

[Mr. White in the chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. We have an agenda that's been precirculated. Can we have a motion to the effect?

MR. YANKOWSKY: I'll move.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is it agreed? Carried.

We have on the agenda item 3: Delegate Selection – Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees Conference in Halifax of this year. Funds for the conference have been allocated and budgeted previously. The meeting is generally attended and has been attended in the last four meetings, I believe, by the chairman, the deputy chairman, and the secretary of the committee.

We'll need a motion to that effect, as we generally do. Julius.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Yes. I'm not about to propose a motion, but I would like to maybe make a suggestion. Shouldn't other members be given the opportunity to go as well? Maybe we could draw a name or something so that one of us members at large can go.

THE CHAIRMAN: Parliamentary procedure dictates that we should have a motion, and then we can discuss the motion. We'll come back to this. Can we have a motion? Mr. Shariff.

MR. SHARIFF: I move that

in accordance with past practices the committee chairman, deputy chairman, and committee clerk be approved to attend the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees Conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia, from September 17 to 19, 2000.

THE CHAIRMAN: Do we have some discussion on the matter? Mr. Yankowsky.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Yes. I would like to propose a friendly amendment saying that maybe one member at large should be able to attend this as well.

THE CHAIRMAN: In parliamentary procedure there in fact is no friendly amendment. If that is an amendment, could you word it such that perhaps part two of the motion reads something to the effect that one member be selected at large from the committee? Would that be entertainable? Okay. You'll put the motion?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: The motion is put.

Discussion on the amendment? Yes, Ms Olsen.

MS OLSEN: I just want to make a point for the hon. member. I think the same issue was brought up last year by the opposition members on this committee and was flatly rejected. So I'm wondering what the rationale is behind the hon. member's motion this year and why it should change from the deputy chairman and the chairman attending the conference.

THE CHAIRMAN: Now, we're going to have to establish a speaking order here on the amendment. Mr. Shariff on the amendment.

MR. SHARIFF: If I can add to the point that has just been raised. This has been the practice in the past, that the chairman and deputy chairman have attended. However, in the event that the chairman or

deputy chairman is unable to attend, somebody else is delegated to attend. I recall that I was unable to attend last year's conference but one of our committee members did attend on my behalf, so we do have that option to pass over that position.

Now, I'm not sure if we do have the budget for one additional person. If we do pass that motion, we would have difficulty in having the appropriate resources to fund an additional person to go.

THE CHAIRMAN: Further discussion, Ms Olsen.

MS OLSEN: I'm just wondering, then, if the deputy chairman didn't go last year, what process was used to determine who would go. Let's clarify that specific process this year so that all members on this committee, if the deputy chairman is unable to go or the chairman is unable to go, have the same opportunity to be selected to go.

THE CHAIRMAN: Perhaps we can ask the deputy chairman about the selection method. I wasn't part of that. I don't recall.

MR. SHARIFF: Well, to my knowledge there's no particular process in place, but I certainly would be in support of determining a process. Maybe a draw could be held and one person selected to substitute for whoever is unable to go.

THE CHAIRMAN: Perhaps we could prevail upon the deputy chairman to draft a paragraph for subsequent meetings on the proviso that it follow generally those lines, and we can discuss it further when we have it before us. Is that reasonable?

MS OLSEN: Well, I mean, I think it's fairly simple. It's likely the . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: It has to be recorded. That's the problem.

MS OLSEN: That's fine.

THE CHAIRMAN: If it's written, then we can discuss it. It would be much easier.

MR. SHARIFF: I'm not sure from a procedural perspective whether we should be debating another amendment, but we could add an amendment to this current motion that could add on: in the event either one of these three people is unable to attend the conference, then a name be drawn to substitute.

THE CHAIRMAN: That would have to be a subsequent amendment. We have to deal with this amendment first. That second amendment doesn't amend the first amendment, so we should deal with that first. Speaking to Mr. Yankowsky's amendment?

MRS. FORSYTH: Mr. Chairman, if I understand this right, we've now gone from two members to three?

THE CHAIRMAN: No. Two members plus the secretary of committees, which has been traditional.

MRS. FORSYTH: Oh. Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: All right. No further discussion on the amendment?

MS BLAKEMAN: Read the motion.

THE CHAIRMAN: Read the motion and the amendment. Perhaps

you could retrieve the . . .

MR. SHARIFF: Is he withdrawing his amendment?

THE CHAIRMAN: No. Read the amendment. We understand the motion, I suspect. It's the amendment we should read.

MRS. DACYSHYN: Okay. The amendment is:

Mr. Yankowsky moved that Mr. Shariff's motion be amended by the addition of the words, "that one member be selected at large from the committee."

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.
Yes, Mrs. Forsyth.

MRS. FORSYTH: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman. I'd like clarification on this please, if I may. The original motion was for the chairman and the deputy chairman and the secretary to go, and now Mr. Yankowsky is saying that one other member should go.

THE CHAIRMAN: No. It'll have to be substituted, because the budget just won't handle three.

MRS. FORSYTH: Then may I ask: if we're in budget restraint, why can't we have just one member go with the secretary, like the chairman?

THE CHAIRMAN: We could have no one go, but the budget is allotted for three persons in economy fare. Actually you have to book that in January, and that was done.

MR. HERARD: Being a new member on this committee, I would first want to know what benefit there is in attending at all. Essentially, if there are reports from previous attendances at these things, then I would like to know where to find them. Just because something is done traditionally doesn't mean it needs to continue to be done if there's no benefit to it. I'm not suggesting there isn't a benefit, but I just don't know what it is. Therefore I'm not prepared to even entertain the motion today, because I don't feel I have enough information on which to base a decision.

THE CHAIRMAN: The reports were filed by the committee chairman and the other attendee, and that was the Member for St. Albert last year. They're tabled in this committee and filed with the annual report for the last four years. They're available at the web site. They can be delivered by the chair. It's a shame that the Member for St. Albert, because she's quite adamant that attendance is required, taking it for myself . . . We actually had another member, Ms Olsen, attend last year also from the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices.

MS OLSEN: The Standing Committee on Legislative Offices has one position to attend this.

THE CHAIRMAN: We do have an amendment on the floor, and if there's no further discussion on the matter, we should . . .
Yes, Mr. Cao.

MR. CAO: I just follow the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont regarding attending. Assuming there's a benefit, then I would suggest some procedure where one person go, either the chair or deputy chair, plus one member at large.

THE CHAIRMAN: That is the effect of the . . .

MRS. DACYSHYN: Not actually.

THE CHAIRMAN: Not actually; no. As it sounds right now, I was assuming it was the chair and another person, but I guess I jumped the gun on that one.

Mr. Yankowsky, would you clarify the motion? Was your intent the chair or both, either of the members? What was it?

MR. YANKOWSKY: My original motion was that the chair go and the deputy chair or the secretary, I guess, and then a member at large be given the opportunity to go as well.

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, an additional member. That presents some difficulty, because unfortunately our budget would not allow for that. So we have two options then: the member can withdraw the motion, with the consent of the committee, without a vote, or we can vote the motion and the subsequent motion can be laid.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Yes, I will withdraw my motion, but I would certainly support a subsequent motion.

MRS. FORSYTH: Mr. Chairman, if I may make a suggestion that we could table this to the next meeting so I and my colleague next to me have time to review the annual report, the budget, and bring it back to the next meeting.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, you wish to . . .

MRS. FORSYTH: I would like to have this motion tabled and brought forward at the next meeting so I and my colleagues have time to review the annual report and the budget.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. On the tabling motion, any further discussion on the tabling motion? The tabling motion is to be postponed for one week hence. Is it agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Those not in favour of the motion? It's carried.

We shall deal with the matter, and I suggest that those that have amendments to the motion as placed would present those in writing so we can understand what they are. Thank you.

Moving right along. We are sorry for the delay in the matter. I know that the department is very important in the province of Alberta. Today we have the Hon. Iris Evans, the Minister of Children's Services, and her staff. Madam Minister, if you would care to introduce your staff and make a presentation, then we'll do the same with the Auditor General.

MS EVANS: I would thank you, Mr. Chairman. Everybody sitting here this morning in these seats is new to their position in this ministry, a brand-new ministry, brand-new people in their positions. For that reason I thought all of us would benefit from the wisdom of Public Accounts so we could learn from you, especially those that are asking all these questions for us to pursue.

To my immediate left is Paula Tyler, newly appointed as deputy in November. To her left are Nancy Reynolds, who is in charge of partnership and innovation in an executive director capacity, and assistant deputy minister Murray Finnerty, coming from Community Development, looking after things like performance measures and other parts of our work with the CFSAs. To my immediate right, Keray Henke, who is the assistant deputy minister in charge of all

the finance and support in administration. To his right are Darren Hedley, who has done a lot of the work on the budget and analysis of accounts in this area, and Bryan Huygen, newly appointed director of finance, who has recently come to our department as well. We will all learn from you.

Mr. Chairman, I am going to take very seriously the comments you made about brevity and draw your attention as a group to the fact that the newly created Children's Services ministry is significantly changed from the accounting perspective, because the persons with developmental disabilities are no longer a part of this budget today but were included at the time as part of the mandate of family and social services.

The other changes or the other things that are unique are that much of the transition of the child and family service authorities has been very obvious as a work in progress. So many of the variances and the circumstances that we find ourselves in when looking at this are a result of changes that were being made in the start-up of the CFSAs.

Predominantly, I want to acknowledge and respect the work of the Auditor General in reviewing for the province of Alberta the accounting procedures, and the lack thereof in some cases, in the manner of creation of the CFSAs. His hope for accountability is something we are in complete sync with him on and agree with.

Maybe I should stop there because I think you wanted to introduce the Auditor General and then get me into my remarks. Is it appropriate for me to stop a moment?

THE CHAIRMAN: If you wish. It doesn't really matter.

MS EVANS: Sure. Please, go ahead.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Auditor General, if you would be so kind.

MR. VALENTINE: Good morning, Mr. Chairman. I'm delighted to be here today. On my immediate right is Lawrence Taylor, who's a senior principal in the office and who did have responsibilities in the area of the family and social services ministry and now has responsibilities in the new Children's Services ministry.

Thank you.

MS EVANS: If I may. As raised by the Auditor General, the Calgary Rocky View child and family services authority was the first of 18 authorities that were up and running and the first to deliver child and family services in our new community-based delivery service system. The function of shared services delivery throughout the province in the six offices that deliver to the PDD boards, to ourselves, and to Human Resources and Employment is part of the equation of delivering services in a financial and IT perspective to these authorities. That continues to be under Human Resources and Employment. There has been over this past year significant work as we move now to yet the new plateau of the shared service centre, where all ministries will gain the benefit of IT and finance from the shared service centre.

At the time the Auditor General was reviewing the statements of Calgary Rocky View and was looking at the department perspective in interfacing with the local CFSAs, the need for accountability for financial systems that recorded accurately, coded accurately on the statements was clearly drawn to our attention and gave a clear picture both to the people at the local level as well as to ourselves at the department level what the finances were and how accountability unfolded. Now with 18 authorities up and running, it is even and ever more important to continue in the quest of accountability, and I'm very satisfied with the bench strength we're building within the Department of Children's Services in the matter of managing the

overall umbrella of accountability on behalf of this ministry, that we will have bridged and will be continuing to bridge some of the problems that were previously identified.

Everybody is using the same system and reporting tools with which to manage their resources, and the whole allocation of support costs to CFSAs is under review by government. Although I've stated that it was originally with Human Resources and Employment, moving to the shared services centre in the period that has followed the government reorganization has meant that this has been a very fluid situation. In the last two days I've met with the northern CFSAs and had a discussion about accountability. Last week I met with the southern ones, all board members and their CEOs.

I want to mention just one more point about developmental disabilities. In '99-2000 Children's Services received about \$8 million in the area of persons with developmental disabilities, for those that are deemed to be part of our mandate, for the 1,200 PDD children. As you're very well aware, with that report out now by the Associate Minister of Health and Wellness, Gene Zwodzesky, there are other issues that will probably surround the final settling out of the PDD perspective, but currently within our system administered by the CFSAs are youth with developmental disabilities. With the transfer of the money, we are now responsible for serving the needs of those children.

8:50

Just a final word about how we are structured today. Partnership and innovation, under Nancy Reynolds, is looking after research, partnerships, and integration, including our liaison with the national children's agenda and the liaison with Aboriginal Affairs. Nancy has already made huge headway with our agreements with aboriginal people.

Under accountability and provincial services, which is the official title of Murray Finnerty's area, are best practices and performance management, another area that the Auditor General said we needed significant work in, the provincial programs in total, and family and community support services, that supports the 272 municipalities that currently offer that program.

Finally, strategy and support, with the strategic planning, finance, and legal services. Human resources and IT will help us develop in those areas.

Mr. Chairman, we await your questions eagerly and hope to learn from you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Madam Minister. We are rather informal here, and we don't expect the minister, particularly in a new ministry that has been brought together such as yours and with the history of your staff, would be able to answer all of the questions that are put to your staff, nor should you, particularly, expect to be able to answer all those questions. If you do have some subsequent information that you wish to provide to all members, if you could channel it through the secretary, it would be most helpful and will get disseminated.

We start with Ms Blakeman, please, followed by Mr. Yankowsky.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to start off by welcoming the minister and her staff and the Auditor General. Do we have fun seekers in the gallery? No fun seekers today. Too bad.

Okay. Having welcomed everyone, I'm going to disagree with the chairman in that I do have an expectation that the minister and her staff will be able to answer all of our questions, perhaps not orally but certainly in writing following the meeting.

It is one of the ongoing frustrations for me as a member of the Public Accounts Committee that we continue to deal with these years in transition from the various departments that have totally restructured themselves and/or become superministries. I think that these transition years are perhaps more important even than others in being able to track exactly what happened. So I appreciate that everyone is in brand-new positions, and I welcome them to those positions and hope they're having a good time. Nonetheless, I will not lower the level of scrutiny that's expected of me by the public, and I'm sure that you will endeavour to reach that bar.

For my first question, then, I'll refer you to page 175 and the top of page 176 in the Auditor General's report for the year that we are examining. The Auditor General is discussing the accountability framework that's contained in Handbook III. My question is: what are these elements for an effective accountability framework, and why were the guidelines not met by the CFSA, children and family services? Why were those guidelines not met in this year?

MS EVANS: Predominantly, Mr. Chairman, through to the hon. member, it would be my interpretation that many were far too new. Some were still in the process of recruitment of staff at the local level, and in terms of being totally fiscally responsible, there was difficulty in articulating with systems that weren't quite up and running. Even in my early days of being involved in this ministry, the visits I had with boards and some of their chief executive officers at the local level netted for me the result that they were not up and running as satisfactorily, either, with their IT because of connections and so on.

Mr. Chairman, I think what the hon. member is pursuing is: what were the elements? We can certainly provide those elements from the accountability framework – that is one binder that I didn't think to bring this morning – that had to be in place before we signed off as a ministry on the approval of each of the CFSAs. So there was a transition period there where the minister and the CFSA were working to make sure their systems were in place. We never completely signed off with them. They were like children; they were very new and still needed help in order to stand. During that period I think there was some real question about the accountability.

Perhaps further, Paula, because you experienced that transition, you'd like to add to the answer for the hon. member.

MS TYLER: Certainly, Madam Minister, and I would say that we can provide more detail in a written response.

The critical elements in the first business plans had to do with adherence to the four what were called at that time pillars of the initiative, a plan that reflected the priorities and capacities of the communities within the region. There was also a list of critical elements that had to be addressed related to the actual assumption of service delivery. At the time the business plans were prepared by the CFSAs, they were not in a service-delivery position. These all had to be prepared prior to us entering into agreements with them. They had to explain to the ministry how they would assume service delivery, how staff concerns would be looked after and adherence to the collective agreement, because they are indeed managing government staff. They had to describe how their financial systems would be in place as well.

One of the areas that they struggled with and, I think, the reason for part of the comment in this Auditor's report had to do with the establishment of outcome measurements for human services. That's a very difficult topic right across human services, not just in Alberta but right across the world, in describing how your actions will lead to improved outcomes for children and families and how you measure back to that. So we have had indeed limited success, I think, in the first round of business plans, but we are seeing

significant improvement this year. However, we will provide a more detailed response.

MS BLAKEMAN: Good. Yes, it's exactly that: what were the elements, and what was the specificity of the failure in some places? Thank you.

You've segued nicely into my supplementary question, which is around the measurable performance outcomes. My concern is that in this transition year there be a very clear linkage between any performance measurements and standards and the evaluations of that from the previous year tracking through into this year, because I think that's where our lessons can be learned. Rather than saying, "We're not doing that anymore; we're now on the new system," you've got to be linking the two systems together. So specifically I'm looking for the steps that the partnering ministry groups – there are about four or five of them that happened there – and the department took in this fiscal year to ensure that these plans had measurable, defined performance measurements and indicators that could be compared to previous years' statistics and targets.

MS EVANS: If I may, Mr. Chairman. From the regular reports that cross my desk, there's no difference in the tracking of measurable outcomes for the children that are in child welfare, either being protected in their homes or within the community at foster or temporary or permanent guardianship placements. The initiative, though, with the Alberta children's initiative, the \$300,000 that was part of putting that project together, I think is best identified by two significant areas of work within this past year that were part of the planning process during this year. That was the Children's Forum and ultimately then materialized through in this past year to the Task Force on Children at Risk.

That Children's Forum was also in the planning stages a long time before the forum was actually announced or the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake announced the honorary chair sometime last April, I believe, a year ago. The planning was going on in this period of time about getting all the partners together. Quite specifically, it was important to get people together to have that dialogue not only at the local level but at the provincial level.

9:00

You were asking about the accountability for the work that the six partnering ministries did through that. It was the development of the child and family services authorities, the work with the boards, and the network with other partners in Justice, Health, AADAC, mental health, the Minister of Learning – at that time there was also a minister of advanced learning – just making sure that we were using the approach of the children's filter: what is in the best interests of children, and how will this decision affect children?

So the work that was done during this period was about co-ordination and consensus building between the department officials and the ministers in evolving how the dialogue would effect positive outcomes for children. It would be difficult I think yet to ascribe any particular outcomes to that except as the results of how we expend funds and resources in collaborative measures from this point onward, because many of those things materialized during the last year.

Are there any more specifics on the ACI, Paula, that you would like to add to that?

MS TYLER: I think you've covered it.

MS EVANS: I think that was it entirely. If you remember, that was a period when the minister, who was the minister without portfolio,

had about \$1.2 million in the budget to look after the boards predominantly in the management of the CFSAs and their work, the appointment of boards in the creation of those authorities. But within the parent ministry, if I can use that, for family and social services, there was work done by the ministers as well in terms of some of the concrete things that we see today, the programs with Justice that look at how youth in the young offender centre may in fact have been part of at one point in time either youth that fell through the cracks or part of our group home youth that are currently being served by Children's Services.

THE CHAIRMAN: You've had now a good deal of time. Perhaps we can allow some others to ask questions.

Mr. Yankowsky, followed by Ms Olsen and Mr. Cao.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank the minister and her staff and the Auditor General for being here today to answer some of our questions. My questions are all on handicapped children's services. My first question is regarding the increased costs that were incurred by the ministry in the last few years for handicapped children's services.

MS EVANS: Well, clearly there are increased costs in the area of handicapped children's services. One reason has been the increasing survival rates of children with very complex needs. Along with Health, obviously, and with the co-operation of the partners we are much better able to diagnose and assess those that have complex needs, and with that early detection treatment options and plans are developed earlier. Since September of 1998 the handicapped children's services division has been working on a pilot through intensive behavioral intervention programs. Children with cerebral palsy and children with autism are very much the focus of this ministry, and in Calgary you may have heard as well of the programs in conductive education that parents have been pursuing as an alternative to look after children that are somewhat older. Simply put, the simple answer is that their survival is much longer.

The increase. There are about 70 children that are funded between about \$46,000 and \$60,000 per year. If I may, in just recently speaking to one of the CFSAs, I learned that they had spent a quarter of a million dollars on one child in one year because of the very definite service needs that were perceived to be provided better in the United States, in Colorado, a very special and particular program. So although I'm giving you an average, the range goes as high as \$250,000, which is a very significant expenditure for government in the life of that child and family. We hope and pray it makes an important difference.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you. My supplementary question is: why does handicapped children's services pay for intensive behavioral interventions, or IBIs, as they are called, and not for conductive education?

MS EVANS: The technology for conductive education has been deemed to be unproven. The Canadian physiotherapists have not sanctioned that program. We have had an assessment by a health review panel on that program – and hopefully by June we will have an answer – to determine whether or not this program is the best alternative.

There's a lot of work that has been done for children that have cerebral palsy. They have programs with dolphins in some places in North America. What it is is an extra stimulation of speech, occupational therapy. There's someone there moving their limbs, teaching them the basic skills of either putting on clothing or at least making themselves comfortable in their placement. I have visited the school and understood that it's certainly an intensive therapeutic

opportunity.

The other thing. If you meet parents and talk to people who are having the programs that we're working with in our pilot with the intensive behavioral intervention, you understand that 85 to 90 percent of those marriages don't survive, and it's because the respite isn't there and it is not easy for them to find people that will help them manage their concerns. So they become totally submerged in the unique problems of their family. Those things are causing us not only to fund the IBI but to look at parenting program funding support as well.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ms Olsen, followed by Mr. Cao.

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to the minister and her staff and the Auditor General, who's here with us regularly. I want to draw your attention to the department's annual report, and I'd like to talk a little bit about the risk assessment project. If you go to page 15 of the annual report, you identified the risk assessment project and that you were "reviewing methods used in other jurisdictions to determine and manage a child's risk within his/her situation." I'm just wanting to know what the results of that particular review were and where the department is headed now with this particular initiative.

MS EVANS: You know, yesterday in my comments in the House on risk assessment versus the assessment for safety, which is a more immediate thing – risk is anticipating a longer term – I indicated that between May and September of this year further work on that pilot would be announced and available.

The risk assessment comparisons and how we find them useful for how that actually operationalizes itself at the local level: I'll ask you, Paula, if you want to comment on the specific areas in that program.

MS TYLER: Certainly. Risk assessment is a particular tool that's been in development and been tried out across Canada specific to child welfare practice. It's designed to help a social worker in a situation with an individual child to assess whether or not there's an immediate or even medium-term risk of abuse or neglect. The results of risk assessment across Canada have been rather mixed. We're still sifting through the results and looking for the very best program.

We have come up with what we think is a workable program, and we think it has value, but we also know that it's not good enough to give social workers a tool. They have to have appropriate practice and judgment, which means we've got to include a training component and orientation and ongoing evaluation. What we're proposing – and the minister referred to a pilot in a particular area of the province where there is some willingness to do that and most are interested – is to try out a bit of a pilot there and then do an evaluation. It's a fairly expensive tool to implement. We want to make sure that we have the right technology, the right training for social workers, but it's also not a magic bullet. It never takes the place of good, professional judgment when it comes to dealing with children and families.

9:10

MS OLSEN: I guess I'm somewhat concerned, having worked a number of years as a frontline police officer and having worked with the children's risk response team and certainly having knowledge of how that process works. There are some tremendous social workers there making some decisions that I've felt were very astute. I guess my concern is that we often – and I say the big "we," the government and the public – go by trial-and-error disaster

management, and when we have a fatality of a child, all of a sudden now we've got to do something. We cannot afford to continue in that process. I guess I would anticipate that much sooner rather than much later – is that what I'm to understand? – we're going to have this particular assessment on-line. What's the benchmark, then, for that?

THE CHAIRMAN: Might I interject here a little? The committee will recall that we're supposed to be dealing with that which is contained in the volumes as published and not areas of new policy. The committee members know this, but perhaps the minister and her staff – it's up to you whether you go into new policy and new policy formation. I heard that a little earlier, but you needn't. You needn't for the benefit of this committee. We are studying the history and the outcome.

MS OLSEN: Well, I have a question that I'll get to then.

THE CHAIRMAN: Right. So you understood the area in question.

MS EVANS: Could I just interject here? I do agree with the hon. member that we have to do better. Part of what we're talking about is the standard now, that the training is up to speed. Part of it is my meeting and the meeting with the deputy and the colleges and the deans and the practitioners at colleges and universities and saying: it's not only training; it's being able to call on people or have them there and to regularly make sure that we're keeping people upgraded. It is periodic checks, like we do at day cares, to make sure that the practitioners are doing a good job.

It's interesting that one of the members of the group that is doing the caseload review identified that at the time that we were less involved in peer review of some of those crisis issues, the caseloads rose. So there are many factors that I think we'll discover even in the review of the caseloads and how we manage caseloads which will hopefully help us to identify if in our processes we are also putting children at risk because the checks and balances aren't there. I am very concerned about the staff retention, retaining good staff, making sure that we have child workers with the child and with the family that don't leave them at risk.

I think predominantly the short answer is with Children's Services: definitely carving out from the overall umbrella of social services a focus on children and very directed child care workers and, with what we heard the other day, which is admitted by the universities, less of an influence on the curriculum for social workers about children than there should be. In the past they dealt with society in general and not quite the specificity for children, and the emphasis on child protection, which is in our child welfare legislation. I think you'll see an evolution to yet a better system for preparing the staff to deal with it.

How do we measure that? Those measurements are the thrust of the focus that we have in our department this year in the performance measures so that they don't only meet the perspective of the Auditor General but satisfy us that we're not simply tracking deaths and trauma to children and families, that we have something that's meaningful that creates a safer environment for the children in Alberta.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Cao, followed by Ms Blakeman.

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Referring to page 17 in the annual report, I would like to ask the minister and her staff about child care subsidy. On page 17 of the annual report it talks about the reinvestment of the operating allowance into the child care subsidy program. While this is a new direction that has benefited parents

and guardians, the day care operators have been impacted by the loss of the government funding. Is the ministry looking at assisting day care operators for the elimination of the operating allowance?

MS EVANS: The change made, Mr. Chairman, by the hon. member that preceded me in this position was a very positive one in that it added dollars for families to attain proper child care. The average amount of subsidy to families is \$350 a month. It also, in fact, acknowledged an increased income level so that more lower income families could take advantage of the subsidy.

The negative is the interference that's implied with an operating subsidy to day care operators, because they are not compelled, then, to give that money back, and that is creating a problem. There's no assurance that if you provided an operating allowance, it would be there.

What we have done in the training of day care workers is that day care workers can apply to the colleges, and we will support their courses for level 1. So the basic orientation is there.

Mr. Chairman, although we are talking about the concerns of retaining good staff in day cares and we're training day care workers and child workers and home care workers, one would assume that because the wages have been lower in those areas than in other societal functions, there would be fewer applying. In fact, surprisingly enough, in the colleges they tell me, at Grant MacEwan and Mount Royal, those courses are more subscribed than ever and in fact are deemed the most popular course, which really would be a surprise given the nature of the wages. But we are looking at it. We plan to come to the standing policy committee and ultimately through the processes to this House with hopefully different solutions for the low wage situation for those child care workers.

MR. CAO: Thank you, Madam Minister.

My first supplementary question is this: has there been a subsequent caseload increase over the past few years due to this sort of change in the reinvestment?

MS EVANS: The average family size has increased about 2 percent for those that are receiving the child care subsidy. You hear me talk a lot about the fact that we're almost flat lining it in the province for population, but there are clearly more families and more children in those families receiving subsidies. The larger family units are benefiting from the program, and about 7 percent of those are receiving the maximum subsidy.

The portion of single-parent families, with apologies to all my single-parent friends who feel like I do – the times in life when they have been managing on their own have been extremely adequate, but the reality is that single-parent families are a large part of the subsidized caseload. About 82 percent of our caseload is single-parent families.

MR. CAO: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ms Blakeman, followed by Mr. Amery.

MS BLAKEMAN: Right. Thanks very much. I'll refer the minister and her staff to page 15 of the annual report. My question is: what was done during this year to specifically address the disparity in wages between the employees of the department performing X job and the employees of agents that were contracted by the government to provide services doing X job, the same job in other words? As far as I'm aware, in most cases the same qualifications, degrees or certificates, and experience were required in each job, yet there is a significant wage disparity, which continues to this day. Specifically I'm talking about what happened and what was done to address the

disparity in this fiscal year.

MS EVANS: In this particular fiscal year the government recognized that there was a disparity and committed over a three-year period to reduce that disparity with the very recent adjustments in salaries of about 4 percent. We are once again faced with the situation of a disparity with these child care workers. It is something where, with the CFSAs working with local contractors, hopefully there can be a bridging of that as the service provider is recognized.

9:20

There are other things, though, that we have to recognize in the system too. Many of those contract-managed services are services that local child and family service authorities are examining in terms of accountability. You can talk to foster care workers that sometimes wonder about the extent of our monitoring and evaluation of their homes and their families. So if perhaps there are ways we can find – and that would be one example – that we can be more efficient in the system without losing the protection and service to the child, perhaps there would be dollars available for supplement at a greater level for those people that are managing those contracts.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

As you know, we have about 3,000 workers that are in contract positions in the province. For me one of the challenges is that many of our government child care workers are moving to the area of student health or to work for the health authorities, and there again there's an escalation of wages. Sometimes, although the job description and grid placement for the experience and the training identifies a certain thing that should be uniform, we find that throughout Alberta there are many different wage scales that actually go along with that particular descriptor. So it is definitely a challenge, and it's a challenge for Children's Services, because we believe we've got some of the greater discrepancies to deal with in managing the issues.

MS BLAKEMAN: I'd like to pursue this a bit further. The minister says that this disparity was recognized in this year and a plan was put together, which, as we know now, didn't quite keep pace with things. But certainly the Auditor General has spoken a number of times over the years about the importance of training and recruitment for government employees. We know this is a real concern in this area, especially where we continue to contract nonprofit or private agencies in the community to deliver services that the government used to deliver.

So I'm probing to see whether there was any kind of recognition of a training component or recruitment or incentive or anything else outside of the wages in order to try and keep the balance between the wages and benefits that the government employees were able to achieve and the wages and benefits that the people employed by these other agencies were able to achieve. I think this is a real serious problem for us, and if you started a program in this fiscal year to deal with it, what else is part of that program?

MS EVANS: Well, I don't want to get into any more of the specifics of that, because, if we may, it's beyond the child care workers. We can give a written response. Did you want to provide anything further?

MS TYLER: I think maybe just to comment that in all of our contracts with private agencies there is always a component of training and staff development included. At this point we have not

looked as a ministry to necessarily enhance that, but certainly part of the funding that goes to the contractors does provide some of that as part of the contractual arrangement.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Amery.

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, everyone. I'd like to draw your attention to page 57 of the annual report under FCSS. I see that the program spending increased by about \$5 million from '97-98 to '98-99. I wonder if you could explain what this increase is related to.

MS EVANS: Yes. I recognize that the actual increase of 5.7 percent as compared to the estimated decrease of 2.9 is an apparent discrepancy. Let me be quite specific. The increased spending here relates to the rise in the child welfare caseload. We had 11,258 within the caseload in '97-98 compared to 12,021 in '98-99 with the cost of providing services to children at 20 and a half million dollars.

Over half of the children in child welfare, Mr. Chairman, are cared for outside their home, and providing for their needs can be expensive. The costs of caring for children also are going up, in part, too, because many have not simply one area of concern but a whole basket of issues that have to be dealt with.

The day care subsidy also added pressure due to the increased rates and the eligibility for the income rising, as I stated in a response to an earlier question, so that added \$2.1 million.

Other discrepancies here between the budget and the actual for '98-99 relate to a delay in the start-up of the child and family services authorities, which cost us an estimated million dollars, resulting in extension of the regional directors of planning, who are directors functioning under a director of child welfare within the department as opposed to the 18 CFSAs now having their own directors at a cost there of \$0.6 million.

Costs were also incurred for the purchase of the computers to assist the authorities, once they became operational, at about 1 and a half million dollars.

So those were all parts of it. Parts of it were mostly start-up and transition.

MR. AMERY: Thank you.

Madam Minister, do you think this program is adequately budgeted for and adequately funded to address the needs of those people who depend on it?

MS EVANS: You know, I would have to say that I think we need more resources or a reassignment of resources, but I'm reluctant to estimate or guesstimate until we've had this year of building the ministry and being able to see how we're spending the money and how the accountability flows. Many of the authorities are telling me that they are working remarkably well in finding ways to be cost-efficient and effective and provide, in fact, more funds for the child.

The Fort McMurray area, for example, makes sure that each child care worker understands the finances of what they actually are doing on-site in the menu they describe for children, and with that knowledge and awareness, they are able to track their costs more successfully. It's plans and initiatives like that at the local level that will ultimately help us decide if we're spending money in the right places.

It's my feeling, even with the release, hon. member, of the Task Force on Children at Risk, that if we really knew about the duplication in your city, for example, where I've been told that there's anywhere from 500 to 800 programs that may deliver as many as 22 services to one family with one child – if we understood the implications of duplication, where local authorities, be they

health, municipal, school, and children's authorities are all producing directors of caregivers, and if we could remove some of those inefficiencies, I think we would better serve not only the taxpayer of Alberta but get the money on the front line for the actual program that the child needs.

The other variable that's really affecting this ministry, quite frankly, is the rising cost of professionals in child care services. We get notices at the local level of a 50 percent increase being requested or demanded by some of the people that are professionals in support of children, and that variable, coming not in the neat sequence of a budget planning year, is one of the things that's really a hit below the belt for the children's authorities.

MR. AMERY: Thank you.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Ms Olsen.

MS OLSEN: Thank you. I'd like to draw the minister's attention to the Auditor General's report, pages 176 and 177. The Auditor General has made some comments. He has stated that they can't confirm the accuracy of \$36 million in child welfare contract costs allocated to the Calgary Rocky View region. I'm asking the minister if you can indicate what auditor monitoring systems were in place within the department in '98-99 to track contract performance expectations.

MS EVANS: Well, we take this recommendation very seriously, and the good news, Mr. Chairman, is that I think today the corrective action is as close to being complete as we would have hoped, although we can always improve.

I think for the specifics that you've asked, I'd ask Keray Henke if he wants to acknowledge and comment on what our response, prudently, should be on this issue.

MR. HENKE: Well, I think we need to clarify that the issue here, as I understand it – and correct me if I'm wrong, Mr. Valentine – is around allocation of cost. So it is not necessarily implying that there is a contractual or a management issue with the contract or that we are placing children at risk. We're not doing that at all, but there is a need to ensure – and we respect and recognize that – that the cost allocation must be appropriate so that we can do an effective job of matching input cost to outcomes and programs and be able to provide more accurate or adequate reports to this Assembly about the cost of programs.

9:30

MS OLSEN: Okay. My next question then. The Auditor General at the same time makes a comment that the authority has departed or deviated from generally accepted accounting principles. Are the steps that you've chosen to take going to correct that deviation?

MR. HENKE: I think we're going to be in a much better position with this year-end to record accurately the costs of providing services in Calgary Rocky View. There are certain issues that we have under discussion with the office of the Auditor General as a government around the interpretation and application of generally accepted accounting principles and the application of provincial policy. So I would hesitate to second-guess the Auditor's opinion on our current year's statements.

MS EVANS: If I may, I'd like to be really understanding of this issue, Mr. Chairman. If I could seek some clarification. When I was Minister of Municipal Affairs, I remember well the Auditor General's concerns about the dollars from the Alberta Social Housing Corporation that were flowing from us through to local

authorities to manage with various groups, nonprofit agencies, et cetera, and the tracking of those expenditures and how the accountability worked there. I'm really interested to know if that's part of the hon. member's intent here, to really decipher where those allocations or where those dollars expended, where we may not be adhering in her opinion to those principles.

MS OLSEN: Absolutely. That's in part what it is. Certain departments have histories, so here we are looking at another department where there's a deviation from something that we might consider the norm and certainly something that the Auditor General's office is using as an accepted accounting principle. I guess for my own purposes as a member of this committee it's important for me to understand what departments are or are not following the practices, and if those aren't considered by the department as best practices, why not?

MS EVANS: Mr. Chairman, I know that the Provincial Treasurer and the Auditor General had conversations about this. We will commit to giving a written response to this, but I want to underscore that I have no problem with the fact that the Auditor General has provided some very good standards for us to pursue in the development of these budgets with the CFSAs. My deputy minister will remember the day that she was accepting the position she was retained for. I identified that from my perspective the most important thrust in her leadership would be making sure that the business plan for the social plan that we deliver for children would be in order, and we are working to that end.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Maybe the Auditor General wants to make a comment here.

MR. VALENTINE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The paragraph which starts on page 176 and continues on 177 has two thoughts in it. The first one is to do with the allocation of service costs for child and family services activities within the Calgary Rocky View region and the methodology by which the costs were transferred from the department to the authority. When I say that we weren't able to confirm the accuracy of the child welfare contract costs in the amount of \$36 million, it means that we weren't able to determine that that was the proper number for the transfer from the department to the authority.

The second thought that comes in the paragraph is one that crosses most ministries and is best explained by the use of an example. For example, the costs of accommodations which are vested in the ministry of public works, now Infrastructure, are not allocated to the operating entities so that one can have a full picture of the costs of providing the service by the particular entity. In other words, what are the true output costs? Some of the inputs are missing, and that goes across a number of ministry financial statements, an issue which is under regular discussion and pursuit by both my staff and staff of the Treasury.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Does the minister or anybody from the minister's staff want to add anything on this matter?

MS EVANS: No. I think not at this time. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mrs. O'Neill, followed by Ms Blakeman, if she's back.

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Madam

Minister and staff and Mr. Auditor General and Lawrence. Madam Minister, I'll reference page 70 of the annual report, in specific program 3.2.8, the handicapped children services. I note on that line that there is a deficit of \$2.9 million, and I would ask if you could please provide us with a reason why that deficit is there.

MS EVANS: Simply put, the increased awareness in the communities with the child and family services authorities, the increased awareness of the service being provided – in actual fact it might surprise the hon. member to know that we have over 8,000 children that receive some support in varying amounts from handicapped children services. But the complexities and the increased awareness in the community is the paramount reason. We have adjusted this now to account for autistic children that are, as I identified earlier, on average very high cost children to serve, but as we become aware of options available for them and their families, those children, about 70 in all that are very high needs, are part of why we've noted an increase.

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you.

With respect to those who were currently receiving assistance for the services, did the child and family services then maintain that level of service for them, or was there an increase or a decrease?

MS EVANS: The funding has provided a set minimum spending for the handicapped children services and prevention of family violence in order to ensure that the service levels are maintained. If you meet families with that minimal amount that are receiving perhaps on the lower end of the spectrum, they're very anxious that those dollars be retained because of the respite and support. But each of the 18 authorities is also given a maximum spending level, and that's one of the things that will be a constant challenge as we identify new therapies, as parents come forward and we look at some of the additional costs surrounding certain programs for children.

Our job is to make sure that this money is not administratively consumed, but in actual fact it goes to the family. It becomes rigorous in the scrutiny of those programs because families have very definite and often individual ideas about what works well for their handicapped child. It's a very, very complex area and consumes a lot of energy at the local level to administer as well.

MS OLSEN: I'll draw your attention, Madam Minister, to page 14 of your annual report and the out-of-home care that "provides places for children to live if they need to be out of the family home while they receive protective services." I'm wondering what criteria was utilized by the department in the year we're discussing to place the 5,900 children into protective services outside the home. What was the criteria?

MS EVANS: Paula, would you like to comment on the criteria for the assignment of 5,934 children out of the home at that time, please?

9:40

MS TYLER: I'm not totally sure on the question, but I'll certainly take a try at it. Under the Child Welfare Act the matters to be considered in assessing whether a child is indeed at immediate risk are the primary drivers for determining whether a child needs to have placement out of the home. Those things certainly include physical risk and emotional abuse.

We have some situations as well, particularly with adolescent children, where there is such significant conflict within the home environment that the only solution, sometimes of a temporary nature,

hopefully, is to provide them with an alternative situation out of home, and for a very small number of children, as the minister indicated around children with disabilities, the families are in such terrible shape, in part due to the severity and the difficulty of the disability, that we provide children, almost in a compassionate way, with an out-of-home placement, again usually for a short period of time with an effort to get the children back into the family home.

The primary consideration of the Child Welfare Act is to maintain the family unit, but certainly there are a number of times that that is impossible, and then once children are in care, we look to providing them with a more permanent home.

I trust that answers the question, but I'm not sure that it does.

MS OLSEN: Sometimes the law is an ass, as we know, and often sending children back to the home creates more problems and, of course, creates an even greater dependence on the system.

I want to go back to the original question. What then, for clarification, is an out-of-home placement? Are we talking about foster homes? Are we talking about hotel rooms? The hotel room practice has been around for a long time, and I'd like to be convinced that that doesn't exist anymore. So what are the alternative solutions, then, that you're talking about?

MS EVANS: Paula, I'd like you to follow up. We have as many concerns as you do about hotel rooms. I think in the Ma'Mōwe region we finally got out of that practice, although if you ever get to brimming, to overflowing, you have to get over that. But, Paula, quite specifically to this generation, which certainly did have placements in hotels.

MS TYLER: Certainly the range of placements include those that you've mentioned. Primarily placements are in foster homes, and we have a very large number of dedicated foster families who provide alternate situations for children. We have group care situations that are usually used for adolescents who are not for various reasons comfortable in home situations, and we do have some more institutional facilities, such as our youth centres, that are designed for children who are in need of a very secure situation. The use of hotel rooms was certainly largely driven by the tremendous burgeoning increase of children coming into care at particular points.

In the Edmonton area, particularly specific to hotel room usage, that has been cut significantly too. I will not say that does not happen periodically, because it does. We are assured that when that does happen, it is for particular situations, usually children between the ages of 16 and 18 who have had significant life on the street and are very resistant to any sort of placement within a traditional family home, often for a very short period of time, and we're not aware of any that go over 20 days. These children are sometimes put in hotel rooms with one-on-one staff, particularly if their behaviours are problematic or they are having some difficulties coming off drugs and other dependencies.

MS EVANS: If I may add to that, I think one of the most unique challenges today in the system is that where we don't have sufficient foster families within the community or within the CFSA, there are intra-authority protocols that provide placements out in the country, which is satisfactory, indeed, for the child that often has been a challenge in our administration of the system.

[Mr. White in the chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ms Olsen.

MS OLSEN: All right. I have many more questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm sure we all do. Ms Forsyth has been waiting a long time. Ms Forsyth, please.

MRS. FORSYTH: Good morning, Madam Minister. I want to start off by saying that I think you're doing a good job in your ministry for a big problem, a huge problem. When dealing with children, it's always a very, very difficult thing, trying to keep up with their needs.

I'd like you to focus on page 70 if I can. Why are the programs 3.1.2, Child and Family Services Secretariat and transition, and 3.1.3, community service planning, on page 70, which I indicated, overexpended by \$987,000 and \$1.62 million respectively?

MS EVANS: Thank you very much. I hope I will give an adequate response to this. If not, certainly we can respond later. The secretariat and transition overexpenditure here was due to the increased number of public meetings provincially, meetings between corporate offices in the regions regarding the issues. If you'll remember, there was a period of time that preceded this with over 12,000 consultations, and there was a tremendous amount of work done on protocols, staff retention, with aboriginal services in anticipation of the authorities' delivery of service. There was also increased spending related to the board orientation costs, the workshops, the CEO position recruitment, the advertising costs that were there. In addition, the secretariat's office increased as the office became operational sooner than expected. So the original budget was only partial year operation.

Approximately a million of the overexpenditure for community service planning was due to the delay of the inception of the child and family service authorities becoming operational. A further \$600,000 related to increased board meetings, Mr. Chairman, and the extension of some of the regional directors' planning offices that were at the local level.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Madam Minister. I appreciate what you've said, and I understand what you're saying. What is duly important: I believe decisions should be made at the community level. I think the community knows best what's going on with the community. My follow-up question, then, on the increased spending in programs 3.1.2 and 3.1.3: are the 17 child and family service authorities ready to begin delivering the services?

MS EVANS: Yes, Mr. Chairman, indeed they are. It has, I think, been a tremendous effort at the local level. There have been challenges along the way in melding the groups. Some of the people were meeting each other for the first time, but I am very satisfied that they have met the accountability through the delivery of their business plans. Even this week I've been signing off on more business plans, and their level of sophistication and their understanding is very obvious. I would agree with the hon. member on the knowledge of the people at the local level and making sure they're hands-on in the priorities of the children in their communities.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ms Blakeman, followed by Mr. Cao.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thanks very much. This next series of questions is around the women's shelters. As a reference point, I believe they're described or discussed on page 19 of your report. My first question is: why in this fiscal year have women's shelters – in other

words, shelters for women who have been victims of domestic violence – continued to be housed under the category of children? I'm looking for an explanation of why the choice is made and, one presumes, continues to be made in this fiscal year to have women who have been victims of violence under children.

MS EVANS: Are you asking about the tracking of statistics, or are you inquiring about the placement of women's shelters within the context of the Children's Services ministry?

MS BLAKEMAN: Yup, the second.

MS EVANS: I think if you look at the logic of the family and community support services and the fact that about \$38 million is expended now in support of family and community support services, it's most of those 272 communities that house the FCSS that deal with some of the problems on the street where you live. The influences in the community, the influences to seniors, the parenting programs. When you look at the FCSS boards, they deal with a multiple range of community issues, not the least of which is the issue of women's shelters. In my home community the shelter may never have commenced operation or even had found any place at all if it hadn't been for the FCSS board that recognized the need for a refuge for women who need shelter. Because the FCSS program is part of this ministry, recognizing yet another outreach by government in partnership with communities, then the placement of FCSS with the child and family service authorities as two groups within communities that provide services is highly complementary.

9:50

I'd also remind the hon. member that more than the women in the women's shelter, the children that are housed with the women in the women's shelter often make the statistics look quite variable, because you cannot put a mother and a child in a room and then consume that extra bed with yet another mother who might find that situation awkward. You're trying to be respectful of their issues as well. So I think there's a lot of work still to be done to make sure the partnership and our support of women in shelters and children in shelters continues to improve.

But there is a logic. If you look at the fact that today the social needs of families and then our government's policy of early intervention are frequently met by yet the other group of family and community support services, I think there is a logic because those boards are predominantly the nonprofit co-ordinators and the local municipal outreach to the moms that need help. So there is a logic there that I do support.

I think at the very outset when you're defining a ministry, you might question, well, those are moms, but frequently they're moms and children, and there's much evidence of work that's been done with children in shelters to ensure that they recognize and understand the impact of that violent situation that brought them there and hopefully change the cycle of violence that might be generations long in that area. So Children's Services in co-operation with the shelters can do a lot to advocate in their placement in schools and to make sure they're safe and learn from the experiences provided there that they indeed can and deserve to be safe.

MS BLAKEMAN: I think we're going to continue to have a philosophical disagreement on that one, but moving on to my supplemental question. Page 19 references the shelter numbers but does not, I note, give the turn-away rates. I'm interested in this fiscal year in how many individuals and also what the cost to the department was for those people who were not served under the

numbers that are noted here; in other words, they were part of the turn-away rate. I would like to know how many were housed in hotels, so the total turn-away rate. How many were housed in hotels? In what other financial matters were these people assisted? Did they receive a coupon or a voucher of some sort? Did they receive emergency counseling in any way, and what was the cost of that to the department and other expenditures of the department to service those individuals who were turned away? At the end of that we should be left with the number of people who didn't get any of those services and either returned home or stayed with a friend or something.

That's a long list; I understand that. I'm perfectly willing to accept it in writing through the secretary of the committee.

MS EVANS: Mr. Chairman, just briefly, the Minister of Human Resources and Employment is the minister that provides income support to individuals, and it's within the context of that budget that we would discover or identify any costs where there was provision of alternative space. Nobody is turned away. They are given, to the best of my understanding, alternative placement opportunities. Many choose to ignore those. As the hon. member knows, we're not always successful in tracking those. We will liaise, for the hon. member's benefit, with the other ministry to determine what was available, what counseling was offered.

There is a significant difference in administration by local boards of, for example, the Safe house in Sherwood Park and WIN House. Some give monthly honoraria so that people can buy cigarettes or have pin money. Some give bus passes exclusively, with no additional moneys. Some of those boards make very determined choices themselves which are different than the support levels that are provided by government. But to the extent that government has provided additional support for any that may not have been accepted at the shelter and directed toward other accommodation, we will commit to working with our partner ministry in bringing those statistics forward in written form.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Cao, we are short of time. Do you wish to ask a short question?

MR. CAO: Not now. I can ask the minister.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, sir.

We have now concluded the questions, so we'd like to thank the minister and her staff for the diligence with which they pursued the answers to those questions. The subsequent information that you wish to provide in the way of writing: if you can do that through the secretary, we'd appreciate that. We can disseminate the information.

Members of the committee, two weeks hence, May 3, we have the Hon. Dr. Lyle Oberg, Minister of Learning, before us. We'll also at that time have the motion that was laid over, and I believe the secretary will be doing some writing to include it in our agenda package two weeks hence.

Any other further business? There being none, a motion for adjournment, please?

[The committee adjourned at 9:57 a.m.]

