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, hon. minister, I think the question is out of order in the sense that it deals with current practice. But maybe if there is an expenditure that the department entered into in 1985-86 that's relative to the question . . .

MRS. OSTERMAN: I think possibly, Mr. Chairman, just briefly I could say that in co-operation with the Calgary Interfaith Food Bank, they did request assistance by way of an information system. I believe we provided some processing capacity in terms of a computer and so on, which has enabled them to provide us with very good information and as a result also I think to better identify the individuals who are accessing the food bank. The relationship there has made a significant difference in terms of the people being served and Social Services' ability to immediately react to those who indeed were falling through the cracks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Very good, thank you.

Mr. Bradley -- oh, pardon me, Mr. Alger; I'm sorry.

MR. ALGER: Mr. Bradley usually gets in ahead of me, Mr. Chairman, but I'm delighted to take his place this morning.

Also on behalf of the group that meets here this morning, I would like to say to the minister that I find her work in any portfolio exceptional, and I really wanted to let the members know that I share delight in sharing this portfolio with her through working through senior citizens.

On that pleasant note, I'm not going to ask one single question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Bradley.

MR. ALGER: Oh, I'm going to speak on another department. In fact, being a businessman, I noticed some pretty exaggerated figures in here and I sort of thought I would ask her about -- I would refer you, minister and Mr. Chairman, to page 21.10, vote 7.4.1., referring to the Michener Centre in Red Deer, where there was quite a big increase in expenses: I would say three-quarters of a million dollars, near enough. On that same page, in vote 7.4.3, the Eric Cormack Centre in Edmonton saw a huge increase of a million and a half dollars. I guess the first thing I would like to know is: what was the cause of these big increases at the two centres? The rest of them don't seem to be so far apart, but these two really got away on you. I wondered why.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Can I blame it on somebody else? No.

For the hon. member's information, in this particular fiscal year, as I understood had been the practice, the budget figures would be evolved based on the costs of salaries at the time, and it would not anticipate the salary increases in terms of whatever the bargaining process would happen to come up with. So when you have Michener Centre, for instance, which would be one of our biggest single areas in terms of a program in a particular

institution -- at that time, my understanding was that there were something like 1,500 employees, so the bulk of the costs to Michener would be in the employee area. If you added on a factor to that that took into consideration whatever increases were given to the employees, that basically is the difference there.

I think it does show you, in terms of looking at salary negotiations and costs of any particular program, when we are looking at one that is heavily dependent on care -- and this particular centre obviously does require very specialized care. I think it would almost literally factor out to at least a one-to-one relationship with the clients who are there. So the short answer, Mr. Chairman, is that the salary increases are the bulk of what would be the difference here.

MR. ALGER: I can understand that, Mr. Chairman, I guess. The other thing that I couldn't help but wonder -- and I hadn't even thought of salaries, I guess. I had sort of assumed that there would be larger numbers of people using the facilities. I do know that we do have an influx of people from other provinces on occasion, and I wondered whether or not they are taking advantage of your social services programs at Michener.

MRS. OSTERMAN: No, Mr. Chairman. As a matter of fact, the number of clients at Michener is decreasing. We have a very strong push, though it is going to take time, to community living. And certainly just a number of weeks ago the community living organization in Alberta made a very fine presentation at a dinner downstairs in the cafeteria that spoke to what they would call normalization of mentally handicapped people in providing the services for them and opportunities for them directly in a community as opposed to the institutional type living.

And the hon. member also raised the Eric Cormack Centre. In this case, while there would be some salary component there, the main bulk of it would be the combination into one program for budgetary purposes of Eric Cormack and Rosecrest. If the hon. member will look at 7.4.8, Rosecrest shows an estimate there but no expenditure, and the two have been combined.

MR. ALGER: That's good to know, Mr. Chairman. The other thing . . .

MRS. MIROSH: Can I ask on that vote?

MR. ALGER: You can when I get done.

MR. CHAIRMAN: [Inaudible] Mr. Alger's supplementals, if you do.

MRS. MIROSH: Oh, it's a supplemental.

MR. ALGER: In the same vein, Mr. Chairman, having spent a little bit of time in hospitals myself for one reason or another, I couldn't help but notice lots of ways to cut down on costs. In these two centres there is no question in my mind that there has been an increase in costs for materials and supplies. Sometimes I wonder whether or not we really manage these places as well as we should, minister, and perhaps better purchasing agents or people of that nature might be given some thought. They seem to get away with scandalous amounts of money. Can you . . .?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Well, Mr. Chairman, it's always difficult. When one tries hard to look at the business end of the running of

any of the programs and the delivering of services, there is often the criticism that somehow we're trying to do something at the expense of the clients that we're serving, when in fact there are two completely different things happening. One is the delivery of a service, the kind of care that an individual is getting. But on the other end, all the administration and backup in order for that to happen should certainly be closely scrutinized. We have, for instance, contracts within a number of institutions -- and I believe Michener would be part of that -- whereby certain food, dietary, and other services are indeed contracted for. So one has a chance to take the opportunities that the marketplace might provide in terms of what efficiencies are there for people who are expert in those fields to come in and deliver the service.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Bradley.

MR. BRADLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MRS. MIROSH: Can I get in on a supplement?

MR. CHAIRMAN: He's had his three. You can use one of yours when you get up next time. Mr. Bradley.

MR. BRADLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to ask some questions on page 21.4 under votes 1, 2, and 5. There seem to be some rather large transfers out of the grant code in each one of those. In vote 1 there's a transfer of \$289,000 out of that code, in vote 2 a transfer of \$1.03 million, and in vote 5, \$159,000. Similarly, there are smaller amounts out of votes 3 and 4. I wonder if the minister could explain why these transfers occurred.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, hon. members have already noted that where there have been overexpenditures, there can be a transfer into that area from another area that's related. Also, if we harken back to my initial comments, that we in some cases have gone at that time and we're moving towards moving from grants to contracts, it shows up in a different area. In other words, another area might be overexpended because we have changed the manner of doing business, so to speak, and so this area would go down, and it would be transferred, if that's possible, to another area. In other words, we don't go for a special warrant; we would first do a transfer in order to fill the gap.

MR. BRADLEY: Do I take it that these funds, then, have been transferred from a grant code into contracts, that in these specific areas it's gone into contracted service in some manner?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, it would then show up in supplies and services, where the contracts are recognized. In other words, the grant amount would have been underexpended, and because the administrative mechanism would now be through a contract, the contract would show up in supplies and services. So the amount would be transferred from one area to another.

MR. BRADLEY: On this area of using more contracts versus grants, which you had mentioned in your opening comments, do you find there's greater accountability by using contracts versus grants to organizations for services?

MRS. OSTERMAN: As I understand it, there had been some concern that the information, the detail was not available to do

the type of accounting that I think everybody believes would be necessary to account for public funds. In contracts we have the opportunity through negotiations to spell out in very great detail precisely what the dollars are being used for, and it enables us to better track overall, from both sides. I think it would be fair to say that both in terms of the service supplier and the department, it is a much better arrangement.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Musgrove.

MR. BRADLEY: I have a my final.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, that was your final. You had three: two supps . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Let him.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let him? Okay. If the committee agrees. Is the committee agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The committee agrees.

MR. BRADLEY: Final supplementary. On page 21.7, vote 1.0.4, under the deputy minister's office of Social Services the estimated expenditure for that year was \$601,576, and the actual expenditure was \$1,184,662, almost a twofold increase. I wonder if the minister might explain the reason for that large over-expenditure in the deputy minister's office.

MRS. OSTERMAN: As I understand it, Mr. Chairman, at that time there was a management group created, and it is not overall really an additional amount expended in the various areas that were drawn together under the deputy minister's office, but in fact the figures would show up there because the management group was pulled together under the deputy minister's umbrella.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Mr. Musgrove.

MR. MUSGROVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question is on page 21.7, and it has to deal with vote 2.8.2., to deal with financial assistance to transients. Now, in that estimate there was \$10,466,000, and there was \$637,000 actually spent. Why did the department spend only such a small portion of the funds allotted for financial assistance for transients?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, the classification of transients was literally -- in fact, I believe that in my budget just gone by it was removed from this whole area of social allowance. Transients were basically employable persons, so it would mostly show up under the single employables or under the employable category.

MR. MUSGROVE: Well, I see. Then it wasn't turned over to some other department but was just transferred within your department?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Precisely.

MR. MUSGROVE: Okay. Well then, there was no decrease of demand in this type of assistance?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Well, Mr. Chairman, there obviously is still some transient service, though in the true sense of the word it would be nominal in that the people would come forward just literally on an overnight or a couple of days basis. But most of them would show up under the financial assistance for employables, and if the hon. member would look at 2.7.1., he will note that there has been a very large increase in that category. That was literally the difference, moving the transients into that category.

MR. MUSGROVE: Does this type of assistance cover the cost of hostels?

MRS. OSTERMAN: No. The hostels are a different classification. Certainly the services -- when those who are in a hostel are eligible for assistance, obviously on receipt of that assistance they would be able to move into some other accommodation. I understand the employables served that year were 21,000 in number. That was the caseload for employables.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Ady.

MR. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question pertains to the Auditor General's report, page 70, recommendation 37. To the minister. Under the Canada Assistance Plan, where the federal government jointly funds some programs with your department, I notice that it was established by the Auditor General that the department had in fact missed claiming back some of the funding that was actually due to them through procedures that were perhaps not as good as they should have been in the accounting. Can you tell me: can your department now claim some of that funding back, even though it was missed in that fiscal year? In other words, can you go back and reclaim some of that funding that your department was entitled to under the Canada Assistance Plan?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Well, I may require my colleagues from the department to help me out here, but it's my understanding that if the program is in place and the rules affecting it are in place and we have missed claiming, it's possible that we could get into negotiations and actually effect some funds from the federal government, but it would have to be negotiated. For instance, if we are working on what would be perceived to be a new area of cost-sharing or one that wasn't defined and they felt that it indeed could be categorized as new, we wouldn't be able to retroactively claim if through negotiations there was an agreement to cost share a certain area.

MR. ADY: Thank you. A supplementary. Has your department improved your procedures in checking into this sort of thing to make sure that all applicable claims are submitted under the Canada Assistance Plan and that you will in fact be receiving the funding that you're entitled to? In other words, have you taken care of the problem?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Well, I think that we're taking steps towards that. We've got a cost-sharing unit now under the senior financial officer, but I think that we can note that publicly I've showed some distress at what I believe to be cost-sharing capacity that we should have with the federal government -- that their CAP bureaucracy doesn't agree with our interpretation of what should be cost-shared. So we have some problems there, but in terms of the systems that are in place, I think we've improved

that.

MR. ADY: Okay, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Moore.

MR. R. MOORE: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Can the minister refer to page 21.2 and vote 5.3? I note there, under allowances and benefits, that there was a very large special warrant: \$6.16 million under this benefits and income support area. Could you advise us what this special warrant was for? It's a considerable amount.

MRS. OSTERMAN: The assured income for the severely handicapped, Mr. Chairman, was one of the categories I mentioned that has grown significantly, and it continues to grow. It's not that it's a brand-new program, but certainly more and more people are becoming aware of it, and as they come forward -- and we believe that they fit the criteria for the program -- the financial service is delivered. This is a straight growth of the program.

MR. R. MOORE: Supplementary, Mr. Chairman, to that. Was that total amount just in increased utilization only, or was there any other portion to it? That's quite a large amount.

MRS. OSTERMAN: No. One of my colleagues may want to comment. But the growth in the caseload, as I understand it, would have been responsible. The estimates were 11,500, and in terms of numbers of people actually accessing the program, 12,220 came forward. I don't know whether there were any other factors -- minor costs per case, I am told. But basically it's a growth in the numbers of people.

MR. R. MOORE: A supplementary; maybe it's a twofold question in a way. I wonder what we're doing. Are we now allowing for that type of growth every year, or are we faced with special warrants in that area? And this utilization: is it strictly Alberta citizens, or are we getting an influx because of our more superior programs here in Alberta?

MRS. OSTERMAN: I'm not sure how many people it would be. I don't believe we have a residence component -- do we? -- on this program, and while it may be that people from out of province are now living here, I don't think that we should be viewing that somehow many people come to Alberta to access the program. I'm sure it would be for other reasons that they are here. If they happen to fit the criteria, obviously the program is delivered. But when we estimate in each year, obviously the size of the caseload is taken into consideration, so that the growth for that year would have been taken into consideration for the year then immediately following, as well as any other anticipated increase that we believed might occur.

I think it's interesting to note that the AISH pension obviously has as part of the criteria the ability of people to appeal. So while there may be a judgment rendered by department personnel, there is still an opportunity for citizens who believe that they have been inappropriately judged as ineligible to access the appeal process, and sometimes the appeal is granted and they become part of the caseload. But obviously in anticipating in the following year, that caseload growth was taken into consideration.

MR. R. MOORE: I have other questions, but put my name at the bottom.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Mr. Fischer.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On page 21.8, vote 3.5.1, contracted institutions and homes, there was approximately \$35 million spent when there was a budget for \$42.5 million. This was a decrease from the estimated expenditure by \$7.8 million. Could you tell me the reason why there's such a big decrease in the spending in this area?

MRS. OSTERMAN: As I mentioned in my opening comments -- and I think the hon. Member for Edmonton Avonmore also was speaking to this overall area -- the transfer of responsibility for a number of the youth to the Solicitor General's department would have made a very significant difference there, as well as the Child Welfare Act, where we began to employ less intrusive measures. In other words, there would be more of an emphasis -- and that has continued into delivery of services -- directly to children in the home as opposed to putting them in a residence facility. But the bulk of it would be the change to the Solicitor General status for a number of the young people.

MR. FISCHER: Well, does that mean, then, that some of the contracted residences were not built and you didn't need them anymore?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Well, I'm not sure whether the Solicitor General would have taken over some of the residences. The Solicitor General could have taken over some of those residences, but certainly we wouldn't be anticipating. At that time I think we would have been watching to see that with the anticipation of the changeover there wouldn't be the building of additional facilities that we didn't believe we were going to need.

MR. FISCHER: The carryover that you have in that -- what becomes of the carryover that's unspent? Is there sometimes a carryover into the next year on facilities that are proposed and then for one reason or another don't get built?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Well, first of all, there wouldn't be a carryover into the next year. They're unexpended funds, and when the books are all balanced, that's when you reconcile what was actually spent and what was actually budgeted for. I'm sure it's a good feeling to know that you didn't have to expend all the funds, though another department may have had an unanticipated increase because they took over responsibility. So in the end it certainly may well balance out, but there isn't a carryover into the following fiscal year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Mitchell, followed by Mr. Ewasiuk.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to pursue the question of expenditure on Hilltop House, which is vote 4.5.5. Could the minister please indicate why it was that less money was spent on Hilltop House than was budgeted? And could she possibly evaluate the effectiveness of that expenditure?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Well, Mr. Chairman, Hilltop House is a residence for women and doesn't deliver any type of particular

treatment. There is a referral done from Hilltop House, as with other various forms of accommodation that may be utilized by women. For this particular year I'm going to have to -- apparently there was a vacancy not filled for a period of time there of \$22,000, and in looking at the amount, I believe that would probably pretty well explain the differential there.

MR. MITCHELL: But clearly the department allocated money to Hilltop House because they felt that Hilltop House was meeting a need in the community that needed to be met.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Well, Mr. Chairman, I think that it's fair to say that, as with a number of facilities, the money is allocated, but during the course of a given year the service may change somewhat. For instance, the children's services is a perfect example in that a lot of residences over time have had a budget allocation, but as we diminish the number of kids in treatment in an institutional type setting and move to the service being delivered more in an outreach way by various organizations, it won't show up under that particular residence. It may show up in another area because the service is being delivered slightly differently. There are a number of very large organizations that deliver services. Catholic Social Services, for instance, is an example. If you were to look at their budget, you would see a decline in some of the residential facilities. They are now putting in outreach programs where they are serving families as a unit as opposed to taking the child and putting them in a residential facility.

MR. MITCHELL: Could the minister please indicate whether there was some discovery during the year under consideration that the \$314,587 that was spent on Hilltop House was unnecessary, and that somehow that realization would have led to the discontinuation of funding this year for Hilltop House?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Well, I don't believe there was any effect. There was no effect in '85-86 in terms of a Hilltop House discussion. The discussion with respect to residential facilities would have been subsequent to that in looking at what was available overall, in this case in the city of Edmonton, and ascertaining what facilities were available. But more importantly, I think in looking at the outreach services in what it is that may need to be referenced for women -- in this particular case we're talking about women.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Ewasiuk. That's three [inaudible]. Okay. Sure.

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Two questions. Both of them are from the Auditor General's report. One of them has really been dealt with. That was recommendation 37, which dealt with the capital assistance plans, and the questions have been asked. Basically, what I was going to ask has now been dealt with.

I just wanted to make a comment that even before I got here -- even when I was at the municipal government level there was a concern that the government wasn't taking full advantage of the CAP program. I'm pleased that this was brought to the department's attention by the Auditor General, and I'm satisfied that the minister and her department will take every effort to ensure that the province gets its fair share from the federal people.

My other question is relative to recommendation 41, which

starts on page 72: children in care. Here again I think the Auditor General has identified a weakness in the procedure in terms of the operators' not complying with their funding and financial obligations. This was revealed in the '84-85 audit. The Provincial Treasurer at that time did indicate that there would be initiatives taken by the department to establish strategies and procedures to comply with your recommendations at that time, but again, in the 1985-86 audit, the Auditor General reveals that this has still not been done. Could the minister indicate to this committee just what you intend to do to comply with the recommendation?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, this gets back to the discussion with respect to grants and contracts that I had with the hon. Member for Pincher Creek-Crowsnest. We are in a position now, with the negotiations and contractual arrangements, where we believe that for both parties the detail is spelled out such that there is the accountability that is necessary. There's no doubt that there was struggling going on in rationalizing the expenditures and verifying the expenditures on the basis of the precise service that was supposed to be delivered under the grant program. But with contracts now, the detail is spelled out, and I believe the accountability is there.

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MS LAING: I'd like to deal with the issue of grants as compared to supplies and services. On all the funds, say in vote 3 in 21.4, where it says supplies and services \$85 million, grants \$2 million, would that \$85 million be all contracted out or contract services?

MRS. OSTERMAN: The largest portion would be contracted services, and obviously, with respect to a whole host of either individuals or agencies, I believe in the child welfare area.

MS LAING: The question I would have in regard to that is: although I understand it's easier to track how the money is spent and service delivered, I wonder about the fiscal responsibility in terms of -- I used to work in a granting agency and earned about \$18 an hour. When I contracted my same service to the department, I earned \$60 an hour, and even taking off \$20 an hour in terms of administration fees that I paid for a secretary, I was earning a net about twice as much as I did as a person working in an agency that received a grant. I guess I'm asking the wisdom of this going to contracting out rather than the grants to agencies. I understand the accountability factor, but I'm wondering about the fiscal responsibility.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I think the hon. member may be mixing some apples and oranges, if I may say so, Mr. Chairman. The granting to an agency, if it were now changed, and is, to a contract with an agency, should make very little difference to the amount of dollars that flow. It should just really spell out precisely the expectation of the service to be delivered, and if it's a fee-for-service basis, it would be maybe on a per-person basis that a service is being delivered. If you're saying that on an individual-service basis, as can occur, you have a contract with someone, you would call upon them on an as-needed basis as opposed to putting a contract in place for the entire year. I suppose one always has to balance whether you believe you ought to have a number of people contracted for a period of time and have them there in readiness and able to serve clients, or

whether in fact on an as-needed basis you go and say: "Will you please deliver a service here; this individual needs counseling for four hours or 10 hours or whatever." I think it's a balance in terms of how you believe it to be most appropriate.

MS LAING: Okay. I guess to follow up on that, then, in looking at Supplementary Information to the Public Accounts -- and I've just drawn a couple out here. I'm looking on page 7.187, where an individual psychologist got \$44,000, and that would certainly not be for full-time work, whereas in an agency the level of pay for him full time would be about \$35,000. In the same way I look at page 7.179, and Psycom counseling services got \$111,000. One of the people there was a former staff member, and I would assume would be getting paid for similar work at a contract rate. And although I recognize that in fact you are using people as you need them and are not paying them for unneeded time, my question would be: in terms of contracting out to several agencies, are you not being less cost-effective, rather than having one person on staff at a lower rate of pay?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Again, I suppose that first of all there may be a difference in the expertise that's viewed to be available in the various professionals that would be a part of any one organization. I think it would be important to access that professional expertise as it may in our view be needed for any one particular client, especially a child that happens to come under the care of Social Services. If we were to put a permanent structure in place to try to anticipate every need that we may have, obviously you'd have to have a very large organization that would again be on standby. I know that in question period -- I think it was just last week or the week before -- we were criticized for putting an organization in place that served very few people. Of course, you have to get into the training and a whole host of things to be in readiness.

Again, I understand what the hon. member is saying, but I think it's a balance, in that we want to have core personnel but, again, on an as-needed basis. Depending on the expertise of the individual, we can go out to the various professionals and contract with them for a service that we think is needed for a particular client that we have.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Mirosh.

MRS. MIROSH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm really pleased to be able to jump back in again, Madam Minister. I would like to revert back to the question my colleague for Highwood was asking on votes 7.3 and 7.4 in regards to the services for the handicapped. Again, you're showing here an excess amount of unspent money in both of those votes. I'm just wondering why this is unspent. Can you not transfer these into other areas where you have a deficit?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Well, yes, there is the ability to transfer funds, as I understand it, within votes. That would be done, and you wouldn't be looking to a special warrant unless you had exhausted the funds that were available within a certain vote. I suppose a person should go to the breakdown of . . . The member has raised 7.3 and 7.4?

MRS. MIROSH: That's right.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I'm not sure I would find the precise detail I would need here, except to say that we try to anticipate

some need and put in place budgets for treatment or an organization or an institution or a facility that's being built. Depending on the start-up time, the funds may be unexpended. In other words, you would anticipate a whole year's expenditure but it isn't always utilized, depending on when a group home comes on stream on so on. They don't always happen right on April 1, the beginning of the fiscal year, and run for that year, though there may be the planning and everything in the previous fiscal year. It is anticipated, but may not get off to a start at the precise time that would involve the entire fiscal year.

MRS. MIROSH: Another favourite question of mine to ministers is: when these institutions are showing good management and have a surplus of money, is there any incentive for them to create a surplus or keep a surplus or move it around within the institution?

MRS. OSTERMAN: From time to time I know that I receive requests for surpluses that have been properly identified, all the accounting is done, and there may be an additional program area or service or something -- or within our own department, I suppose it's fair to say -- and the particular organization will say: we can do this additional thing if we're allowed to keep our funds, or we can enhance a program area here, or we can buy this, it's needed in the institution or it's needed in the group home, whatever. That is really a judgment call. At times, if they have the surplus and we still haven't pulled it, so to speak, and it's under negotiation -- it may even be additional costs to a certain program, as they're into the new fiscal year and we're just in the negotiation stage -- we may say: this surplus you can use to cover what are now anticipated to be your additional costs.

MRS. MIROSH: Good. I'll leave my supplementary for someone else.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Alger.

MR. ALGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If I may, now I'd like to get into my own division of social services, which is senior citizens. On page 21.2, vote 4.2, senior citizens, the estimated amount of money was \$770,724. I'm almost sure I know what that's for. Would the minister describe it? It seems to me that would be the estimates for controlling our financing rather than the secretariat, would it not be? Could you describe that to us? Mr. Chairman, if you don't mind, just a little general explanation for the benefit of my colleagues.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's fair enough, hon. member, but before the minister answers, I wonder if I could just interrupt for a moment and let Mr. Brassard introduce a group of his students and explain to those students just what it is that we're doing here. Is that agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. BRASSARD: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and committee members.

With us today we have a group of students from Sundre high school, Law 20, and they're accompanied by their teacher, Jean Pepler. I wonder if they'd just stand in the gallery and let us acknowledge them, first of all, and then I'll explain what's going on here.

Welcome to the Assembly. What we're doing right at the moment -- this isn't a full Assembly, as you can see, but we have with us the Minister of Social Services, the Hon. Connie Osterman, and her assistants, as well as the Auditor General, Mr. Donald Salmon, and we are challenging them, as a Public Accounts Committee, as to how they spent the money in the past that was given to them. This Public Accounts Committee is holding that department accountable for the funds that were given to them. We've already discussed the forthcoming budget; we do that in the full Assembly.

Just so you'll be aware, Mr. Alger has just asked the minister a question, and now we'll carry on. I just thought you should know what is happening while you're here anyway. Thank you.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm always interested in the questions from the hon. Member for Highwood. Note that he has taken ownership of the senior citizens area, and well he should. I congratulate the hon. member for his keen interest in working with the senior citizens. I know he's meeting with many, many people and organizations in this regard.

Overall, in the fiscal year that's under description the Senior Citizens' Advisory Council was chaired by a private citizen. I think all hon. members will know now that the hon. Member for Highwood has taken over this chairmanship, and in a very good fashion. I think the Senior Citizens' Advisory Council would say that they believe they are gaining a profile that is deservedly so because a member of the Legislature is now involved in this way.

Both the advisory council, but in particular the secretariat, are funded in this particular area. The mandate for the secretariat is to act as an information resource centre for seniors and encourage co-ordination in planning in the delivery of services for them. I think that's very important. We have seen so many services spring up over the last number of years for senior citizens, and they're delivered by a whole host of departments. I think sometimes to the seniors out there it is just a maze. I think they show their gratitude, I guess, for some organizations to sort of clear away the underbrush and advise them at any one time as to what may be available and the types of programs that can be accessed.

Indeed, when we're delivering programs, I think the secretariat and council can play an important role in looking at where there is overlap and so on, and sort of taking the eagle's view, if you will, in looking down at all the programs and maybe seeing them more clearly. I know there are a number of initiatives under way now, especially in the health care area, looking at how we can do a better job of co-ordination.

The secretariat in this particular area has a staff of five: the director, a program co-ordinator, a research co-ordinator, and two secretaries. I think the hon. member still has about that staff in place. Of course, there are granting abilities. The running of the secretariat and the council doesn't take up the entire budget. As organizations come forward and have a particular program that looks as if it would be greatly beneficial to seniors, then the council has the opportunity to make those grants within the amount of money they've had made available to them, and does that with respect to various organizations, research, whatever, across the province.

MR. ALGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Madam Minister.

One other point that I'd like to just ask about, because I think it will be of great interest to all of us, is in vote 5.2, the senior citizens' supplementary benefits. We had planned on utilizing

\$64 million, of which \$2.45 million was transferred away from that account, and I can't for the life of me remember what we did with it.

MRS. OSTERMAN: That is the top-up to senior citizens, those who are on basic federal pension as well as the old age security. If the senior citizen doesn't have any other source of income, then obviously they need an additional source. The province adds to those two basic pensions and has supplementary benefits, and I think to a maximum of \$95 a month. I might also say that I believe that's the highest addition in Canada, as well as all the other programs that we have in place. Again, that is demand driven. In this instance, we see that not as many seniors came forward that fit the category of below a certain amount of income and therefore would require the Alberta top-up, the assured income.

The amount that was left over from that program, by way of transfer, as I said before, is then utilized before we might go for a special warrant. In this case, I understand that that amount would have been used in the assured income for the severely handicapped.

MR. ALGER: Thank you, Madam Minister. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Shrake, followed by Mr. Bradley, if there's time.

MR. SHRAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I see here back on page 21.2, in votes 2.4 and 2.8, we've transferred two large sums. Under social allowance for single parent families you transferred over \$2.5 million; in social allowance for special groups, you transferred over \$9.5 million. I was wondering: why did these areas receive such large losses?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Well, I think we explained before that there was an underexpenditure in some areas because it's a demand-driven program, so if there was a lesser number of people who came forward to access the program, the funds just wouldn't have been expended.

In terms of where the transferred dollars would have gone to, I would ask my colleagues . . . Oh, yes. So where we saw there was need, it would have been used in the mentally handicapped area and the employable area.

MR. SHRAKE: With these large transfers like this, did they decrease the amount of service, or was there any hardship caused by these large transfers?

MRS. OSTERMAN: No. There is a description of what allowance is available to the individuals, whatever category they fit into, and they would continue to access that amount. It's just a lesser number of people that were utilizing the program.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Musgrove, then -- Mr. Bradley; sorry.

MR. BRADLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I had a question on page 21.9 under vote 6, vocational rehabilitation services. I note under vote 6.3.6 there's a research and demonstration program which some \$3.8 million was allocated to, and approximately that amount of money was spent. Could the minister advise as to exactly what this program vote is and what it was set out to achieve?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, there are a number of organizations in the province, the four main ones being in Calgary and Edmonton, who receive these research and demonstration program funds. I should set a base for my comments by saying that there are many programs for the mentally handicapped or mentally challenged people across the province where they're in training programs or in sheltered workshops and so on. But going beyond that, beyond the delivery of that service for our mentally handicapped people there's the VRRRI and the In-Definite Arts Society in Calgary, and in Edmonton the Western Industrial Research and Training Centre and, I believe, Phoenix, that have programs that are described as research and demonstration.

Those funds are set aside from the regular programming that speaks to the training of mentally handicapped people in the discovering of new programs, a new way to try to serve these special folks. The dollars that are set aside for that are called research dollars because in fact they are new methods that are trying to be developed to do this type of programming.

MR. BRADLEY: Could the minister advise exactly what type of demonstration programs or research programs? That seems like -- you know, almost \$4 million . . . Could you give some specific examples of the type of research projects or demonstration projects that have been funded under that?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Well, some of them would border on, I suppose -- leaving aside the practical area -- almost the clinical area, where if people have cerebral palsy or they lack in motor development, there's a constant desire to perfect new techniques that may enhance the opportunity for that type of development. So it would generally be perceived as new, as opposed to a standard way of doing a service.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A final supplementary, Mr. Bradley?

MR. BRADLEY: No, that's fine, thank you.

MS LAING: Can I just . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is it on this point?

MS LAING: Yes. It's on the other side of this point, though. I'm looking at the revenue from the federal government, page 21.13, and I see a great reduction in the revenue received for rehabilitation of disabled persons. I don't understand; did you have to pay back \$2 million? Why is there that drop?

MRS. OSTERMAN: As I understand it, there had been, for a change, an overclaiming of payments, and when the smoke all cleared, we had received -- in a book way, not an exact passing of cheques back and forth -- there had been an acknowledgment of more funds payable to us than we were actually entitled to, so the adjustment was made.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Our time is rapidly drawing to a close. I'd like to raise a concern that I have with the membership, which is that because of the changes in scheduling that were forced upon us because we accommodated the private members' Bills, we've had to adjust the dates on which various ministers were to ap-

pear before us. Unfortunately, we haven't been able to find a minister who's available on June 3 -- that's a week from today -- who has his time freed up so that he could be with us. It's not the fault of the ministers; I want to make that very clear.

MS LAING: Who would that be?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, we did have somebody scheduled, but we bumped them along when we canceled the other meeting, so we do have ministers scheduled for June 10, June 17, and June 24. At this point what I'm suggesting to the members of the committee is that I think it would be very difficult to find someone on such short notice who could be here next Wednesday.

With that, I'd like to recognize Mr. Moore.

MR. R. MOORE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just for the hon. member that asked the question about the schedule, I think we all remember that when we originally set up public accounts, we had set Tuesday as the meeting day. Because one of our parties has their caucus meeting on that day, we agreed to go with Wednesday, with the understanding that the cabinet met that day and there would be occasions when important things came up in cabinet and a minister wouldn't be available. We did it under that condition, and that is what is happening. Those ministers are tied up, but they want to be here just as much as anybody else, and they would be here, but that's what's happened.

I know there's quite a list of speakers yet, Mr. Chairman, but because the minister's door is always open to the public and I think they can go to her at any time -- I know they can -- and her officials are there . . . The other fact is that we have some members that have to get on to another meeting at 11:30. I move that we now adjourn until June 10, when the Minister of Transportation and Utilities will be here.

MR. MITCHELL: I'd just like to address the question of the schedule.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a motion on the floor. Is it relevant to the motion to adjourn?

MR. MITCHELL: The way the motion was worded, it definitely is relevant, yes. He said that owing to the fact that . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, fine. Make your point.

MR. MITCHELL: In talking about scheduling and so on, could we not have a special meeting? Could we not meet on Tuesday or Monday?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That would be very difficult to do, given the times at which different caucuses meet and all the rest of it. My hunch is that we'll have opportunities to meet with ministers in the fall this time. With that, are you agreed with the motion that was put forth by Mr. Moore?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

[The committee adjourned at 11:28 a.m.]

