



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 27th Legislature
Fourth Session

Standing Committee
on
Public Accounts

Solicitor General and Public Security

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8:30 a.m.

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Fourth Session

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

MacDonald, Hugh, Edmonton-Gold Bar (AL), Chair
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC), Deputy Chair

Anderson, Rob, Airdrie-Chestermere (W)
Benito, Carl, Edmonton-Mill Woods (PC)
Calahasen, Pearl, Lesser Slave Lake (PC)
Chase, Harry B., Calgary-Varsity (AL)
Dallas, Cal, Red Deer-South (PC)
Elniski, Doug, Edmonton-Calder (PC)
Fawcett, Kyle, Calgary-North Hill (PC)
Griffiths, Doug, Battle River-Wainwright (PC)
Groeneveld, George, Highwood (PC)
Kang, Darshan S., Calgary-McCall (AL)
Mason, Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND)
Olson, Verlyn, QC, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (PC)
Sandhu, Peter, Edmonton-Manning (PC)
Vandermeer, Tony, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (PC)
Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)

Also in Attendance

Allred, Ken, St. Albert (PC)

Department of Solicitor General and Public Security Participants

Bruce Anderson	Assistant Deputy Minister, Correctional Services
Jim Bauer	Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services
Gerry McLennan	Chief Executive Officer, Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission
Bill Meade	Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Security
Brad Pickering	Deputy Solicitor General and Deputy Minister of Public Security
Lori Sajjad	Chief Financial Officer, Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission

Office of the Auditor General Participants

Doug Wylie	Assistant Auditor General
Ram Rajoo	Principal

Support Staff

W.J. David McNeil	Clerk
Shannon Dean	Senior Parliamentary Counsel/ Director of House Services
Robert H. Reynolds, QC	Law Clerk/Director of Interparliamentary Relations
Micheline S. Gravel	Manager – House Proceedings
Corinne Dacyshyn	Committee Clerk
Jody Rempel	Committee Clerk
Karen Sawchuk	Committee Clerk
Rhonda Sorensen	Manager of Corporate Communications and Broadcast Services
Melanie Friesacher	Communications Consultant
Tracey Sales	Communications Consultant
Philip Massolin	Committee Research Co-ordinator
Stephanie LeBlanc	Legal Research Officer
Diana Staley	Research Officer
Rachel Stein	Research Officer
Liz Sim	Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

8:30 a.m.

Wednesday, February 23, 2011

[Mr. MacDonald in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning, everyone. I would like to now call this Standing Committee on Public Accounts to order, please. My name is Hugh MacDonald. On behalf of the committee I would like to welcome everyone in attendance.

Please note, again, that the meeting is recorded by *Hansard* and the audio is streamed live on the Internet.

We're going to quickly go around the table and introduce ourselves for the convenience of our guests. We will start with the gentleman to my right, who suddenly has on his lapel a Calgary Flames pin. They have been doing very, very well since the session ended last November.

Mr. Rodney: Yes, they have. You will hear much more of this during my member's statement this afternoon, so please come back if you're on the Internet. I look forward to it.

Dave Rodney, Calgary-Lougheed.

Dr. Massolin: Good morning. Philip Massolin, committee research co-ordinator, Legislative Assembly Office.

Mr. Vandermeer: Tony Vandermeer, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Groeneveld: George Groeneveld, Highwood.

Mr. Kang: Good morning, everyone. Darshan Kang, Calgary-McCall.

Mr. Chase: Good morning. Harry Chase, Calgary-Varsity, hoping not to add to my file this morning.

Ms Sajjad: Lori Sajjad, Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission.

Mr. McLennan: Gerry McLennan, CEO, Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission.

Mr. Pickering: Brad Pickering, Deputy Solicitor General.

Mr. Bauer: Jim Bauer, ADM, corporate services.

Mr. Meade: Good morning. Bill Meade, ADM, public security.

Mr. B. Anderson: Bruce Anderson, ADM, corrections.

Mr. Wylie: Good morning. Doug Wylie, Assistant Auditor General.

Mr. Rajoo: Ram Rajoo, principal, Alberta Auditor General.

Mr. Xiao: Good morning. David Xiao for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Sandhu: Good morning. Peter Sandhu, Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Allred: Good morning. Ken Allred, St. Albert.

Ms Rempel: Jody Rempel, committee clerk, Legislative Assembly Office.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Now, item 2, circulation of the – Mr. Griffiths, have you been introduced?

Mr. Griffiths: No. I'm sorry. I was grabbing my apple juice. Just went by me, but I'm here.

The Chair: Yes. The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright. Good morning, sir.

Mr. Griffiths: Good morning.

The Chair: Could I have approval of the agenda that was circulated, please, or any questions about the agenda? Mr. Chase. Moved by Mr. Chase that the agenda for the February 23, 2011, meeting be approved as distributed. All in favour? Any opposed? None. Thank you.

Now the next item, please, is the approval of the minutes of the December 1, 2010, meeting. Any questions? Mr. Chase, would you like to approve those minutes? Moved by Mr. Chase that the minutes for the December 1, 2010, Standing Committee on Public Accounts meeting be approved as distributed. All in favour? None opposed. Thank you.

This brings us, of course, to our meeting today with the officials from the Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security. We are dealing with the reports of the office of the Auditor General from April and October 2010, the annual report of the government of Alberta for 2009-10, which includes the consolidated financial statements, the Measuring Up document, and of course the business plan annual report, and the annual report of the Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security ministry.

I would like to remind everyone of the briefing material prepared for the committee by the LAO research staff, and I would like to thank them for that in advance.

Now if Mr. Pickering, deputy minister, I believe, could make a brief opening statement on behalf of the Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Pickering: Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Public Accounts Committee. I'm pleased to be here and provide you with an overview of our ministry's activities in '09-10. During '09-10 the ministry delivered its mandate through four core businesses: law enforcement and crime prevention, custody supervision and facilitation of rehabilitative opportunities for offenders, victims of crime programs and services, and regulation of liquor and gaming in Alberta and encouraging social responsibility. The department's work in these core areas supported the Premier's mandate of promoting safe and vibrant communities and reducing crime so that Albertans feel safe.

I'm pleased to report that we continued to strengthen Alberta communities in '09-10 by adding the second wave of a hundred new front-line police officers as part of the Premier's commitment to add 300 officers over three years, proceeding with the integration of Alberta traffic sheriffs and the RCMP traffic services, and bolstering Alberta's law enforcement response team with the transfer of three specialized sheriff units, allowing for more effective, integrated, and co-ordinated law enforcement. During '09-10 the department continued to make progress on a common computer system for law enforcement agencies and a common radio system for emergency personnel.

Last year's spending on law enforcement and crime prevention was \$346.3 million, \$19.5 million less than budgeted. The underexpenditure was mainly due to a delay in hiring new officers, using the federal police officer recruitment fund, lower contract costs due to RCMP operating with a higher than usual number of vacancies, and costs recovered for some specialized sheriffs units seconded to the ALERT model. The remainder is due to vacancies, reduced overtime, and discretionary spending for supply and services.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to draw your attention to page 19 of the annual report, where you'll see ALERT's progress

in shutting down organized crime operations in the province. We measured performance in this business area by determining if crime prevention efforts and safety programs are making Albertans feel safe. I'm pleased to report 91 per cent of Albertans reporting that they feel safe in their homes. This exceeds our target by 1 per cent. As well, 78 per cent of Albertans feel safe in their neighbourhoods, an increase of 5 per cent from the previous year. We also track victimization and crime rates. Last year 23 per cent of Albertans surveyed reported being a victim of crime, 2 points lower than our business plan target.

Our work in this area is not done yet. In '09-10 Alberta's violent crime rate was 15 per cent higher than the national average. Our property crime rate was 30 per cent higher than the national rate. However, Statistics Canada has changed the way it counts crime rates, which has boosted the numbers across the country.

Our second core business area is the custody, supervision, and facilitation of rehabilitative opportunities for offenders. In '09-10 we continued with several initiatives in this division. Construction continued on the new Edmonton Remand Centre. When construction is complete in the fall of 2012, it will hold almost 2,000 inmates. With the construction of three more pods, it could hold 2,800 inmates.

Over the past few years I've seen an increasing number of remand inmates, and the trend has continued. Last year 58 per cent of our inmates were in remand. In order to accommodate this growing population, all provincial correctional facilities except the Calgary Correctional Centre now house remanded inmates. On any given day there were 2,900 inmates in our adult facilities. Those numbers are expected to continue to climb by approximately 23 per cent over the next five years. Proposed federal criminal law changes could boost those figures even higher.

In '09-10 we continued to move forward with the implementation of the direct supervision model in our facilities, expansion of education programs, and more focus on special-needs offenders like aboriginals and women. Alberta's per diem cost of housing an adult offender continues to remain the lowest in Canada at \$129.89 per day.

We've seen tremendous growth in the number of offenders under supervision in our community. In 2009 there were 22,000 adults and young offenders under community supervision, an increase of almost 2,200 cases from the previous year. We continue to move forward with the risk reduction model to manage offenders being supervised in the community and using more effective interviewing techniques with offenders.

In '09-10 spending in corrections was \$210.3 million, \$2.9 million more than budgeted, which was used for items such as the health service transfer costs and overtime costs. In '09-10 we met our goal of having no escapes from a correctional facility or during prisoner transport. We also surpassed our goal of at least 85 per cent of incarcerated offenders participating in work, education, or treatment or life management programs. In '09-10 89 per cent participated in these programs. We also exceeded our goal of having 99 per cent of offenders successfully complete a temporary absence program. In '09-10 99.8 per cent of offenders completed their programs involving employment, rehabilitation programs, or community service without incurring any new criminal charges.

The department's third core business is helping victims of crime. The victims financial program provided \$10.4 million in benefits to victims of crime. During '09-10 we received 2,543 new applications for benefits, an increase of 7 per cent from the previous year and up 19 per cent over the last two years. In '09-10 the department spent \$9.3 million on grants to victim services programs. These funds come from the victims of crime fund and are delivered through police and community-based victim services

units. Almost 65,000 Albertans received assistance through the victim services units in '09-10. Last year the department spent \$23.7 million to help victims of crime, \$3.5 million under budget. The underexpenditure is mainly due to lower benefit payments to victims of crime. Payments are based on the severity of injuries.

8:40

It's important to note that while the victims of crime fund has a surplus of approximately \$50 million, \$30.6 million of that surplus is spoken for through contractual obligations, mainly due to multi-year commitments for financial benefits awarded to victims of crime under a previous program. Individuals who apply for financial benefits are asked to complete a survey rating on their satisfaction with the overall service provided to them by the employees and volunteers in the criminal justice system: 82.4 per cent were satisfied with the service, exceeding our target of 80 per cent.

The '09-10 Solicitor General annual report includes liquor, gaming, and the Alberta lottery fund information, but AGLC is required under the Gaming and Liquor Act as well as the Government Accountability Act to produce its own report. The AGLC annual report reflects the results of gaming and liquor programs for '09-10 in more detail and was published and tabled in the Legislative Assembly on November 3, 2010. In reporting on its core businesses, AGLC's goals reflect two overriding principles: integrity and social responsibility. Alberta's privatized liquor model continues to be profitable, contributing \$760 million to general revenues.

A key issue concerning violence in and around licensed premises remains a top priority for the ministry. In November of 2009 AGLC made significant changes to the Gaming and Liquor Act to help police and licensees improve public safety in licensed premises. Police were given more power to deal with suspected gang members and their associates by excluding or removing them from licensed premises before a crime is committed. Licensees were also given the authority to collect, use, and share information about problem patrons to prevent troublesome individuals from moving from one establishment to another or creating similar situations in new bars or nightclubs.

Alberta's communities benefit from over \$1.4 billion in gaming revenue from VLTs, slot machines, and ticket lotteries through the Alberta lottery fund. In addition, charities earn more than \$323 million for conducting licensed gaming events. In '09-10 the performance measure survey results showed that 78 per cent of Albertans were satisfied with the conduct of the liquor industry, 79 per cent of Albertans were satisfied with the conduct of legal gaming in our province. As with all performance measures, AGLC will continue to monitor these results to ensure that Albertans continue to be satisfied with liquor and gaming in the province.

Overall, '09-10 was a successful year for AGLC as it continues its role to ensure that Alberta's liquor and gaming industries are well regulated and managed to the benefit of Albertans. This will all continue to be done with the highest level of social responsibilities and practices in place.

Before I conclude, I want to address the 2010 report of the Auditor General, which contained recommendations about the peace officer program. I want to assure the committee that steps have been made to address all recommendations made by the Auditor General.

That concludes my remarks, and I welcome questions from the committee.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Wylie, from the office of the Auditor General, would you like to add anything at this time?

Mr. Wylie: Maybe just a couple of brief comments, Mr. Chair. We'll start by discussing the contents of our October 2010 report. The results of our 2010 audit work are included on page 191 of that report. We audited the financial statements of the ministry, the department, the victims of crime fund, the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission, and the Alberta lottery fund for the years ended March 31, 2010 and 2009. We issued unqualified auditors' opinions on these financial statements. We also issued an unqualified review engagement report on the selected performance measures in the ministry's 2009-10 annual report.

On page 191 of that same report we also highlight an observation made during our financial statement audit of the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission, that a policy requiring regular independent IT security assessments was not documented. Mr. Chairman, I won't repeat the contents that the deputy just referred to on our audit included in the 2010 report referring to the peace officers' audit. I'll just leave it at that.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. We'll be pleased to answer any questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll proceed quickly now to questions to the ministry from members. Mr. Chase, please, followed by Mr. Vandermeer.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. My first question has to do with goal 1, law enforcement common technology and agency interoperability. On page 21 of the annual report we find a half page on improvements to gathering, sharing, and communicating information in government and the law enforcement world. The second item here is the Alberta police integrated information initiative, or API3, a project described as introducing common computer information systems to create a single source for law enforcement records. We have now heard a great deal about this project, better known at this point as TALON, the Alberta law officers' network. We've also heard about a \$65 million price tag, which, of course, does not appear in the financial statements in the annual report or the government estimates. Could you explain what was done in the way of risk assessment before embarking on a project that has proven to be so controversial in terms of the privacy rights of Albertans?

Mr. Pickering: Mr. Chairman, the funding for the initiative is included within the capital budget of the ministry, so it may not be in the operating estimates.

With respect to the information system the new police information database allows police agencies to better manage information for the protection and safety of Albertans and police officers. The information that will be collected in the database is the same type of information that's currently collected by police agencies. Police actions with respect to the collection, use, or disclosure of personal information in the database must comply with the FOIP Act, just as they currently do. The Solicitor General is in the process of completing a privacy impact assessment. This is being done in consultation with the Privacy Commissioner's office and all participating police agencies.

Once the privacy information database is completed, which is expected by the latter part of April, it will be disclosed with the exception of any technical information that may be removed if it will harm the security of the system.

I think it's important to put into perspective that the foundation behind the system was twofold. One was public safety, and the second component was police officer safety. Our members every

morning put on their uniforms and move out onto the street, and it's important that they have the best information available to them.

There were a couple of reviews that were done. The first one was in 1996 with regard to the Bernardo review in Ontario, and I think we're all familiar with that case. Justice Campbell indicated that it's important for police agencies to share information to ensure that investigations are done in the most effective and efficient manner. The second sort of fatality inquiry, that occurred in Alberta, dealt with a police officer in Calgary, and it was done with respect to a lack of information on a potentially violent individual. In that particular situation a member of the public was shot by a police officer; a police officer also was stabbed. Unfortunately, information existed in other databases which may have changed the course of those events. I emphasize "may."

Mr. Chase: Thank you.

The Chair: Before we proceed, Mr. Chase, with your second question, the chair apologizes to Mr. Pickering, but when you responded, another member of the committee had caught my attention to indicate that they wanted to ask a question.

Now, the \$65 million for this TALON project: you said that it was in your capital budget. Am I correct?

Mr. Pickering: That's correct, yes.

The Chair: Where would we find that in the annual report, please?

Mr. Bauer: I would refer you to page 93 of the annual report. It's one of the schedules pertaining to how the funding was spent for the department. It's specifically under element 1.0.5, information technology. Underneath there's a line item for capital investment. The initial estimate of that was \$35 million, and in '09-10 what was actually spent was about \$9.7 million, so costs associated with the development of that system were included or contained in that \$9.7 million.

The Chair: So what happened to the \$25 million that went unexpended?

Mr. Bauer: What occurred is that it was anticipated that the costs were going to be incurred in 2009-10. However, as a result of the delay in issuing a contract with the preferred vendor, that actually was deferred to 2010-11. Essentially, the \$25 million was deferred. Some of it is being spent in 2010-11 as well as into subsequent years.

The Chair: That money wasn't put back into the general revenue fund or the sustainability fund?

Mr. Bauer: No. There is an ability to basically carry forward unused capital investment into future years, and that is exactly what transpired.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Mr. Chase, I'm very sorry.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. I just wanted to put on the record that it's important for both the public and police officers to have accurate information. It's the accuracy of that information and how it's used that is key.

Sixty-five million dollars is a vast amount of money for an information system. Could you explain what process you went through to determine the value for money to be gained from this

investment and how you decided that this would be the best use that the ministry might make of that \$65 million?

8:50

Mr. Pickering: The process that the department went through was looking at – we have a number of diverse systems across the province. Each police agency has their own IT system: Edmonton, Calgary, the RCMP, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge as well as some smaller police agencies. We looked at sort of taking an enterprise approach with respect to that in the context of aggregating that information and having it delivered in a single source so that each department, police agency was utilizing the same standards and information.

Basically, there was a business case done that was completed prior to and tabled for the Treasury Board in order to justify the expenditure of those dollars as well as some background reports that were done dating back to 2005. There has been a fair amount of work done researching the project, working with the police agencies to ensure that they're prepared to come onboard and have a single system for the province, and on that basis the department proceeded with the expenditure.

Mr. Chase: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Vandermeer, please, followed by Mr. Kang.

Mr. Vandermeer: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On page 25 of the 2009-10 annual report it mentions a formal integration of Alberta traffic sheriffs and the RCMP traffic services. What impact did this integration have on the ministry's budget?

Mr. Pickering: During the year in question we ran pilot projects with respect to the RCMP in a number of locations. The ultimate impact on the budget was the ability to take advantage of the 70-30 cost share under the provincial police service agreement given their integration with the RCMP. The RCMP and traffic sheriffs are deployed to reduce high-risk driving behaviour as designated through the Alberta traffic safety plan.

Mr. Vandermeer: Okay. Can you provide a status update on how well this integration has been going?

Mr. Pickering: As I mentioned, there were four pilot projects that were initiated to test the benefits of different command structures and reporting structures. Each pilot provided valuable information. There was an evaluation completed after the pilot. The pilots clearly showed that integrated traffic units are the most effective way to strengthen enforcement, increase our visibility, and deter dangerous driving. The integrated traffic units are operationally led by the RCMP. However, each organization will maintain its own identity.

The integration will be phased in over a two-year period. However, all areas of the province will continue to receive traffic services. By October of 2010 all the front-line traffic sheriffs with the exception of Fort McMurray were integrated with the RCMP traffic resources. Accommodations and infrastructure needs are required in order to continue the integration.

Basically, in '09-10 the number of traffic fatalities decreased by 14 per cent, and the number of traffic injuries decreased by 13 per cent. The Alberta traffic sheriff highway patrol, as I think you're all aware, was introduced in 2006 as the government's efforts to make Alberta's provincial highways safer.

Mr. Vandermeer: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Kang, please, followed by Mr. Griffiths.

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My questions are around IT security controls. The Auditor General states that during each of his reviews of IT controls at the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission in 2008 and 2009 management stated that it intended to obtain an independent security assessment on key systems before the end of those fiscal years, but no assessment was done. Again in 2010 despite the repeated promises no assessment was done, at least until advised that the AG might include this in his report. The excuse was budget and staff constraints. My question is: as the AGLC has a business plan and knows its budget within a given fiscal year, can you explain why management would offer budget constraints as an excuse for a broken promise?

Mr. McLennan: Yes. AGLC was affected like, you know, a lot of other businesses in Alberta with resources and manpower. I want to assure the committee that the AGLC was conducting threat assessments, vulnerability assessments on its own. What it did not have was a policy in place and an independent third party to do the assessment. As a result of the Auditor General's recommendations, policy was developed and was implemented to ensure that a third party came into the organization, did a threat and vulnerability assessment as well as penetration testing.

In March of 2010 an independent contractor was contracted to do a threat assessment, a vulnerability assessment of our external AGLC websites. In November of 2010 again a third party was hired to do a vulnerability assessment of our internal systems. We have these reports; we're working on any areas of improvement. What will happen is that this year the company will come back and do a penetration test on any issues that were identified in the tests that were conducted.

Mr. Kang: I think you answered my second question, too, so I'll go to the next one. The AGLC budget for the 2009-10 fiscal year was \$2.37 billion. The liquor and gaming industries are attractive targets for criminal organizations. It would seem reasonable to expect that IT security would be a high priority for the commission. What assurance can you provide that the security policy, that required so much persuasion to produce, will be in place to produce the results we want?

Mr. McLennan: Sorry; I'm just not clear. Is the question pertaining to financial results, or is it with regard to security in bars and lounges?

Mr. Kang: To security, yes.

Mr. McLennan: The AGLC takes the issue with regard to violence in and around licensed premises very seriously. We have formed a new committee, the Alberta safer bars committee, that's made up of different government organizations plus interest groups. We meet on a regular basis. This group comes up with policy initiatives that we have implemented.

Mr. Pickering talked earlier about some of the initiatives that came out of this committee with regard to amendments to the Gaming and Liquor Act a year ago to keep gang members out of licensed premises and also to keep troublesome people out of licensed premises. We have ProServe training. All people that work in licensed premises must take the training. So far we've trained over a hundred thousand people that work in licensed premises. As a result of, again, the violence and the lack of training for security staff, we introduced a mandatory program in 2009 for security staff. So far we've had over 5,000 people trained in that program.

In addition, we just introduced a new program, a trial program in Edmonton, to deal with licensed premises. We're just in the trial stage, but so far the results look good. In addition, we con-

ducted over 35,000 inspections of licensed premises to ensure that integrity was maintained.

Mr. Kang: Thank you, sir.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Griffiths, please, followed by Mr. Chase.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you very much. I don't ever find any department spending money on stuff that they shouldn't, which is generally the idea of Public Accounts. The question for me is always whether or not we get value for the money. It's usually appropriate, but is it the best way to spend it?

My questions are all about performance measures. On page 13 of your report I see the performance measures summary. I'm curious. For instance, number 5: "Offenders have the opportunity to access rehabilitative services and programs." The performance measure, about whether the incarcerated offenders are involved in work or education, treatment, life management programs, is pretty consistent. You can see that over five years it's been 88 per cent, 89 per cent, 90, 89. Are you working to develop any performance measures to see what the effects of those work programs are and which ones are working effectively, to know if they should be involved in more work programs or education programs or if it's treatment programs? What helps to make sure that there's no recidivism, the payoff to Albertans by having them not reoffend? I know it would be difficult to come up with a performance measure like that, but has the department considered doing something like that?

9:00

Mr. Pickering: I'll maybe refer that to ADM Anderson.

Mr. B. Anderson: The issue around recidivism is a tough one because we've never even been able to collectively, on a national basis, come up with a proper definition, and we continue to work with the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics to do that. I can tell you that what we're doing provincially is implementing best practices. We implemented the blueprint for corrections a number of years ago. What that blueprint did was that it gave us a course of action over the next number of years, and we're in the process of implementing that blueprint, which is to implement programs and services that are based on best practices. Although we haven't necessarily measured our results in Alberta, we're implementing programs that have demonstrated success in other provincial jurisdictions or federally. That's what I can tell you in terms of where we're heading.

Some examples of that would be direct supervision within adult custody institutions, moving from a risk management to a risk reduction approach in community corrections, and the implementation of motivational interviewing in community corrections. That's where we're heading.

From a work or education perspective we had a consultant review our educational work programs, and it made a number of recommendations in terms of how we can improve those programs. The problem with offering programs within the correctional environment is that 90 per cent of our inmates on the adult side – and that's where most of our inmates are – spend fewer than three months in custody. The average time on remand is 18 days; the average time in custody is about 37 days. So the issue is: how do you deliver a program to someone who is in custody for such a short period of time? The focus has been on providing, you know, modular programs and programs that are information based and also some basic life-skills programs to assist inmates upon release.

The other thing that that performance measure measures is for offenders. Offenders are people who have been convicted of offences. Well, 58 per cent of our adult custody population is on remand, and you can't force remanded inmates into programs. If they want to participate in programs, they do that of their own volition. So that's also a challenge for us. One of the things that our review has demonstrated, though, is that we need to try and do a better job of providing programs for remanded offenders because the percentage of our remand population has grown significantly, so we're focusing on that area. The new Edmonton remand centre, when it opens, will I think provide some significant improvements in that regard.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you very much, Mr. Anderson. The second question I have, referring to page 27, is on the Alberta gang reduction strategy. I know that anecdotally it's had some positive impacts, and it's helped Albertans realize we are attacking gang violence. But no performance measures to show what programs are being run, where the money is being spent, or what results it's actually having besides the anecdotal stories. I'm wondering if you're working on a performance measure to show if there is actually improvement in the gang management strategy, if there's effectiveness.

Mr. Pickering: Yeah. The Alberta gang reduction strategy is co-chaired by both the departments of Justice and Solicitor General. It provides a comprehensive long-term blueprint for us. We're in the infancy of that. It is a component of our long-term crime prevention strategy. Basically, in April of last year it was approved, and it was publicly released in December. It's beginning our response to gangs, and we're looking at it in the context of a number of action items. There are about 28 action items. It will be something we'll have to evaluate as we move forward.

Mr. Griffiths: So there will be performance measures coming as it develops?

Mr. Pickering: As it sort of rolls out, it's something that will be looked at in the sense of: are we meeting the outcomes we're intending to achieve?

From a department perspective our main focus has been on our ALERT model, which is the Alberta law enforcement response teams. We do have a gang team integrated with seconded members from the Edmonton Police Service, the Calgary Police Service, RCMP, and Medicine Hat and Lethbridge. Those provide a response from a province-wide perspective because gangs are mobile and not captured by any sort of specific municipal boundaries. Success in the ALERT model has been fantastic in the sense of the number of busts we've had as well as some civil forfeiture that we've been able to achieve.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Chase, please, followed by Mr. Xiao.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. Goal 4, corrections. As a long-time educator I believe in the adage that an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. It is noted on page 32 of the annual report that the adult offender population increased in 2009-10 from 2,838 to 2,907, an increase of 2.4 per cent, close to the annual population growth. It is then noted that the offender population is expected to grow by 23 per cent between 2010 and 2015, a rather fatalistic if-we-build-it-they-will-come approach. Given that Alberta's annual population growth is expected to be around 2 per

cent, it seems that the government must expect a significant increase in the proportion of Albertans in prison. What is the Solicitor General doing to moderate this trend so that Alberta taxpayers do not see a corresponding 23 per cent rise in the cost of supporting this offender population?

Mr. Pickering: I'll start, and then I'll refer it to ADM Anderson. Obviously, there are two factors with respect to our corrections side of the business. One is that we take what we get, which results in the justice system providing those offenders, so we have to incarcerate and care for them. As well, in this area policy has a significant impact in the context of Criminal Code amendments. There are some amendments that the federal government is looking at with respect to conditional sentencing that occurred back in the mid-90s, which, if that reverses, will have a significant impact on our population because we'll go from being in custody within the community through our community supervision program to being incarcerated.

With that, I'll turn it over to Bruce.

Mr. B. Anderson: Again, I'm not sure if I can add too much. I mean, really, one of the biggest drivers is legislation. There are other drivers. The institutional count is driven, really, by the number of admissions and the average time that those people spend in custody. Our number of admissions has been rising over the years, and then the average time that inmates spend in custody has been rising. Even if the average stay in custody has increased by as little as one day, given the number of admissions we have, that can mean up to an extra 70 inmates in custody on any given day. So it's significant. It doesn't sound like much, but it really does have a significant impact on the population.

You know, in terms of what is driving the population, enforcement practices can drive the population, sentencing practices, risk aversion, and time to trial because the number of offences are more serious and complex to get through the court system. If people are charged with multiple offences, they can spend more time getting their offences dealt with in court. So there are a number of factors that in combination will affect the population. But as Mr. Pickering noted, back in the mid-90s, when conditional sentence orders were implemented, what that did, effectively, was take the minimum security population that was in custody and give the courts the ability to give them a community sentence. That reduced the custody population.

Now the custody population has really sort of grown just because of the factors we've talked about, and it also includes just general population increases in the province as well. It's grown to the sort of levels now where we were back in the early '90s. One of the reasons it's presenting a challenge for us is that the population, also the profile of the population, has hardened so that the minimum security offenders that were once in custody are no longer there.

9:10

Fifty-eight per cent of our population, as I indicated previously, are remands. They've been ordered remanded in custody by the courts because they're either determined to be a flight risk or they present a danger to the community, so they need to be held in a secure environment. So even some of the infrastructure that we previously had, work camps for example, where we could house minimum security sentenced offenders, are no longer appropriate for the current inmate population.

Mr. Chase: Thank you.

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Chase. Mr. Pickering has something to add to that, I believe.

Mr. Pickering: Sure. Just one supplemental, I guess, to get into looking at what the government is proposing to do to try and slow the rate down. We are working in conjunction with our colleagues in the Department of Justice on a crime prevention framework. The crime prevention framework is trying to look at the risk and protective factors that go into crime, basically looking at the potential, trying to address some of the root causes. As well, we have a pilot project that we've been working on with our priority and prolific offenders, trying to deal with the repeat offenders. That program has been very successful in working with those offenders to try and keep them out of the system.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. Again, as a former teacher I find the crowded conditions in the remand centres lead to basically crime incubators or crime classrooms. It is reported as well that the remand population is growing, page 32. This group has grown from 50 per cent three years ago to 58 per cent of the inmate population in 2009-10. Remand centres are intended to provide short-term accommodation for accused persons awaiting court appearances and for convicted offenders awaiting transfer to other facilities. They tend to be subject to overcrowding and have no programs for inmates. Convicted offenders are therefore given extra credit time for time served in remand.

Your annual report discusses the new Edmonton Remand Centre, which is expected to be operational in 2012. My question is: what is the Solicitor General doing to reduce the demand on remand centres such as cross-ministerial education programs, poverty reduction programs, community support programs, boys' and girls' clubs, officer outreach, and school resource officers? Could you give me a sense that we're reaching children early so they don't become criminals later?

Mr. Pickering: As I mentioned, those would be components of the government's crime prevention framework that's currently under development. I think it's important to note that those that are put into remand are there as a result of a court decision. The court decision is usually looking at public safety risk or a risk of flight, so the courts have determined that those people need to be incarcerated either from a safety perspective or to ensure that justice is done. But as I mentioned previously, the crime prevention framework would start to look at some of those root issues.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Pickering.

Mr. Xiao, please, followed by Mr. Kang.

Mr. Xiao: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Your annual report, page 16. Your ministry has spent \$2.4 million on information technology. My question to you is: can you explain a little bit further how the money was spent?

Mr. Pickering: Okay. The increase in expenditures we had on information technology over the prior year was due to \$1.3 million for evergreening of computer equipment and network replacement, \$0.9 million for secure server environment purchases, and \$0.2 million for manpower put in place for some of the initial components of our strategic information technology project.

Mr. Xiao: What kind of new technology initiative have you planned for the future?

Mr. Pickering: At this point in time the only future information technology would be the replacement of our shift scheduling system for corrections and sheriff staff. We run a 24/7 operation, so shift scheduling is important.

The IT branch also manages the planning and delivery of a broad range of IT services and policies within the ministry. It collaborates with the department and police services to develop the integrated information initiative that we previously spoke about and, as well, manages the Service Alberta information technology contract.

The strategic information initiative for the department in total is \$100 million; \$65 million of that deals with the Alberta police integrated initiative. That was basically approved in 2006 and set out a long-term plan for our information management and technology. Within that \$100 million is basically the police system, a system for corrections as well as an integration sort of initiative within the department.

Mr. Xiao: Also on page 16 you increased the spending on organized crime in the last fiscal year as well, \$1.9 million.

Mr. Pickering: The majority of our funding for organized crime goes to the Alberta law enforcement response teams, so that would be increased expenditures to the ALERT organization.

Mr. Xiao: Okay. Due to personnel?

Mr. Pickering: Right. It's basically a grant that we provide to that organization for increased personnel and operating costs.

Mr. Xiao: Okay. Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Kang, please, followed by Mr. Groeneveld.

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question is also around operating expenses on page 93. The increase in operating expenses for IT was more than \$3 million, an increase of nearly 30 per cent of the budgeted amount. The ministry achieved in-year savings in other areas. Why was it not possible to respond to the overspending in IT before going \$3 million, or 30 per cent, over budget? That's on page 93.

Mr. Pickering: Basically, as I previously indicated, for the IT sort of expenditure the overexpenditures were for evergreening of some of our computer systems that were getting very dated. That was \$1.3 million. There was \$0.9 million for secure server environment purchases and \$0.2 million for manpower.

Mr. Kang: So that \$2.4 million was separate from this expense, where you talked about others?

Mr. Pickering: It was included in that overall expense.

Mr. Kang: So overall it was \$3 million, not \$5.4 million?

Mr. Bauer: What we're referring to is the operating expense for the information technology branch. What Deputy Pickering has referred to is the difference between the authorized budget of \$10.5 million and the actual spend of \$13.6 million, which is really, basically, about a \$3 million overspend, which was the result of the factors or the items that he's already referred to. Is there something else that you're referring to?

Mr. Kang: When the deputy was talking about \$2.4 million, you know, then he had mentioned those numbers in there, too. They

were \$2.4 million, \$1.9 million, and \$3 million here. We're talking about two separate . . .

Mr. Pickering: Yeah. These were equipment purchases. The other \$600,000 would pertain to charges incurred by the department through Service Alberta in obtaining its computer services.

Mr. Kang: I'm still not clear; \$2.4 million was hardware, you know, technology costs, software purchases, greening equipment?

Mr. Pickering: Of the \$3 million, \$2.4 million was equipment purchases as identified. The additional \$600,000 would have been for other charges through Service Alberta.

Mr. Kang: Okay.

Mr. Pickering: Sorry for that confusion.

The Chair: Thank you. We're going to move on now, please.

Mr. Groeneveld, followed again by Mr. Chase.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Chair. I'd like to take you back to page 20 of the annual report and the law enforcement framework, which is where you talk about strengthening service delivery, ensuring accountability to Albertans, and funding law enforcement effectively. That's certainly quite a mouthful, I guess, when you try and put this all together. Being Public Accounts here – I think you answered this question or part of it anyway – how much have we spent on that process so far?

9:20

Mr. Pickering: On the development of the law enforcement framework, which is a strategic document to put forward a lens that will evaluate our decision-making as we go forward, there was no separate budget for it. It was included within the department's operating budget. We spent about \$90,000 on consultants through the consultation sort of process with stakeholders. Basically, that was the direct cost incurred with respect to the development of that policy document.

Mr. Groeneveld: Okay. Fair enough. I'm sure at this point it's been a bit of a learning experience when you get into that. So where to from here? Do you change direction? Are you happy with where you're headed for now in that process? I see we have about another year to go, kind of, in the study. Is it going in a direction that you think is beneficial?

Mr. Pickering: Yeah. The development of the law enforcement framework was in the minister's mandate letter. Basically, that was announced in December of this year, the final sort of document. We are happy. As we are developing it, some of the decisions the department was making were consistent with it such as increasing our expenditures into the ALERT model, integrating some of our enforcement resources with respect to the sheriffs' integration into the ALERT model.

Basically, what we believe is that the law enforcement framework does provide the foundation for moving forward with the new vision. The focus, I think, is on strengthening service delivery, accountability to Albertans, and ensuring that we have an equitable distribution of policing costs. Basically, the framework describes how government will work in partnership with communities, police services, and other law enforcement partners; sets out roles and expectations for our law enforcement personnel, looking at the continuum of law enforcement from security all the way to police officers; and makes sure that we have the right person doing the right job with the right training to basically be

involved with community members in the context of crime prevention initiatives and ensure that communities have the flexibility to meet their specific policing needs.

Mr. Groeneveld: Good.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Chase, please, followed by Mr. Sandhu.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. Goal 5, rehabilitative services. At times the remand centre houses individuals who aren't flight risks but are there for minor offences such as unpaid LRT tickets. A case in point occurred in Calgary, when two weeks ago Children and Youth Services took a two-month-old baby into custody in large part because her mother was taken to the remand centre. The annual report includes a discussion of rehabilitative services and education programs for offenders, pages 37 to 40, which are intended to reduce the risk of reoffending. It has been reported that 70 per cent of inmates currently in remand have been in remand before, so recidivism is clearly an issue. Can you tell us what effect rehabilitative services and education programs have had on recidivism among offenders?

Mr. Pickering: I'll turn that over to ADM Anderson.

Mr. B. Anderson: I touched on recidivism in one of my responses to an earlier question. I mean, clearly, what we're doing is implementing best practices that have demonstrated results in other jurisdictions, with the intent of replicating those results in Alberta. But from a recidivism perspective, if you want to talk about readmissions to custody, we have done a 30-year review. We looked at admissions to custody from 1979 to 2009, and what that showed us was that half of the individuals who were admitted to custody were never readmitted to custody. So if you want to say that's a 50 per cent success rate, I guess you could use that term. It does demonstrate that half did not return.

We had 25 per cent that had two or three subsequent admissions, we had 9 per cent that had four or five subsequent admissions, and then 15 per cent that had six or more. So we've really got about 15 per cent of the custody population that we're talking about as chronic offenders who seem to rotate through the system. Half of those who were admitted over that 30-year period touched the custody system once and were never readmitted again.

I can tell you that on the probation side, in terms of successful completion of probation, on the adult side in '09-10 we had a success rate of about 66 per cent. That means that 66 per cent of those under probation supervision, those adults, completed that period successfully. On the youth side it was 57 per cent.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. Those are impressive statistics. I would highly recommend work by Dr. Don Andrews of Carleton University, a specialist in recidivism. He had terrific results with his research. Unfortunately, he's now deceased.

Question 2. Also discussed under goal 5 are youth justice committees, 126 in number, which received \$350,000 from the government to provide youth with alternatives to formal court processes. The government also provided one of the committees with \$150,000 to host a conference for all of the committees. Could you explain how the \$350,000 was distributed and how you were measuring the benefit of this funding? Also, conference expenses averaged about \$2,000 per committee. Was this money well spent?

Mr. Pickering: I'll maybe start and then refer it to ADM Anderson. I think, as you mentioned, there are 126 committees across

Alberta. There are about 1,400 volunteers on those committees. Almost 25 per cent of those committees serve aboriginal communities, providing youth with mentoring elder support and a link to their cultural traditions.

I'll maybe refer it now to Bruce if he can get into any of the specifics.

Mr. B. Anderson: I guess the individual grants really are based on the workload that's generated by the respective committees, so that's how the grant money is allocated.

With respect to the conference, the conference is an annual event. Really, it's used for a couple of purposes. One is to recognize the work that these volunteers do – and they are all volunteers – and then, secondly, to provide some educational opportunities for those volunteers.

With respect to success rates about 80 per cent of the youth who go through the youth justice committee process complete their extrajudicial sanction successfully.

Mr. Chase: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Sandhu, please, followed by Mr. Kang.

Mr. Sandhu: Thank you. Can you explain why the ministry let the victims of crime fund accumulate to a surplus of approximately \$50 million?

Mr. Pickering: The surplus has grown over time. Basically, the majority of that surplus grew within some of the early years. The revenue source for the fund comes from fine and ticket revenue. I've got stats going back to 2003. Basically, revenue exceeded expenditures by a fairly significant amount up to about 2008-09, and at that point, basically, the revenue and expenditure base levelled out. Our revenue was fairly close to our expenditure base.

As I mentioned in my opening comments as well, we need to keep in mind that based on the previous program, that existed prior to the Victims of Crime Act, there are some long-term benefit payments that are to be made, which total about \$30.6 million. Of that roughly \$50 million, about \$30 million could be considered committed.

Mr. Sandhu: On page 143 of the annual report can you explain why \$3.2 million from the victims of crime fund was unspent?

Mr. Pickering: Yeah. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, the majority of the underexpenditure was due to benefit payments being less than budgeted for. Benefit payments are done on the basis of injury reports, so we estimate a certain amount, and the actual amount spent was less than that.

Mr. Sandhu: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Kang, please, followed by Mr. Xiao.

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The community-based crime prevention program provides funding for a range of different initiatives. I would like to ask you about this one first, that the ministry supports nonprofit and community-based organizations to undertake projects to prevent crime and make their communities safer. The annual report notes on page 23 that \$600,000 in grants was given to community organizations to support 17 projects. Can you tell us what you did to assess the value of funding these projects for which you provided \$600,000? How successful were they?

9:30

Mr. Pickering: The funding is basically provided to community groups. As you mentioned, there were 17 projects that were funded. I'll sort of maybe make some opening remarks and then turn it over to ADM Meade. The ministry does support community-based crime prevention and safety initiatives, including public awareness and education, training and support for community and law enforcement agencies to work together to prevent or deter criminal activity. We also work with other nongovernment agencies, including the Safe Communities Secretariat and Justice, to address causes and effects of crime. In '09-10 the grants that were provided for crime prevention totalled about \$0.6 million.

Maybe for some more specific details I can turn it over to ADM Meade.

Mr. Meade: Thank you. The kinds of programs we fund tend to be things like Boyle Street co-op, Calgary block watch, all the child and family services. Our staff work with these organizations to support them in the development of not just the grant but of the assessment phase, that happens at the end of each year. Then that information is built back into any future grant in terms of: did they meet their goals, and did they require any additional help from us in terms of future years?

Mr. Kang: My second question is about the ministry providing support for aboriginal communities to develop and implement their own community safety initiatives. To this end, your ministry provided \$265,000 to aboriginal organizations for four crime prevention co-ordinators. Can you tell us what you did to assist the success of these initiatives and the value for funding it?

Mr. Pickering: I'll ask ADM Meade to respond to that.

Mr. Meade: Sure. These are important learnings because we found that, really, in a First Nations community we needed to work with First Nations in developing the programs that worked for them. These dollars go into supporting four community co-ordinators, who work with both the leadership and the elders within those communities to address the crime prevention type of activities. Tsuu T'ina/Stoney is one, Yellowhead Tribal is another, Kainai is another, and Lesser Slave Lake is another. Some of those involve multiple First Nations, and the co-ordinator works with those in developing those programs.

Mr. Kang: Are there some kinds of performance measures there, like, you know, how successful these programs are?

Mr. Meade: Yeah, there are. Also, of course, the key stakeholders are the elected officials on First Nations, the elders, and other community groups. We engage them in determining whether or not the crime prevention activities on the particular First Nation are beneficial.

Mr. Kang: Thank you, sir.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Xiao, please, followed by Mr. Chase.

Mr. Xiao: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have a question. You know, the Solicitor General made an announcement that we're going to start the construction of the police training facility in Fort Macleod. I just want to ask you about what kind of impact this training facility may have on the quality of our policing personnel, on, obviously, professional development. Also, as a province how

will this facility help us to have a better force? You know what I'm getting at, trying to justify the cost.

Mr. Pickering: Yeah. Consistent with the law enforcement framework, we looked at standardization across our law enforcement community, and we believe that the training facility will allow training to occur in a consistent sort of fashion across all of our police agencies. Currently from a recruit training perspective each agency does their own recruit training. In the sort of new world, once the facility is up and running, that will occur at that facility. It's envisioned also that that facility will look at some public safety components as well with respect to firefighters, ambulance training, et cetera, so that we have good integration across our entire sort of first responder spectrum. The training centre, I think, allows that to occur in the context of a central location for that to occur and will result in standardization across the province.

Mr. Xiao: Do you have any idea at this stage how much it's going to cost us on an annual basis in terms of operational expenditures?

Mr. Pickering: I can tell you that in the business case that was developed for that facility, the operating costs, a portion of it, would be absorbed by the department. We have sheriffs and correctional officers that would be trained there, and those that were trained from the police agencies would be on a cost-recovery basis.

Mr. Xiao: Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chase, please, followed by Mr. Groeneveld.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. Goal 7, liquor and gaming. It is reported on page 46 of the annual report that an MLA committee was appointed to examine specific aspects of Alberta's gaming model. It has been said that the work of the committee cost about \$21,000 but that the report was rejected by the ministry. This seems rather wasteful. Was there some issue with the committee's terms of reference, or is there some other explanation for the committee's advice being rejected?

Mr. McLennan: Yes, the previous Solicitor General formed a three-person MLA committee to look at a number of issues with regard to the gaming model, specifically pooling, wait times, and the number of volunteers that are required. The terms of reference were very good. The committee criss-crossed the province, spoke to and met with over 1,400 people. Four hundred written submissions were submitted to the committee. The committee analyzed the information, made six recommendations to government. Based on those recommendations the minister's position was that the issues are very complex, and he's returned the report to the AGLC for additional analysis and to get back to him on the matter.

Mr. Chase: Thank you.

Recently the Alberta government recommended spending millions of dollars to spruce up VLT machines rather than on addiction prevention programs, which represent less than 4 per cent of gaming revenue expenditures. It is reported that the ministry supports evidence-based decision-making and spent approximately 1 and a half million dollars on gaming research, page 44. Could you tell us how many different researchers or research teams received funding and how this information was actually being used in support of evidence-based decision-making?

Mr. McLennan: Yes. The Alberta Gaming Research Institute is comprised of three universities: the U of A, the University of Calgary, and the University of Lethbridge. They do active research for us as well as for other jurisdictions across the country. They are presently doing a socioeconomic study, that we expect to get the results for this fiscal year or early next fiscal year, with regard to the social and fiscal capacity in gaming. In the annual report that the Alberta Gaming Research Institute put out last year they talked about their partnership with the AGLC and how they are benefiting gaming in the province. We work very closely with this organization, and we feel that they can certainly be very beneficial to provide treatment programs for Albertans.

Mr. Chase: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Before we move on to Mr. Groeneveld, I neglected to introduce Mr. Anderson, who has been with us for quite some time. Thank you for coming today. Good morning, sir.

Mr. R. Anderson: Good morning.

The Chair: Mr. Groeneveld, please, followed by Mr. Kang.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Chair. I'll take you to page 191 of the October 2010 report of the Auditor General. In there what jumps out at us very quickly and what he'd mentioned himself is that the AGLC did not have a documented policy in place to ensure that regular independent security assessments of its IT systems were done. Is there a reason for this, and can you provide a bit of an update on where we're going with it now?

9:40

Mr. McLennan: I did address that question or a similar question in a previous response, but yes, as a result of the recommendations of the Auditor General we've implemented policy as well as testing. We did complete testing in 2010 of our external websites by a third-party independent contractor as well as internal assessment of our different systems. We have gotten the reports. We are working to implement any deficiencies. We also will be hiring a third party to do a penetration test to ensure that anything that was identified in the test has been rectified by our staff.

Mr. Groeneveld: Good. Thank you. Is there anything specific that got in your way to make the delay, or was it just the load issue that came with it?

Mr. McLennan: It was a manpower and budgeting issue. However, I'd like to emphasize to the committee that we were conducting internal reviews by our staff. What we did not have was documented policy and hiring a third party to do that testing. The policy is now being put in place. A copy of the policy has been provided to the Auditor General, and we are doing the testing.

Mr. Groeneveld: Good.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Kang, please, followed by Mr. Allred.

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Goal 4, corrections. In the discussion of best practices for managing offender populations, you refer to electronic monitoring as "cost-effective and reliable," page 34. Can you tell us, sir, how you are measuring the cost-effectiveness and reliability of this electronic monitoring system?

Mr. Pickering: I'll have ADM Anderson answer that.

Mr. B. Anderson: We're using electronic monitoring on a limited basis. Primarily, we're using EM, or electronic monitoring, for monitoring intermittent servers who have been authorized to be absent, released early from their intermittent sentence and confined to their home during the weekend or during that portion of the week when they're supposed to serve their sentence. The sentence is then combined with them being allowed to go home subject to a curfew that's monitored by electronic monitoring, and then during the day they're either in education or work service programs. So it's a very structured sentence.

The type of EM that we utilize is a presence/absence system, so we can tell when someone is actually present where they're supposed to be or if they leave. The only way that we could effectively monitor whether someone is at home is to either phone them on a continual basis, every hour, which is obviously not realistic. That really is the only other way we would know if they're there. So it is very cost-effective in that sense. The only other way would be to have a huge number of staff who would be continually making phone calls to offenders who were subject to curfews to see whether or not the curfew was in fact being properly observed.

Mr. Kang: My second question. Your annual reports also refers to the second annual Corrections Week, page 34. This event was the subject of a government news release, a speech in which the minister talked about celebrating correctional services' role in a safe Alberta and a football game. Could you provide a little more information about the cost of this event and expected benefits to the taxpayer?

Mr. Pickering: I'll start, and then I'll defer to ADM Anderson.

Corrections Week, I think, is to recognize the professional staff that we have within the ministry. Our correctional peace officers do a very difficult job in the centres that they operate in, and it's to recognize them and the professionalism of that profession.

With respect to costs I know that there were celebrations in Lethbridge, Calgary, and Edmonton this year. In the year in question I believe it would have been in the Calgary area.

With that, I'll turn it over to ADM Anderson.

Mr. B. Anderson: With respect to costs I don't have a dollar value, but the costs are really limited to some small advertising costs to advertise to the public that it is Corrections Week, and then there were some costs associated with some of the open houses that we had to allow members of the public access to some of our correctional facilities or community offices.

Really, the primary benefit from our perspective in terms of Corrections Week, I think, is to not only recognize the fact that our employees do a tremendous job and provide a valuable service, but it's also to educate the public on the work that corrections does. I think to a large extent the public is unaware of what happens within a correctional facility, the type of work that a correctional peace officer does and what they're responsible for, and the same thing with respect to our community corrections staff.

Mr. Kang: Just a quick one related to this, please.

The Chair: No. I'm afraid we have to move on. There are a couple of other people who have not had an opportunity to ask questions yet who indicated a willingness to do so, and we have a very short time frame now.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Allred: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't see anything in your report, so I'm asking the question: what programs do you have in place to prevent the introduction of drugs into the correctional system?

Mr. Pickering: I'll start and then refer it to ADM Anderson. Basically, we have a drug dog program which does searches within our facility on a regular basis. As well, at the admission into our centres there is a facility called a BOSS chair. If there is a suspected sort of bringing of drugs into the facility, an inmate is required to sit on the chair.

With that, I'll turn it over to ADM Anderson.

Mr. B. Anderson: I'm not sure I can add too much to that. I mean, we treat it very seriously. We don't tolerate the use of drugs within the institution. There are disciplinary processes within the institution. If an inmate is found to be in possession of contraband, including drugs, they're subject to internal discipline. They're charged internally, they appear before an independent adjudicator, and they can lose remission if they're a sentenced inmate. They can serve time in segregation. So there are penalties.

The other thing we do is that most of the visits, with very few exceptions, are secure visits. They're behind glass, so that does not allow, then, the introduction of contraband into the centre by visitors.

As Deputy Pickering indicated, we have the BOSS chair. It's a body orifice scanning chair. Basically, offenders will sit on that chair when they're admitted. It will determine whether or not they have metal internalized in their body, so if they're using some type of metal to contain drugs, that would be found. In some cases, you know, the fact that inmates are being placed on this chair: they will just turn over contraband that they may have.

The drug dog: we have one. We are in the process of recruiting another drug dog, so we'll have another drug dog operational this year as well.

Mr. Allred: A supplemental if I might, sort of a double-headed one. What effort do you take to monitor your employees, and what is your overall success rate in preventing the introduction of drugs to the system?

Mr. Pickering: I'll have ADM Anderson answer that.

Mr. B. Anderson: The success rate is good. Now, I won't say that we don't have any drugs within the centre, but we do not have what I would consider to be a drug problem, and it's because we do implement the kinds of procedures that I've talked about.

One thing that I did not mention is that we also do random drug testing of 1 per cent of the inmate population every week, so there are those random tests that occur as well.

With respect to the drug dog results from '09-10 there were 178 centre searches and 714 inmate searches. Contraband was discovered, but I don't have information on exactly how much was discovered. I can tell you that I think the measures that we have in place are significant in terms of deterring the use or the introduction of drugs. One way that inmates do bring drugs into the centre, however, is to conceal them internally. It's difficult to control that, so we also have dry cell techniques, where if we believe that an inmate has in fact digested or inserted drugs internally, they're placed into a cell that does not have any running water until such time as they need to go to the washroom, in which case we hope that's flushed down.

9:50

The other thing I can tell you is that when the drug dog does enter the institutions for cell searches and inmate searches, you'll often hear toilets flush, which means that inmates are in fact getting rid of contraband. So it also has a preventative effect in that sense.

Mr. Allred: You didn't address the monitoring of your employees in the institutions.

Mr. B. Anderson: We do not have a program in place to monitor employees. However, if we suspect an employee is involved in any kind of illegal activity, then we would engage the police in terms of investigation.

Mr. Allred: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Rob Anderson, please, followed by Mr. Griffiths.

Mr. R. Anderson: Man, I feel like eating breakfast after that conversation.

Gentlemen, it's good to see you. One of the highlights of being elected and serving the Legislature thus far has been working with you fine gentlemen in my first year and a half or so. You're doing a great job.

There are some questions I have relating to a project that was obviously ongoing while I was there and that also I've heard a little about recently, so I'd just like to get your thoughts on it. That's, of course, the TALON project. This, obviously, was a project that was going on last year, and I'm unsure of the amount that was expended on it. Clearly, it's a piece of infrastructure that's needed to improve law enforcement. We need not be doing police work in silos, and the RCMP and municipal police forces need to be talking to one another, so I certainly support the principle.

Over the last year I heard there have been some resources spent. Obviously, a privacy report has been done on it. I guess there are some concerns around that area, around people's privacy. There just seems to be a lack of a plan.

The Chair: Do direct a question to the staff, please, because we have a very short time left for this meeting.

Mr. R. Anderson: Okay. Sure. What would you like me to ask?

The Chair: It's your choice, but don't take any lessons from Mr. Chase.

Mr. R. Anderson: Okay. I was just going to say . . .

I guess my question, therefore, is just these privacy concerns and making sure there's no abuse of this new system that we're spending so much money on. What are you doing to make sure of that?

Mr. Pickering: I will address the question. It was actually the first question we had out of the gate this morning, so this may be a test to see if I'm consistent in my response. The new police information database allows police agencies to better manage information for the protection and safety of Albertans as well as police officers. The information that will be collected in the database is the same type of information that is currently collected by individual police, so the only difference is that we're now aggregating that into a single system.

Police actions with respect to collection, use, or disclosure of personal information within the database must comply with the FOIP Act as it currently exists. The Solicitor General is currently in the process of doing its privacy impact assessment, and this is being done in consultation with the Privacy Commissioner's office and all participating police service partners. Once the PIA for the database is completed, which is expected by the latter part of April, it will be disclosed except for any technical information that may be removed if it would harm the security of the system.

As I mentioned this morning, I think there are two major sort of foundations, and you said you agreed with the principle behind it. Really, it's officer safety and public safety. I think one can go back to the Bernardo review that was done in 1996 to realize that it's important from a public safety perspective to ensure that our police agencies are sharing information to ensure that investigations are done in the most efficient and effective manner. That was a recommendation that came out of a review done by Justice Campbell in 1996.

As well, in Alberta in 2003 there was a fatality inquiry dealing with an individual that was shot by a police officer. A police officer was also stabbed. That occurred in Calgary. What may have changed the course of those events – and I do emphasize may – was the opportunity to understand the potentially sort of violent index for that individual, which wasn't contained within the system of the Calgary Police Service but another police service within the province.

Mr. R. Anderson: Supplementals.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. R. Anderson: Will there be a way to access one's own TALON report in order to make sure that there's no false or misleading or incorrect information? Will there be a process put in place to remove that false information should it exist?

Mr. Pickering: A couple of safeguards exist, and those occur under the FOIP Act. Anyone can ask to see their personal information and ask for a correction if, in fact, it's in error. Once the system has been implemented, any concern with how the information in the database is accessed or used can be brought forward to the chief of police of that jurisdiction and also a complaint to the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. So we believe it's appropriately covered.

Mr. R. Anderson: Thank you, Brad.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

In the limited time we have we still have members interested in asking questions, but unfortunately we're going to have to read them into the record and have written responses, Mr. Pickering, through the clerk to all members. We'll start with Mr. Kang, please.

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Liquor and gaming, goal 7. It is reported on page 46 of the annual report that an MLA committee was appointed to examine specific aspects of Alberta's gaming model. It has been said that the work of the committee cost about \$21,000 but that their report has been rejected by the minister. This seems rather wasteful. Was there some issue with the committee's terms of reference, or is there some other explanation?

My second question. It is reported that the ministry supports evidence-based decision-making and spent \$1.5 million on gaming research, page 44. Could you tell us how many different researchers or research teams received the funding and how this

information has actually been used in support of evidence-based decision-making?

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Griffiths, do you have any questions at this time for the department?

Mr. Griffiths: Well, I didn't have a question. I just wanted to say that as chair of the charitable gaming casino – and Mr. Rodney was on there, too – I want you guys to know that the staff that were provided to help us crunch numbers, collect all the data, organize the meetings, meet with all the different volunteer charities: they were exceptional. I don't think I've ever personally passed that on to you guys, but I wanted you to know that, and now it's in *Hansard* forever. They were absolutely incredible, and I can't thank you enough for the great work they did.

Mr. McLennan: Thank you. I'll pass that on to the staff.

The Chair: Mr. Rodney, please.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you. As a member of the committee, as Mr. Griffiths has said – thank you so much, Doug, for bringing that up. The other Doug, Elniski that is, MLA for Edmonton-Calder, would say: everything's in Calder.

Everything was on that group of people that you sent around the province with us. We talked to thousands of people in dozens of locations. It was a tall order. I think some great work was done. For anyone out there who's wondering if anything has come of it, well, the report has been released, and I do trust that in the future we'll be able to take some of that information and make it even better. The thing that was most affirming for all of us was that although there were little disagreements here and there across the province in terms of what could be done to fix it, overall people thought: we are so fortunate to have a program that's so well run. Thank you again for all your work with that.

The Chair: Thank you.

To conclude, Mr. Chase, you have a question you would like to ask?

Mr. Chase: Yes. Thank you. Goal 3, protection services. As the son of a dedicated, former long-time serving Canadian Forces squadron leader, I'm not a stranger to acronym usage. However, the annual report is full of acronyms that sound as though they've just stepped out of television: ASIRT, ALERT, ICE, FASST, SCAN, I-TRAC.

I'll focus on one on page 29. It is noted that the Alberta Security and Strategic Intelligence Support Team, or ASSIST, provided services that "included protection of energy infrastructure and coordinated exchange of information between partners and jurisdictions and value-added crisis management services." That list is like the acronyms. They need someone to translate. Can you please provide an overview of what "value-added crisis management services" refers to in the real world?

The Chair: Thank you very much.

That concludes this portion of our meeting. I would like to thank Mr. Pickering and his staff on behalf of all members of the committee for your time and attention this morning and wish you the very best in this fiscal year. While we conclude our other business, you are free to leave. Again, on behalf of the committee thank you very much.

Mr. Pickering: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

10:00

The Chair: Committee members, other business: the committee report on 2010 activities. A copy of the draft annual report has been circulated, and I would appreciate it if you could take time in the next week to have a look at that, and perhaps we could have a motion next week to send this on to the Legislative Assembly.

Also, I would like to note that the anticipated meeting schedule for the spring of 2011 is here. This is a schedule, of course, that was made following the motion passed at the November 3, 2010, committee meeting, and we're hopefully going to have a lot of

interest through this spring session in the various departments that we have scheduled to appear before us.

Now, if there are no other items under other business, may I move on? Thank you.

The date of our next meeting will be with Alberta Justice and Attorney General, and it's next Wednesday, March 2, at 8:30 a.m. in this room.

Could I have a motion to adjourn? Moved by Mr. Sandhu that the meeting be adjourned. All in favour? None opposed. Thank you very much. Have a good week.

[The committee adjourned at 10:01 a.m.]

