

[Mr. MacDonald in the chair]

THE CHAIR: Good morning, everyone. I would like to call this meeting, please, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, to order. Could I have a member please approve the agenda?

MR. BRODA: So moved.

THE CHAIR: There are a few housekeeping items I would like to address before we welcome the hon. Mr. Hancock and the hon. Mrs. Heather Forsyth. If departmental staff wish to speak, they can go to the podium, please. Last week it was not necessary, but if you need to assist either minister at any time, please feel free to go to the podium. If not, if some of the staff would like to join the Auditor General, you can certainly join us at the table if you so wish. Before I go any further, behind us there is coffee, and there are some refreshments there as well. I believe some of you have already done so, but you're welcome to bring them in here. This committee room is not like the Legislative Assembly.

I would now like to again welcome both ministers. I appreciate, particularly, the hon. Justice minister. I realize he does part-time duty, moonlights over in the Legislative Assembly as Government House Leader. He was very busy last night, but he's made it here this morning, and I really appreciate that on behalf of the committee.

Mr. Hancock, Mrs. Forsyth, you have minutes for opening comments. Would one of you prefer to go first?

MR. HANCOCK: Well, certainly, Mr. Chairman. Thank you. It's a good opportunity to be here to speak to the annual report. I will make some opening comments and prepare to answer any questions. My colleague the hon. Solicitor General is here with me, although the annual report is last year's department annual report and, therefore, fell fully within the Justice ministry, for which I was responsible at the time. There are always, in my experience, questions about how we're doing things as we go forward, and I'm delighted to have Heather Forsyth with us so that she can assist with those questions and any questions that the committee might have.

We also have the Deputy Minister of Justice and Deputy Attorney General, Mr. Terry Matchett, to my right; the Deputy Solicitor General, Mr. Jim Nichols, to my left; the assistant deputy minister of strategic services for both ministries, Mr. Dan Mercer; and the senior financial officer for both ministries, Mr. Shawkat Sabur. Program heads in attendance are for Justice, Geoff Ho, here in acting capacity for Mr. Rod Wacowich, assistant deputy minister of court services; Ken Tjosvold, ADM, criminal justice; Peggy Hartman, ADM, legal services; and Manuel da Costa, executive director of maintenance enforcement. Program heads in attendance for the Solicitor General are Mr. Arnold Galet, ADM, correctional services, and Mr. Robert Dunster, ADM, public security.

A brief overview of overall expenditures. The authorized budget of \$421.4 million – boy, that sounds good compared to \$230 million – consisted of \$419.9 million in the approved business plan estimates and \$1.45 million in supplementary funding. Supplementary funding was allocated for two programs in correctional services: \$1 million for the Children's Forum initiatives, impacting children and youth in young offender centres, and \$0.45 million for contract equity funding for organizations providing contracted services to correction programs. Ministry management and staff were able to administer the funds provided to within .6 percent of the authorized operating and capital investment vote.

Statutory spending occurred in the following areas: \$22.4 million for motor vehicle accident claims fund. Claims from the fund were \$5.2 million less than the authorized budget. There was also \$2.3

million for valuation adjustments as a provision for estimated future payment, obligations for vacation pay, and vacation allowances.

Just a few words on each of the operations would probably assist members in understanding the financial information in the annual report. Information on programs administered by the former Justice department is found on pages 85 to 113 of the annual report, information on the victims of crime fund on pages 115 to 129. This fund is, obviously, now administered by the Solicitor General.

Program 1, ministry support services, provided various support functions to program areas of the ministry and includes nonlegal service areas such as business planning, performance measurement, information technology services, human resource programs, management information, financial administrative services, and communication media relations. Ministry support services program spending in 2000-2001 was \$11.4 million, which was less than the authorized budget by \$2.4 million, or 17.4 percent. Discretionary spending in this program was limited in 2000-2001 so that surplus funds would be able to offset essential overexpenditures by other program divisions.

Under program 2 our court services division provides administrative, planning, and technical support to all courts. There were four courts in the province, all constituted by provincial statute: Court of Queen's Bench, Court of Appeal, Surrogate Court, and Provincial Court. The department also maintains a registry for the Court of Appeal for the Northwest Territories. These courts maintain all court records and accept a wide variety of documents for filing from the public, lawyers, law enforcement agencies, and other government departments. Employees record all court proceedings, swear in witnesses and interpreters, mark and ensure the safekeeping of exhibits, process fines and other payments into court, perform searches, and provide general assistance to the public and lawyers. Court services also operate numerous law libraries, which provide legal information to judges, Crown prosecutors, defence counsel, and the public. Spending for 2000-2001 in this division totaled \$105.4 million, which exceeded the budgeted amount by \$1.8 million, or 1.7 percent.

Program 3 under legal services of the Legislative Counsel office, which drafts all government bills, regulations, and orders in council. In order to prepare and compose these documents, staff consult with ministers, deputy ministers, board chairmen, and senior government officials in all ministries and agencies of government.

The civil law division also in the same program is composed of three branches: civil law, constitutional and aboriginal law, and legal research and analysis. Civil law is responsible for providing legal advice and assistance to all government departments and for representing them in matters before the courts and various tribunals. The constitutional and aboriginal law branch provides specialized advice to the government concerning constitutional matters, and the primary responsibility of our legal research and analysis branch is to provide legislative policy advice.

Our criminal justice division also falls under program 3, and its principal function is the prosecution of all offences under the Criminal Code, the Young Offenders Act, and provincial statutes in all Alberta courts as well as the Supreme Court of Canada. Criminal justice is divided into three branches. Appeals and criminal law policies is responsible for criminal appeals to the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada. Special prosecutions is responsible for providing specialized prosecutorial services in areas such as organized crime, significant commercial or corporate crime, or crimes against government. The third branch, general prosecutions, is responsible for all other cases.

Maintenance enforcement is also included under program 3. This program's primary responsibility, as you well know, is to ensure that

court orders for child support and spousal maintenance are collected and paid to the appropriate individuals. Altogether actual spending in 2000-2001 for legal services programs was \$53.4 million, which exceeded the authorized budget by \$1.1 million, or 2.2 percent. This variance resulted primarily from a higher than expected requirement for legal services in criminal justice and increased systems costs in maintenance enforcement.

Program 4 is legal aid. Alberta Justice provides a grant to the Legal Aid Society so that low-income Albertans have access to legal services that they would otherwise not be able to acquire. In 2000-2001 the grant was \$22.5 million. The partnership between Legal Aid, the Law Society, and our ministry is committed to ensuring the most effective legal services at the most reasonable cost.

Program 5 refers to the Public Trustee's office, with three primary roles: trustee of the last resort for dependent adults, administering the estates of deceased persons who have no one else to administer their estate, and acting as the official guardian by protecting the assets and financial interests of missing persons and children under the age of 18. Actually, that should be, I think, the official trustee of those persons. In 2000-2001 the Public Trustee's office spent \$7.5 million, which was 3 percent over their budget.

Program 6 refers to the provincial medical examiner's office, whose job is to investigate all unexplained natural deaths and all unnatural deaths in Alberta. These investigations determine the identity of the deceased and the cause of death. The findings are used to settle estates or are used in court proceedings for both civil and criminal matters.

The Fatality Review Board reviews all accidental, unclassified, and undetermined deaths including any death involving a ward of the court, a person held in custody, or a person institutionalized under the Mental Health Act. Actual spending was \$4.6 million, which was 3.3 percent over budget.

8:45

Public security, program 7, is now part of the Solicitor General's ministry. The division is responsible for administering the Police Act. The act stipulates that "an adequate and effective level of policing [be] maintained throughout Alberta." To this end, public security manages the provincial police service agreement with the federal government for RCMP services. The total costs for provincial policing amounted to \$85.4 million, or approximately 84 percent of the total expenditures for the division. In addition to provincial policing, \$4.8 million was spent on First Nations policing during 2000-2001. Public security also delivers crime prevention initiatives including funding for community crime prevention projects throughout the province and within aboriginal communities. Spending on crime prevention programs totaled \$1.2 million in 2000-2001. The division also provides court and Legislature security and prisoner escort services and has responsibility for licensing and monitoring private investigators and security guards. As you will note, actual spending for program 7 was \$102.2 million, which was under budget by almost \$0.8 million, or less than 1 percent.

Correctional services, program 8, is now part of the Solicitor General's ministry as well. The division is responsible for administering judicial sanctions for adult and young offenders who are awaiting trial, are on probation or other forms of community disposition, or are sentenced to time in custody. Custodial services provided in remand adult and young offender correctional centres amounted to \$81.1 million, or approximately 72.5 percent of the division's expenditures. Custodial services are supplemented by a variety of community and custodial supervision programs for both adults and young offenders, which account for an additional \$16.2

million of the division's expenditures. Examples of these supervision programs include custody diversion, work programs and camps, probationary services, and group homes. The total actual spending for correctional services was \$111.8 million, which is under budget by \$2.5 million, or 2.2 percent.

As noted earlier, the victims of crime fund is now part of the Solicitor General's ministry as well. The fund's statement of operations on page 119 shows an increase in net assets of almost \$4.7 million in 2000-2001. The change in financial position reflects the continuing stabilization of fund operations from its inception in 1997-98.

Lastly, turning to the revenue schedule on page 80, the ministry's revenues in 2000-2001 totaled \$133.8 million, representing an increase of about \$16.6 million from the previous year. You'll also notice that there was a \$1.3 million increase in federal payments overall. This increase was primarily due to a \$2.6 million funding increase in the amended agreements for the young offenders program. The increase in this program offset a \$1.1 million reduction in payments for federal inmates serving time in Alberta's correctional institutions. Under our exchange of services agreement with Corrections Canada Alberta is reimbursed at a per diem rate for housing federal inmates in our provincial institutions.

Revenues from fees, permits, and licences of \$33.2 million for 2000-2001 were almost \$2 million lower than the previous year. This is primarily due to a reduction in Surrogate Court fees in compliance with the Supreme Court of Canada decision, the Eurig estate decision, and the recommendations of the Fees and Charges Review Committee as well as an accounting adjustment for the motor vehicle accident claims. Other revenue increased by almost \$17 million primarily due to increased revenues from provincial fine surcharges and a onetime pension plan transfer.

I'd like to take just a brief moment to make a note of the continuing role of the January 1999 Alberta summit on justice. The summit was held to build consensus on actions for improving public confidence and community participation in the justice system. Recommendations were provided on the following themes: improve public knowledge, education, and awareness; simplify the justice system; increase sensitivity and cultural awareness; enhance community partnerships; increase the role of victims and offenders; clarify accountability; act on previous studies and reports on justice; and increase funding.

After the summit we made a commitment to address virtually all of the recommendations in the immediate short or longer term. Our 2000-2001 spending reflects this commitment through expenditures such as community partnering initiatives including citizen advisory committees, youth justice committees, community and police-based victims' services programs, First Nations police services and First Nations crime prevention programs, emphasis on community services by offenders in correctional facilities, increased expenditures on legal aid, establishment of a Domestic Violence Court in Calgary, improvements to the courts including early case resolution units and judicial dispute resolution programs, initiation of a family law reform project, increased expenditures for victims' programs and services, new provincial crime prevention programs, and public security. Total spending on Justice programs: \$417.8 million, a \$40.4 million increase over the previous year.

The new departments of Solicitor General and Justice continue the commitment to key summit initiatives. Mr. Chairman, Alberta Justice undertook numerous successful initiatives in 2000-2001 as outlined in our annual report. I can say without hesitation that our success was due to the hard work and commitment of Alberta Justice staff. Staff achieved these results by astutely managing resources, identifying innovative saving opportunities, and streamlining

operations. As we move forward, the new departments of Solicitor General and Justice will continue with this strategy as it underscores both departments' commitment to provide Albertans with the most effective and cost-efficient services possible.

I would invite any comments and questions that members might have and would commit that if we can't give specific responses today, I'd be more than pleased to provide written responses as soon as possible.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Hancock. If you could provide those responses through the committee clerk, Corinne Dacyshyn, we would be very grateful.

Before we proceed with questions from the committee, I would ask now, please, that the committee introduce themselves for the convenience of those gathered, perhaps starting with Ms Blakeman, and, Mr. Hug, we could finish up with you and your staff from the Auditor General's office.

Thank you.

[Mrs. Ady, Ms Blakeman, Mr. Broda, Mr. Cao, Mr. Cenaiko, Ms DeLong, Mr. Goudreau, Mr. Lukaszuk, Mr. MacDonald, Mr. Marz, and Dr. Taft introduced themselves]

THE CHAIR: And this is Corinne, of course.

MR. HUG: Jim Hug, Acting Auditor General.

MR. PRADHAN: Karim Pradhan, audit principal of the Auditor General's office.

MR. SABUR: I'm Shawkat Sabur. I'm with the Department of Justice and the Solicitor General.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Thank you.

Now, Ms Blakeman, if you could lead us off, please, and you will be followed by Mr. Broda from Redwater. Thank you.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you. Thanks very much to both the Minister of Justice and the Solicitor General for coming before the committee this morning, and I also welcome the staff that have come with them and, of course, the Acting Auditor General and his staff. I appreciate that you're both here today, but I will point out once again that, in fact, I think we should have had the opportunity to examine each of you separately, but given that the report combined the two ministries at the time it was done, that's how we're dealing with it today.

My first question. I can refer you to page 185 of the Auditor General's report, and it's the most obvious question, I think, so I might as well put it up front and let you answer it. This is around fine collection, and the Auditor General has repeatedly raised this. Rather, to be specific, he raised it in the '94-95 report, again in the '99-2000 report, and in this report, which is 2000-2001. There is a problem with the department tracking their fine collections. Most of the about \$20 million in fine revenue and \$9 million in late payment penalties belong to the province, so we're looking at about \$29 million that we're not too sure about, and although there has been some progress in implementing this recommendation, the Auditor General points out that it has been unreasonably slow. My question to the minister on this: is this a matter of barriers that the department is struggling to overcome in order to be able to implement some rigorous tracking of the fine collection system or is it a matter of priorities, that this is slipping behind other higher priority items, and if so what are those?

MR. HANCOCK: Well, probably the realistic answer is both, but the reality was that until we were able to do the changes to our technology to combine the two previous technology systems, which didn't provide the opportunity to do it, into JOIN, which got started in about February of last year, we didn't have the real capacity to do that well. Now I believe we do have that capacity and have submitted, I believe to the Auditor General, some information for review to see whether they're satisfied that we're able to comply with that in the way that's expected. So I think that recommendation, hopefully, will not appear in the future.

8:55

MS BLAKEMAN: Okay. As a supplemental then: since this is an issue that has been raised repeatedly and does reflect on the performance of the department as a whole, I'm wondering whether it was considered or why it wasn't considered to have this issue of fine collections as part of a performance measurement.

MR. HANCOCK: Well, I think that when you measure the performance of the Department of Justice, now the Department of Justice and the Department of Solicitor General, one would look at trying to measure something which would deal with our outcomes, which is creating safer communities. A management issue with respect to how you administratively collect fines and whether you collect all of them is important and should be measured in the context of the department's internal operations, but in terms of the overall measurement of the performance of the department, I don't think it's a critical measure with respect to whether we're creating safe communities.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr. Broda, followed by Dr. Taft.

MR. BRODA: Thank you, Chair. My question under the Auditor's report is about awards handled by the Crimes Compensation Board. I don't have a page number for you; however, the Auditor General has raised concerns over the recording of liabilities for the victims of crime fund. What is the basis of the Auditor's concerns? I don't know which department may want to answer that. If the Auditor General wants to answer that.

MR. HUG: Yes, I'd be happy to. The concern is that although there is a part of a liability recorded for expected payments to the victims, the entire liability isn't there. If you were to project the estimated time of payment over the years for these victims, determine a present value for that liability, you would have a larger number than the number which presently appears in the financial statements. So because we believe that the liability is understated, we had to put a reservation of opinion into the financial statements.

MR. BRODA: Okay. My supplemental question would be to the ministry then. How does the ministry plan to address this concern?

MR. HANCOCK: Well, this I think falls into that category of a number of overarching concerns relative to accounting policy and when liabilities are booked. It's a larger issue that you find across departments and really is an issue for resolution I think between Treasury and the Auditor General as to how we consistently report these types of liabilities in our accounting practices. I think that would be fair to say, Mr. Auditor General.

MR. HUG: I can confirm that there is a meeting scheduled this afternoon between our office and some people in Finance to discuss

this issue and also a similar issue with respect to the motor vehicle accident claims.

MR. BRODA: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Broda.

Dr. Taft, followed by Mr. Marz.

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm not sure which minister or which staff this will go to. I'm on page 11 of the annual report of Alberta Justice, the Fatality Review Board. I notice the Fatality Review Board is responsible for reviewing deaths in a variety of situations, including wards of the government under the Child Welfare Act. I'm wondering: in the year in question how many deaths of wards of the government under the Child Welfare Act might have been investigated by the Fatality Review Board, and how well is the relationship between the board and the Children's Services agency working?

MR. HANCOCK: With respect to the number, I'll have to get back to you with the details on the numbers that were investigated. I'd be happy to do that.

With respect to the relationship, I can report that the relationship is excellent. In fact, over the past year we've been working together with Children's Services on the whole issue of investigation of deaths of children, the whole issue of incidence of suicide and other deaths of children and children in care, and working up a review of the process and a new protocol for investigation. Although the committee hasn't finished its work, the suggestion is that there be enhanced ability in the medical examiner's office. We will have to find resources to do that, but we've got an excellent working relationship. We've been working together with them since last year and, quite frankly, in doing that review, reviewed a report by one of your former colleagues in this area. So it's an exceptional relationship. It's, I think, working productively to create a better, more improved way of dealing with the deaths of children.

DR. TAFT: A supplemental then. Is that relationship primarily between Alberta Justice and the Department of Children's Services or primarily between Alberta Justice and the various children's authorities?

MR. HANCOCK: I would say at this date that it would be between the two departments. The medical examiner, of course, in terms of the work that he's mandated to do and the reports that he's mandated to give to the Fatality Review Board, would do that independently of any of those relationships. In terms of working together to improve the way we deal with issues of the deaths of children, we would be working with the Children's Services ministry.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr. Marz, followed again by Ms Blakeman.

MR. MARZ: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question deals with the financial statements in the Alberta Justice annual report. On page 105, court services, subprogram 2.1, program support shows an operating deficit of \$4.211 million within that subprogram. The program support services accounts for another \$3,394,000 of the deficit, the chief provincial judge's office for another \$707,000. What's the reason for these very significant deficits?

MR. HANCOCK: First and foremost, as I mentioned earlier, probably redoing our technology to put together CAP and CJIS, the

two previous technology systems, into a new and better technology system called JOIN, Justice on-line information network, I believe it stands for. So that was an additional cost. I think \$1.6 million of that was for the technology development project. The remainder in program support services was due to an additional expenditure on the digital court reporting equipment area, and about \$500,000 of it was in the Chief Judge's office due to increased use of supernumerary judges to cover average numbers and duration of Provincial Court judge vacancies. A small amount of that would have been because of the addition of professional allowances to the benefits package for Provincial Court judges. That was recommended by the year 2000 Judicial Compensation Commission, and the government agreed with that recommendation.

MR. MARZ: Okay. Thank you.

Under program supports, 2.1.4, capital projects, there's another deficit of \$327,000 and a \$314,000 surplus in the amortization of the capital. Could you explain the reasons for those variances?

9:05

MR. HANCOCK: The first, I guess, is due to an extension of the project, expanding the project slightly, which resulted in the extra \$327,000, and the surplus was due to a change, I gather, in accounting principles which allowed the amortization of that capital over 10 years instead of five years.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms Blakeman, followed by the Member for Calgary-Fort, Mr. Cao.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much. Well, the minister and I meet once a year in Public Accounts, and every year I ask the minister about the maintenance enforcement program, so here comes the question. I can refer him to pages 31 and 39 in the Justice annual report, and I have a couple of questions under this area. The report talks about an 80 percent collection rate. Now, in the past the department did not in fact have the ability to actually give a figure that showed the amount collected against the amount that was owed. In other words, we had case files which were shown as a positive collection if they'd only collected \$1.49 in a month. The minister had assured me in the past that this lack would be addressed, so I'm wondering if the department is now able to tell in this percentage how much they're collecting against how much is owed, and I'm including arrears in that. Are we really at a point in Alberta where 80 percent of any given monthly court order for maintenance enforcement and any outstanding arrears have in fact been collected?

MR. HANCOCK: I'm going to have to call on our director to let us know where exactly we're at. Because our technology is moving so quickly in maintenance enforcement now, I have no idea.

MR. DA COSTA: In regards to the technology, by the end of March 2004 we will be in a position to have all those calculations. Our system that we are redeveloping should be completed by then. In regards to the content, starting last year, we were able to go back into the system and do an accounting of what's owed in a given year, and that's how we receive the 80 percent factor. We've been collecting 80 percent of what is owed in a given year. It would include arrears if the arrears were mandated by the court to be collected.

MS BLAKEMAN: Okay. Well, I live in hope.

THE CHAIR: Excuse me, Ms Blakeman. Excuse, please, me for a

second. Could I please ask the director of the maintenance enforcement program to please introduce himself to the committee for the record?

MR. DA COSTA: Yes. Manuel da Costa.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much.
Continue.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you. I realize that 2004 may be considered a rapid advancement in this area. It's still not rapid enough for me, and if I can urge the department to move faster, I will.

My supplemental question on maintenance enforcement is around accomplishment of the recommendations that came forward in the maintenance enforcement review and two issues that I've been pursuing with you, computer technology and staffing and space. The last time I asked about computer technology, I was told that you were almost at the point of perhaps considering tendering for a computer. If I could get an update on that and, as well, whether you've got the full contingent of staff and whether you have expanded space for them to work in, in this fiscal year of course.

Thank you.

MR. HANCOCK: I'll ask the director to respond, but just as a general overview we have moved forward. The redevelopment of the technology is taking time. There were two reasons. One, you have to move carefully, but one of the primary ones, of course, is that we have to pay for it out of the budget years when dollars are available, so it's spread out over a period of time.

With respect to the technology, of course, there have been advances over the past years in terms of interactive telephone, giving account holders a PIN number so that they can access their data, access their account interactively. We've had the interactive web site up so that people can access their account in that manner. We've made provision for payment through automatic debit processes. So the technology has advanced on the collection side in significant numbers of ways, but there's still much more to be done.

MR. DA COSTA: On the overall system development, we did let out a contract, and the design phase of the new system is being completed right now. We will be reviewing that design shortly and moving on to the construction later this spring with a target of having it completed in March of 2004. It's a large system. It deals with people's lives for a whole generation, so we can't move into a system just overnight, plug it in, and have all the solutions. So we were quite happy with the progress on that.

As the minister mentioned, we have also upgraded considerably our telephony to be able to give access to our clients 24 hours a day and the same thing with access to their accounts through the web site and so forth. So we've done quite a bit, I consider, and I'm very pleased with those improvements in those areas as well as with the Help Us Find web site, which was done in that given year. So we have some of the technology that's leading across the country.

With regards to office space, we had a major expansion and redid about three-quarters of the floor on the seventh floor of the Brownlee Building, and presently we've acquired the remaining space, just two weeks ago, to complete that renovation during the spring. So with the office space there have been huge improvements, and the facility is much better.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thanks for the update.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr. Cao, followed by Dr. Taft.

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. First of all, I would like to say that I feel great that we have a very good justice system administered in Alberta. Law and order is maintained, and we feel safe in our homes and on the streets, and that's thanks to the two ministers and the department staff. My question is regarding the victims of crime fund. On page 119 in the statement of operations of the department I see that there is quite a change, especially that there is a net asset. So my question is: why this big change, and why do we have such a big net asset?

MR. HANCOCK: Well, the victims of crime fund, as committee members will know, receives revenue from provincial fine surcharges and federal statute offence surcharges, and it's expected to be self-funding. It fluctuates, of course, with the activity and the number of tickets issued, essentially, and, I guess, the number of fines that are levied in any year. So it'll fluctuate on that basis.

Of course, as the Solicitor General reminds me, there have been some changes to the Criminal Code which change the fine levels and what charges incur fines, et cetera. Provincial fine surcharge revenues increase with the increase in the volume of offences.

So those are the types of things which impact on the balance in the victims of crime fund.

MR. CAO: Regarding that, a supplemental question: could the minister elaborate on the activity in terms of the youth justice committees?

9:15

MR. HANCOCK: I don't think the youth justice committees come out of the victims of crime fund. I think they come out of, probably, the crime prevention side. We have a considerable number. Actually Alberta has been very successful in the development of a youth justice committee network. There are 83 youth justice committees in place, most of them active and operational, and under the new young offenders' process there'll be more opportunity for activity of committees like the youth justice committees and those sorts of committees. Any funding that goes to youth justice committees – and we don't provide them with a lot of funding – I believe comes from the crime prevention side of the budget.

MR. CAO: Well, I guess I see that on one side you have a big net asset and on the other side – the youth justice committees, that is – there is some need for expansion. So I'm trying to see whether we can or whether there's an attempt to.

MR. HANCOCK: I'm glad you asked that question, because I'm sure the Solicitor General would like to tell us about the review of the victims of crime fund and the opportunities that might avail themselves for you to make that type of representation to the review.

MRS. FORSYTH: Well, we've just launched a very comprehensive review. The department has determined that our number one priority is victims. I have asked the Member for Calgary-Shaw, who is going to be leading it, and am looking forward to her reviewing the victims of crime fund. So it's going to be very well done. She's going to be traveling the province starting, I believe, in April.

MR. CAO: Thank you.

MR. HANCOCK: If I may just add one of the things that has to be

taken into account. I mean, it's always nice, when you see a pot of money and you know you have needs, to wish to avail that pot of money to service those needs, but one of the prime *raison d'être* of the victims of crime fund is to compensate victims of crime, and that is a fluctuating thing. So you can't just assume that because there's an extra amount of money in that pot right now, it could be used for other programming, although I wouldn't want to prejudge the review, because there are many, many ways in which victims issues could be addressed, and I'm sure the review of the program will assist us in that regard.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Before we get to the question from Dr. Taft, I would like to remind all members that this room is quite small and it does not tolerate the same level of chatting noise that obviously a large room like the Legislative Assembly could. If members of the committee need to consult with one of their colleagues, if they could just go into the anteroom here, I think it would be beneficial for the entire committee, particularly those of us who are hard of hearing.

Now Dr. Taft.

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm interested in the discussion in the Auditor General's report on fines and costs, page 185. Not that I ever have to pay any fines or anything. I do notice that the department collects about \$100 million from about 1 million fines imposed each year. My question has to do with any evaluation or assessment of the effect of the fines on the people who pay them and on the nature of the people who pay them. I'm not sure what those different fines would be for, but presumably one purpose of a fine is to change behaviour. Another purpose is to collect \$100 million, I suppose, but the primary reason is to change behaviour. Does the department do any assessment or any research into who pays those fines? Is it the same 50,000 people year after year paying the fines? Are they widely distributed? Do people who pay fines tend to learn a lesson and not pay the following year, or are we just hitting people for \$100 million?

MR. HANCOCK: Well, that's a good question and one where I think I would like to refer you to, for example, the consultation which is beginning under the Traffic Safety Act, ready for the implementation of the Traffic Safety Act, where the Minister of Transportation just announced in February that they were going to do a review of the fines under there. A good portion of fines are relative to traffic issues in the province, and that's precisely the question that needs to be looked at. Obviously, they're intended to be both corrective and a deterrent, so we have to look at the sufficiency of them to see whether they're sufficient for their purpose.

There are areas that one might look at; for example, driving without insurance. I think the fine in that area now is \$1,500. There's some suggestion by MADD, for example, that some drivers who have bad records might take a chance and drive without insurance rather than buy insurance because the cost of insurance is higher and the risk of getting caught is too low. So we have to look at those sorts of fines and see whether or not we're accomplishing what we want to accomplish. The Minister of Transportation, in anticipation of your question, launched that review last month. That's one area that I think one could look at, but it's something that has to be done on an ongoing basis. The whole question of fines under the Petty Trespass Act has been raised with me in the past couple of months; for example, the fine of \$100. Well, a lot of landowners who find that hunters and others encroach on their property are not finding that the \$100 petty trespass fine is much of

a deterrent or very effective, and they're asking us to review that.

So, yes, one of the roles of our department is constantly to review our legislation to determine whether it's modern and effective and whether it's doing the job for which it was put in place. We co-operate with other departments of government who have provincial offences under their jurisdiction to review it, and of course we are constantly working with the federal government to make the criminal law more effective in terms of the sanctions that are provided under the criminal law, some of which are fines.

DR. TAFT: To carry that debate, though, beyond an impression or a passionately held position by, say, MADD or by farmers whose land is trespassed on and move it into more the realm of substantive evaluation and science, you'd want to know who's been paying those fines, maybe not by individual name but the nature of the people who are paying the fines. Are they paying them every year, or once they get fined a hundred bucks for hunting on somebody's land, do they stop? So my question would be: if we wanted that kind of information now from your department, are those trends – and I'm not looking for individuals – is that analysis available?

MR. HANCOCK: I'd have to say that while we have as part of our business plan the modernization of every statute which comes under our jurisdiction over the course of our business plans process and have a legislative plan in place to do that, in the course of reviewing each piece of legislation that we're responsible for, we of course would be looking at fines and penalties and those sorts of things to determine their effectiveness. As I mentioned, Transportation is doing the same, which is one of the primary ones in the area that you're talking about, but we don't have the database or technology which would allow us to do the finite, detailed research that you're talking about with respect to recidivism rates among petty trespassers. We can't even provide you with that significant of detail for recidivism rates on the criminal side, which we probably should be able to do, but we work co-operatively with CJIS, the criminal justice information system, which is a network of all justice departments and solicitor general departments across the country in terms of developing appropriate justice statistics. Sometimes it takes quite a period of time even to get a common definition with respect to something like recidivism.

So if you're looking for detail on recidivism down to traffic fines, that's way beyond where we're likely to be able to go anywhere in the near future, and I'm not sure it would be a useful application of resources. I mean, we have the motor vehicle registries which keep track of people's traffic infractions on their records. We have ways of, for example on a demerit system, removing people's licences if they've been too active in that area. We have a Driver Control Board, which reviews drivers' transcripts in those sorts of areas. But if you're asking throughout all of the areas where we have fines and penalties whether we could provide you with details as to the nature of the individuals who were constantly active in that area, I guess the answer would be no.

9:25

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MRS. ADY: I just want the hon. member to know that I got a ticket once and I learned my lesson.

I was going to ask a mold question, but I just couldn't find it in the book anywhere, so I won't ask the mold question today.

My question actually comes from the Alberta Justice annual report, page 106, 3.0.4, criminal justice division. I see in here that you overspent the budget by \$1.391 million, or 5.4 percent. Could

you tell me the principle reason for the overexpenditure? I'm not certain which minister this would go to, actually.

MR. HANCOCK: Again, criminal justice is an area where, while there's a steady stream of clientele, there is a bit of fluctuation in terms of the nature and extent and complexity, so we have, as you know, throughout the last year been studying workload and stress issues on the criminal justice side, and I think it's fair to say that our Crown prosecutors had a heavier workload and probably still have a heavier workload than anybody in Canada in their area, and there were significant work-related issues. So a good chunk of that money was for supplemental support in that area, bringing in additional people to cover workloads, those sorts of areas. Some of that might have been as a result of some salary increases that were necessary in that area, although the main bulk of that is coming in the annual report effective the end of this year.

Generally speaking, on the criminal justice side there's been a lot of work that we've had to do in terms of looking at the way we carry out the function in that area, how we staff it and resource it. There's a constant demand. I've got to say that the people in criminal justice are finding over the course of the last number of years an increasing complexity of the cases that they have to deal with in terms of the Charter challenge issues, in terms of the rules for disclosure that have been set down by the Supreme Court. There have been significant changes in that area driven by court decisions out of the Charter and rights issues. So there's a high degree of complexity there, and we've had to adapt to deal with that.

MRS. ADY: Well, further to that, I'm glad you brought up the Crown prosecutors, because I had several that visited with me, when I first came into office, that were feeling some stress. So my supplemental question would be: have you been able to take any steps to improve working conditions for Crown prosecutors?

MR. HANCOCK: Well, we're certainly in process. As you may recall, we did a study last year. We set up a committee with Crown prosecutors, actually with all legal service areas in the department. It was last May that I sat down with the president of the Crown Attorneys Association, and we discussed how we might deal with the issues, particularly on the Crown prosecutions side of things, and we agreed that we would put together a working group, bring in a consultant to work with them, because it's not simply a matter of – at least I didn't think it was simply a matter of adding more people and more money in terms of salaries. That was clearly an issue, but we really had to have a complete look at how we're doing business and whether there were better ways of doing business.

If I might say, one of the reasons for that was that while primarily the job of a Crown prosecutor is to prosecute crime, the vision of the department and the vision of government is to create safe communities, and sometimes simply prosecuting a crime to its fullest extent is not necessarily the most effective way to provide safe communities. Putting somebody in jail for 45 days might make the community safer for the 45 days that the person's in jail, but if you haven't dealt with the issues surrounding that – for example, it's a domestic violence issue. If the person has an anger management problem or a mental health problem, that has got to be dealt with or you're not really making the community safer. So part of our criminal prosecution side is empowering our prosecutors to look for the best result for the community in terms of creating a safer community rather than simply picking up the file and going to court and prosecuting to the fullest extent.

Now, that is a laudable objective, but it puts more work on the Crown prosecutor than to determine how they can best be more

effective. We have Crown prosecutors across the province – for example, the chief Crown prosecutor in Lethbridge, Robin Dann, has done a marvelous job of encouraging Crown prosecutors in that area to be involved in a local domestic violence initiative with other stakeholder groups in the community – people from the Solicitor General's side now in terms of parole and policing, people in the community in terms of mental health issues – all of which is to say that while we believe we're going in the right direction with respect to our mandate to help provide safer communities, we've made the life of a Crown prosecutor even more complex than it was before. So this committee was to look at what we were doing and to help determine whether or not we could deal with that.

Now, the committee came back and said: yes, we need to deal with all of those things, but before we deal with all of those things, you've got to pay Crown prosecutors more and you've got to hire more Crown prosecutors. So last fall we had a supplemental estimate of \$6.5 million, which was to enable us to hire 15 more prosecutors to bring the workloads down to a more reasonable level and to allow us to change the pay grid so that opportunities with the federal government or opportunities with other provinces or, quite frankly, in the private sector weren't so significantly more attractive that they couldn't afford to stay and work with us and do the good work that they're doing. So we've dealt with that in an initial way. We hope to continue because it's not a onetime thing. It's basically a three-year project to get things in line, but in the final analysis we'll end up with a Crown prosecution service which is fundamentally part of the communities in which they operate and live, and they'll be working with other stakeholders in the community to make sure that our ultimate goal of creating safe communities is the primary focus while they're prosecuting criminals to the fullest extent necessary.

There's a long answer to a short question.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms Blakeman, followed by Ms DeLong.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thanks. I'm staying on more or less the same topic, but I'll reference different pages, and I'm referencing in the Justice annual report pages 42 and 43. There have been some pains taken to outline how the department was achieving strategic objective 3, improving the courts, and it outlines a number of programs that were instituted during the fiscal year under examination. The seeds of the problem that we have experienced this year are unquestionably in the year that's under examination, and some of it has already been referenced by the minister; specifically, the issues with the Crown prosecutors that happened last fall resulting in more being hired, the number of vacancies on the bench, and the issues around courtroom space. The seeds of all of those issues, which are coming together and, I think, which the minister could agree are limiting improvement of the court system or limiting access to it, were in this fiscal year we're looking at. So my question is: was this not anticipated by the department, or was it a question of planning? How did this get away from you, or do you not consider that it got away from you?

MR. HANCOCK: No, I don't think it got away from us. You're dealing with essentially some management issues. One of the fundamental management issues – and this will be of interest, I think, to everybody in the current climate. We have a collective agreement with AUPE with respect to most of the employees in the department. Under that collective agreement there are categories for judicial clerks, for example, and there has been a constant concern – I don't know when it got started – about the classification of

judicial clerks and with the changing roles and functions, whether the classifications were changing appropriately. There were a number of issues there which needed resolution and which were difficult to resolve because they couldn't be resolved, as I understand it – and I'm no expert in this area – outside of the collective bargaining process. So last year the collective bargaining process not only in Justice but in a number of other areas in government where these sorts of anomalies existed finally dealt not completely but significantly with the issues for employee groups such as judicial clerks and administrative support, which make up quite a number of the employees in the Justice department. That in fact impacted on our budget – and we had a supplementary estimate of \$1.5 million just last week to cover some of the adjustments there – to the extent that we couldn't absorb them in this year's budget, but that was a fundamental change that was necessary. Quite frankly, we're still dealing with some of the issues in that area to make sure that our employees, who are fundamental to the success of the system, are appropriately compensated and within the context of a collective agreement – and I hate to talk about categorizing people – are appropriately categorized and compartmentalized, if you will. So that's really one of the fundamental bases of what we're talking about.

9:35

For example, you have in the past alluded to and in some of your comments today picked up on issues which are being driven out of the Calgary area, where the people are concerned about delays in the processing of divorces, desk divorces, or delays in filing materials, those sorts of things. Well, fundamentally, one of the problems is that one size doesn't fit all. Under the collective agreement one size does fit all. So we've got a situation where we've got a very good market economy in Calgary, paying fairly high wages, and we're unable to compete with the private sector for the people that we train very well in the public sector. So it's difficult to retain judicial clerks in that kind of an environment. Hopefully with the wage adjustments of last fall we will be able to compete better and will be able to recruit to those vacant positions and make sure that that is sustained. It is a problem and one which we will continue to have because we have unique employees and unique categories, and we need to be able to adjust.

I would just also add that we are in the department undergoing a renewal strategy where we're looking at court services, for example, but also other aspects of the department, as we did and are doing with the criminal prosecution side, to make sure that our resources are properly aligned in a modern context. We have a very interesting court structure, which has, for example, judicial clerks at the Provincial Court level, at the Court of Queen's Bench level, and at the Court of Appeal level and registries at all three levels. The significant volume of that is driven in Edmonton and Calgary, but we also have Provincial Court locations throughout the province and in fewer locations throughout the province Queen's Bench locations, where documents can be filed and where judicial clerks are present and those sorts of things. What we need to look at is whether in this and years going forward, we're properly aligning our services so that we can provide the best access to the public and make the best use of resources.

So we have the two issues that really come together this year. One is our ability to pay people so they'll stay and work with us and our ability to align resources and treat people fairly and equally with respect to where they are and what they're doing.

MS BLAKEMAN: Neatly done.

However, I was addressing things in a larger context. You've cut

off the piece that's talking specifically about the collective bargaining process and the employees that are involved in that, and I'm referencing a larger couple of issues around access to courts. Can I get you to expand a bit on this? I mean, did you not anticipate in your long-range planning that there would be continued problems with the Crown prosecutors, that you would have problems with court space and problems with vacancies on the bench? Was that planning not anticipated in the fiscal year we're looking at?

MR. HANCOCK: Oh, absolutely. We don't have a problem with vacancies on the bench. We have some vacancies, but we don't consider that to be a problem. We work with the bench, particularly the Provincial Court, where we make the appointments. We work with the bench and with the Chief Judge on an ongoing basis to make sure that he has the people he needs and that we are able to manage the resources for it. We've had some significant issues in that area over the last number of years with the Judicial Compensation Commission, both for the Provincial Court and for the justices of the peace. If there's one area that we didn't anticipate, I guess we didn't anticipate the significant increase in compensation to the justices of the peace nor, quite frankly, to the Provincial Court, but those have been managed in the process.

With respect to access to court issues, you've got to be aware that as we move forward, we're trying to develop a justice system where adjudication is not the preferred option, where people are moving more towards collaborative law, towards mediation, towards other processes. So we don't want to continue to build what I call the acute care side of the system, a very, very expensive system, necessary, very necessary, but the acute care side of the system. Where we really need to devote resources is to the wellness side of the system, the issues that will keep people out of the system, our diversion programs, for example, where people with mental health problems can be diverted to treatment rather than treated as criminals, where we deal with access to the courts on the youth side, where youth can be dealt with on a precourt process. So as a matter of planning you don't automatically fill all vacancies because they occur when you're trying to take work away from the courts by dealing within a precourt basis, which is better for the individuals involved in terms of their ability to resolve their problems themselves or their ability to get treatment for problems which are not necessarily criminal in nature even though they may have exhibited themselves in a criminal effect.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms DeLong, followed by Dr. Taft.

MS DeLONG: Thank you very much. If you would go to page 109 of the Alberta Justice annual report, at the bottom there, purchased community services, under community residential centres there was a surplus of approximately \$913,000. How did we end up with that surplus?

MR. HANCOCK: That would be a correctional item; right?

MS DeLONG: That's program 8, correctional services.

MR. HANCOCK: I'm sorry; can you give me the question again?

MS DeLONG: Okay. Page 109. It has to do with the community residential centres. There was a surplus of about \$913,000. How did we achieve this surplus?

MR. HANCOCK: The Solicitor General may want to supplement,

but it appears to me that federal legislative changes resulted in our not utilizing fully the community residential resources that we had anticipated using. Reduced offender accounts also resulted in lower use of community residential resources than were anticipated. We live in a constant environment of changes to the Criminal Code, many of which we advocate for.

MS DeLONG: There's also something there, line 8.4.2, native court workers. What's happening there? Again there's a surplus.

MR. HANCOCK: This is an area somewhat in transition, and the Solicitor General may want to deal with that. The native court costs were less than expected because program delivery changes that were anticipated didn't occur. The \$512,000 surplus for community service contracts is primarily due to lower costs for adult and youth offender community service and First Nations and Metis advisory committees. We've had a number of ways that we're trying to provide services in this particular area. It's still a major area of interest and concern. We do have an overrepresentation of aboriginal people in the justice system still. That's been extant for many, many years. We still have to find better ways to deal with that, but the native court workers program hasn't been universally embraced as being one of the best ways to deal with that.

The Solicitor General may want to expand.

MRS. FORSYTH: David has answered the questions. It was in transition last year. We're still moving ahead on it. I think it's a good program, and it allows the people that are in there to be dealt with. So we're still pushing on it.

MS DeLONG: Thanks very much.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Dr. Taft, followed by Mr. Cenaiko.

9:45

DR. TAFT: Thanks. Let's turn to page 28 of the Alberta Justice annual report. The bottom three paragraphs talk about public satisfaction with the level of policing. I'll give you a minute to get there. The question comes from an examination of the statistics here. If you look at the figures in the graph and so on, the overall level of satisfaction with policing in the province fell from an average of 84 percent a couple of years ago to 80 percent.

Sorry; do you want some more time?

MR. HANCOCK: No. I'm listening. I'm multitasking.

DR. TAFT: Multitasking. Okay.

So the level of satisfaction with policing fell over the last couple of years, but the report notes that the percentage of respondents who are very satisfied is increasing. In fact, it increased to 26 percent from 20 percent. So, logically, if the average fell and the percentage of people who are very satisfied rose, that means that the percentage of people who are rather dissatisfied must have increased to pull that average down even more than the effect of a higher percentage of satisfied people would have pulled it up. Are you following me?

MR. HANCOCK: Uh-huh.

DR. TAFT: Good. Okay. So what is happening that there presumably is a substantial increase in the number of people who are unhappy with policing?

MR. HANCOCK: Measuring public perception is always an inexact science in terms of being able to read what you want out of it, but it's a useful tool. I think you hit on an interesting way of analyzing the numbers, and I would respond in this way. In Alberta we've had a growing population. You might have read the papers the last couple of days indicating that Stats Canada shows that Alberta has grown by 10 percent over the last number of years. That growth has happened in a number of specific areas. If you want to look at Fort McMurray, at Brooks – the Grande Prairie area has had if not significant growth at least significant economic activity.

Over a number of years the policing contract that we had with the RCMP and the federal government did not allow for us to fully staff up under that contract. In other words, they could not provide the number of police that were necessary under the existing contract, much less expansion. Last year – I believe it was in the year that's covered by this report – the federal government finally put some resources into policing and, as a result of that, increased the pay scale for RCMP officers and also geared up the training facility in Regina so that they could actually produce additional RCMP officers. So we were able to finally get to a full staff complement, which was a complaint from many rural municipalities, that they didn't have the policing complement which they were supposed to have under the policing contract. As a result of the federal government finally coming to the table with their resources, we were forced to put in some additional money and got an extra \$16.5 million for policing to deal with that. I believe it was in this year, but it might have bridged one of these years.

Now, although I can't be exact in saying that that was one of the reasons why there was dissatisfaction with policing, I can tell you that in Fort McMurray, Brooks, and other areas of growth that didn't have the corresponding growth in their policing, there was some dissatisfaction with the level of policing.

The other area which I think you have to point to in terms of dissatisfaction – I would suggest that the statistics could equally be analyzed to show that those people who came into contact with the policing system were very satisfied. Those, I would suggest, who perhaps didn't come into contact with the policing system but read or heard about crime, for example, in parts of our community where some shootings occurred or where those sorts of issues happened, which happens, again, when you have a growing population and a continuing urbanization of the population – people become more afraid as a result of some of those crimes which are widely broadcast, which isn't to say that we shouldn't widely broadcast crimes. So it does deal with that polarizing of the statistics, I would suggest, where those people who understand and see the police operating and feel safe in their communities feel very confident that the police are doing a good job and that they were adequately policed. Those people who live in communities that have had a recent criminal incident which has been widely publicized or who live in urbanized areas that are growing rapidly and where the policing hasn't been growing to keep up with it are not as satisfied.

MRS. FORSYTH: If I may add on behalf of the Attorney General. He launched a major review of policing. I was on the committee, and when I got the ministry, I continued that. So we're doing a major review of policing in the province.

DR. TAFT: Okay. Well, just as a suggestion for next year's annual report, your discussion of statistics is reasonable, but it would be more informative if there was a more extensive presentation of the background numbers to that chart.

My supplemental could go in a number of ways. You raised the issue that has struck me, that so many of the performance goals here

deal with public perception of safety, which isn't the same thing as the actual number of crimes or the actual figure. Perceptions can be misleading. I look at the goals that Alberta Justice set for itself, and they don't have a goal in there, which I would have thought was pretty straightforward, of actually reducing crime rates, period. Why not? You don't have to go on at huge length, Mr. Hancock.

MR. HANCOCK: You ask me open-ended questions and then not want the full answer.

As a social scientist you may appreciate that the crime rate is a measure of crime based on how many charges are laid. That crime rate can go up if you crack down on drugs, so you'd have an increasing crime rate in the drug area if you're more effective at policing in the drug area. It's not necessarily, in my view, a wonderful indicator of how safe society is. It's really a more effective indicator of how police are doing their job. I would prefer to measure outcomes if we could, and I'm constantly on the lookout for and one of my missions in life is to develop another set of ways to measure how we do business, particularly on the social side of the agenda, where economic analysis and counting isn't always the best way to determine whether you're achieving.

So you do need to measure some of the societal outcomes by determining the perception of the public in terms of how well you're doing in terms of people feeling safe in their communities, people feeling that the police are doing a good job. But there's always room for improvement in developing social indicators and ways of measuring your performance based on the outcomes that we're trying to achieve rather than just measuring things. That's not to say that statistics like the crime rate are not valuable to look at, but if you're looking at the crime rate as a measure of how successful we are in lowering crime, I don't think the crime rate tells you that. The crime rate really just tells you how many criminals you've caught this year.

DR. TAFT: Well, we won't get into that discussion.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr. Cenaiko, please.

MR. CENAİKO: Thank you very much. I went through the report, and I'm not sure – maybe I missed it. I just wanted to know. There's no mention of volunteers that both ministries utilize throughout the province. I just wondered if you have the numbers of volunteers that are working in the communities with the policing agencies, with the Crown's offices throughout the province, and I thought it might be an idea – I didn't see it in here, and maybe I missed it – in the future to look at making some remark or statement regarding how valuable they are to both the ministries.

MR. HANCOCK: I would agree entirely with that, because volunteers or even in a broader context citizen participation in creating safe communities is fundamental. This isn't about the Department of Justice either federally or provincially coming in and making our communities a safe place. It's fundamentally a part of how we live in our communities and how we are citizens of our communities. We have a wonderful record of volunteer participation through at least 230 – and it's grown since then – different community participation organizations from police-based victims' services units to nonpolice victims' programs, youth justice committees, citizen advisory committees, First Nations crime prevention programs, a lot of areas.

9:55

With the crime prevention grants that are given out to community organizations like the Dickensfield group, which saw an issue in their community with respect to vandalism, with respect to incidents of what might be considered minor youth crime but are very unnerving and disrespectful in the community, the community comes together and puts together a group of people who says: we're not going to live like this; we're going to fix the broken windows. It's volunteer driven, and it has to be volunteer driven. We could not afford to nor would it be effective to put a policeman on every corner. Citizens participating in their community on Citizens on Patrol and other organizations – and I know that's of interest to the hon. chair because he was, while I was still the minister responsible for the Solicitor General side of the portfolio, wanting me to come along on a ride-along with Citizens on Patrol in his constituency.

That's a very, very important contribution to creating safe communities in our province, and you're right: that contribution should be measured or reported on and thanked in our annual report. I would take that as an advisement for the future. We report on the number of organizations, but that is a bare mask for the number of individuals in this province who contribute to making our communities a safer place.

MR. CENAİKO: My supplemental question sort of falls in line with that in that we have hundreds of volunteers that work in programs dealing with victim assistance. One of the notes in the report, on page 122, is on the victims of crime fund, where "the purpose of the Fund is to provide grants to victims' programs and to pay benefits to victims, or their dependants, who suffer injury or death as the result of a criminal offence." I guess my question is just for some clarification and maybe for the education of the MLAs that are in the room. In fact, for individuals that are victims of an offence under the provincial acts, are those funds available to them federally; for example, under the Highway Traffic Act and under the Criminal Code, hit-and-run under the Criminal Code versus hit-and-run under the Highway Traffic Act, or careless driving under the Highway Traffic Act versus dangerous driving under the Criminal Code? Those two offences go back and forth through the criminal justice system hand in hand when we look at laying charges and/or charges being reduced.

MR. HANCOCK: I guess I can't answer that definitively without checking and getting back to you, but essentially the victims of crime fund, as I understand it – Bob can answer that.

MR. DUNSTER: I'm Bob Dunster with the public security division. I'm responsible for the victims of crime fund, and as our minister mentioned, it's under review at the moment. The way that it's specified right at the moment, it's a Criminal Code matter in that jurisdiction. I know that from Mr. Cenaiko's comment there is a back and forth between those issues and probably will be considered at the review.

MR. CENAİKO: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, everyone. In light of the hour, I don't think we have an opportunity for any more questioning. It's quickly coming up to 10 o'clock.

MS BLAKEMAN: I just have a really short question that could be done in writing.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Yes. That's fine, Ms Blakeman. We were a

little late getting started, so if you could be brief, I would appreciate it.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thanks. For my question, given the hour, I'll ask if you wouldn't mind giving it in writing through the clerk. On page 15 you reference Internet-based crime. I'm wondering what was done in this fiscal year around planning or dealing with Internet-based crime. So don't answer it now. We'll take it in writing. That's what I'm interested in, what's happening around that.

Thanks.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you. We'll take that under advisement. I'd love to give you the answer now, but we don't have the time.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Mr. Hancock, if you could provide a written answer, again through the clerk, we would be very grateful.

At this time I would like to express on behalf of all members of the committee gratitude for you and Mrs. Forsyth and your staff for co-operating in coming here this morning. We appreciate that. I would also like to thank Mr. Hug and his associates for their time this morning as well.

Could I now have a motion to adjourn?

MR. HUTTON: So moved.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

I would like to remind all members of this committee that we're meeting again March 20, next Wednesday, with the Hon. Ron Stevens, Minister of Gaming. We will be in this room.

[The committee adjourned at 10 a.m.]

