



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 27th Legislature
Fifth Session

Standing Committee
on
Public Health and Safety

Department of Solicitor General and Public Security
Consideration of Main Estimates

Monday, March 5, 2012
6:30 p.m.

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The 27th Legislature
Fifth Session**

Standing Committee on Public Health and Safety

Fritz, Yvonne, Calgary-Cross (PC), Chair
Taft, Dr. Kevin, Edmonton-Riverview (AL), Deputy Chair

Bhardwaj, Naresh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (PC)
Blackett, Lindsay, Calgary-North West (PC)
DeLong, Alana, Calgary-Bow (PC)
Doerksen, Arno, Strathmore-Brooks (PC)
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Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)
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Department of Solicitor General and Public Security Participant

Hon. Jonathan Denis, QC Minister

Also in Attendance

MacDonald, Hugh, Edmonton-Gold Bar (AL)

Support Staff

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6:30 p.m.

Monday, March 5, 2012

[Mrs. Fritz in the chair]

**Department of Solicitor General and Public Security
Consideration of Main Estimates**

The Chair: Good evening, everyone. I'd like to welcome everyone to the committee meeting this evening. Tonight we have under consideration the estimates for the Solicitor General and Department of Public Security for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2013.

I'm going to remind members once again that these microphones are operated by *Hansard*. Please move the microphones closer to you so that they actually hear you clearly. Because they are not voice activated, we just need to catch the attention of the gentleman there for *Hansard*. If you are speaking into the mike, move them closer to you. Also, don't leave your BlackBerrys on the table because that interferes with the microphones.

I'm going to go around the table and ask people to introduce themselves. Also, Mr. Minister, if you would please introduce your staff when you're making your introductions. Thank you.

I'm going to begin with Mr. Bhardwaj. Actually, no. Kevin.

Dr. Taft: Thank you for remembering me. My name is Kevin Taft, MLA for Edmonton-Riverview, and I'm serving as deputy chair.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Good evening. Naresh Bhardwaj, MLA, Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Rogers: George Rogers, MLA, Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Mr. Rodney: Good evening. Dave Rodney, Calgary-Lougheed.

Mr. MacDonald: Good evening. Hugh MacDonald, Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Doerksen: Good evening. Arno Doerksen, Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Blackett: Good evening. Lindsay Blackett, Calgary-North West.

Ms Woo-Paw: Good evening. Teresa Woo-Paw, Calgary-Mackay.

Mr. Denis: I'm Jonathan Denis, Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security. To my left is Jim Bauer, ADM, corporate services. To my right is Jay Ramotar, Deputy Solicitor General and Deputy Minister of Public Security. Two to my right is Bill Meade, ADM, public security division.

Behind me is Bruce Anderson, ADM, correctional services division. I also have Lis Anne Sondergaard, my executive assistant, here. And last but not least, Dan Laville, my communications director.

The Chair: Dan, can you wave so that we can see where you are. Okay. Good. Thank you. Great.

Now, for the process this evening what I'm going to do is read into the record verbatim what the speaking order and time is. Government Motion 6 and Standing Order 59.01(4) prescribe the sequence as follows: the minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf may make opening comments not to exceed 10 minutes; for the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf may speak; for the next 20 minutes the members of the third party, if any, and the minister or the member of the Executive Council

acting on the minister's behalf may speak; for the next 20 minutes the members of the fourth party, if any, and the minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf may speak; for the next 20 minutes the members of any other opposition party represented in the Assembly or any independent members, if any, and the minister or the member of Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf may speak; and any member may speak thereafter.

Committee members, ministers, and other members who are not committee members may participate.

Department officials and members' staff may be present but may not address the committee.

Members may speak more than once; however, speaking time is limited to 10 minutes at a time.

A minister and a member may combine their time for a total of 20 minutes. Members are asked to advise the chair at the beginning of their speech if they plan to combine their time with the minister's time.

Three hours have been scheduled to consider the estimates of the Solicitor General and Department of Public Security. If debate is exhausted prior to three hours, the department's estimates are deemed to have been considered for the time allotted in the schedule and we will adjourn; otherwise, we will adjourn at 9:30 p.m.

Points of order will be dealt with as they arise, and the clock will continue to run.

The vote on the estimates is deferred until consideration of all department estimates has concluded and will occur in Committee of Supply on March 13, 2012, as per Government Motion 6.

Having said that, I'm going to ask Mrs. Forsyth to introduce herself for the record.

Mrs. Forsyth: Oh, hi. I'm Heather Forsyth, Calgary-Fish Creek.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Minister.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I do have some opening comments here. No one will accuse me of being a slow speaker, so I don't know if I'll use the 10 minutes in total.

Just to read into the record, in and of itself there has been some reorganization through my department, as there has been through a lot of ministries. I just wanted to highlight, first off, that my ministry is no longer responsible for the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission and its gaming programming. In addition, 410 enforcement officers and associated administrative staff from Transportation; Tourism, Parks and Recreation; and Sustainable Resource Development have been transferred to my ministry. This puts the government's enforcement functions under one roof so that they can work together to more easily enforce the laws of the province and increase the safety and security of all Albertans.

My department's mission is that Albertans have safe and secure communities in which to live, work, and raise their families. This is accomplished through effective law enforcement supporting crime prevention but also providing secure correctional facilities and providing assistance to victims of crime. This is what our business plan goals reflect, specifically. They include, without limitation, ensuring that Alberta has effective public security through leadership, oversight, collaboration, integration, and innovation; providing effective custody and community supervision through the application of best practices; ensuring that Alberta has safer communities through partnerships in crime prevention, offender rehabilitation, and community transition supports; and providing support to victims of crime and organiza-

tions that support victims of crime. You'll note that my ministry's business plan focuses on outcomes for the Albertans we serve and the goals that Albertans have said they want.

Now, we're here to discuss budgets, so I'm going to move over to financials. This year's program budget is \$772.2 million. In reviewing the budget, it is noteworthy to keep in mind the nature of my ministry's business, which, again, is to keep Albertans safe and secure in their communities, their roads, and provincial parks, meaning it's always human-power intensive. In fact, more than 80 per cent of our budget is directly or indirectly related to staffing. Any sort of wage increase, hiring, or vacancy directly impacts the ministry's bottom line. A significant part of this year's budget increase goes towards manpower – sorry; human power, to be more politically correct.

The 2011 AUPE settlement and other inflationary pressures such as Alberta's RCMP contract, cost increases, and general contract increases represent \$28.3 million. The rest are comprised of the following: \$14.1 million for amortization of the Alberta police integrated information initiative, or API3, to get it operational; \$13.1 million to fight organized crime through efforts of specialized integrated law enforcement teams; \$12.8 million to support the new Edmonton Remand Centre to make sure that it's up and running by April 2013; \$8.7 million for 30 new RCMP officers and 48 new sheriffs; \$6.7 million to implement the new RCMP contract; and \$6.3 million for other adjustments such as First Nations policing, the victims of crime fund, and additional staff required by the Calgary Remand Centre and the Lethbridge Correctional Centre.

Looking at the specific divisions in the ministry, Public Security is responsible for contract policing, police oversight, policing standards, organized and serious crime, the victims of crime fund and associated programs that support victims, and the sheriffs programs. The divisional budget is \$473.8 million, an increase of \$57.3 million. This increase supports police agencies and sheriffs in the work they do across the province.

In 2011 Alberta and the RCMP renewed their provincial police service agreement, PPSA, not to be confused with the Personal Property Security Act, which means that the RCMP will continue to be Alberta's provincial police force. This is the first time since 2008 that also under the budget we're adding new RCMP officers to the more than 1,500 officers already in Alberta communities serviced by the PPSA.

There is \$38 million for combating serious and organized crime through specialized integrated law enforcement teams across the province. As well, \$81 million is to provide support to municipalities for their policing cost through the municipal policing assistance grants and the new police officer grants for the 300 officers added since 2008 in our cities.

Madam Chair, our police funding not only keeps Albertans safe but also helps them feel safe. According to the 2011 survey of Albertans, more than 4 out of 5 Albertans are satisfied with policing in Alberta. I always think we can improve, but this is a pretty good place to improve from.

The sheriffs branch for 2012-13 is \$58.6 million. That includes \$4.6 million for 48 new sheriff positions as well as 32 of these being used to bolster security in Edmonton's and Calgary's Court of Queen's Bench and provincial courtrooms.

The public security division is also responsible for victims of crime programs and the victims of crime fund. This year's budget is \$29.4 million.

6:40

Another division is correctional services, which provides secure custody of the sentenced and remanded adults and young

offenders. This division also provides the court-ordered community supervision of charged and sentenced individuals. The 2012-2013 budget for this section is \$237.1 million. The increase includes \$12.8 million mainly for recruitment and training of 180 new staff in the new Edmonton Remand Centre. When it opens in April 2013, the 1,952-bed centre will help address adult inmate population pressures and reinforce our government's commitment to the safety and security of corrections staff and inmates. Also directly relating to staffing is the corrections budget increase of \$11.2 million to pay for the province-wide AUPE settlement. In addition to covering the costs for more correctional centre staff in Calgary and Lethbridge, the remaining \$4.3 million covers increased costs for the food and general contracts in our correctional centres.

Supporting the work of the two divisions is ministry support services. This division includes various corporate functions such as information technology, financial services, planning and policy development, and human resources. Their 2012 budget is \$32.4 million. More than two-thirds of this increase is needed because of the AUPE settlement and the transfer of enforcement officers and associated support staff to my ministry.

I want to also address the issue of impaired driving legislation. Headlines across the country have made it common knowledge that Alberta is getting tougher on crime, and that includes drunk driving. My ministry is working with Transportation and Justice and Attorney General as well as our law enforcement partners on implementing the new penalties for the improved drunk-driving law.

Another project my department continues to work on is the Alberta first responders communication system. This allows people to provide much more co-ordinated responses to emergencies and disasters than ever before. The radio system currently used by law enforcement and fire departments and emergency medical services does not enable these groups to talk to each other. This new integrated radio system solves that very problem. For example, a law enforcement officer in his or her cruiser could speak to a paramedic in his or her ambulance who could be in touch with a local fire department, all of whom are responding to the same situation. Municipalities will come onto the system when they are ready and able. Construction on this \$374 million project began a year ago. It is expected to be operational by 2014.

Work also continues on the Alberta police integrated information initiative, colloquially referred to API3. Budget 2012 includes \$3.2 million in operating and \$10.9 million in capital investment for this project. This system will ensure that police officers throughout the province can get accurate and timely information quickly and easily. It uses data that has already been collected and will have a series of checks and balances to ensure the appropriate level of information privacy. We're working with the Privacy Commissioner right now on this particular issue. Project completion is expected by the end of 2013.

Progress continues on the new facility in Fort Macleod, including completing the land transfer of the building site from the town and proceeding with the request for proposals for the facility's construction. Budget 2012 includes a \$19 million amount this year to build the facility with the remaining portion to be split over the two subsequent years. The total cost of the \$122.4 million amount is funded through the Alberta Infrastructure project. It is important to note that the training centre is part of something bigger than just a new facility. It is about ensuring that Alberta's police and peace officers and corrections staff get the consistent, integrated, and state-of-the-art training needed to provide effective and efficient law enforcement throughout their careers.

Madam Chair, in summary, Budget 2012 includes support to ensure safe and secure communities through our commitment to policing and law enforcement, through the delivery of effective correctional services, and through supporting programs to victims of crime. It's important to me, having been an officer of the court now for 11 years, that the public has confidence in the whole judicial system and also in law enforcement as a whole, commonly referred to in classrooms as the tertiary review of justice. It is very important that people feel safe in our province, and it's also important to building new communities. And when people feel safe and they're building a community, it's important to know that economic development often comes from that as well. It's all part of the Premier's safe communities initiative.

The committee's continued support will help ensure that my ministry delivers on its mandate to promote these goals, to promote safe and secure communities, and to keep crime down so that Albertans feel safe in all four corners of this province. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Now I'd like to invite Mr. Hugh MacDonald, a member of the Official Opposition, to engage in a discussion with you, Minister. Mr. MacDonald, will you be combining your time through this discussion with the minister tonight for the next hour?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you. Go ahead.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Madam Chairperson. My first question would be on page 74 of the business plan for 2012-15. In the statement of operations summarized here, the expense for correctional services two years ago was settled at \$200 million; for 2011-12, one year later, it was forecast to be \$212 million; this year's estimate is \$237 million; and then it goes up again as a target by an additional \$20 million. Is this increase in the expense for correctional services reflected at all in the federal government's initiative with their crime legislation?

Mr. Denis: No. I'll be brief in my response, Member. We've indicated that we are supportive of many of the underpinnings, the initiatives under Bill C-10, but we have not yet had a conversation with the federal government as to cost. I was recently at our federal-provincial-territorial meeting in Charlottetown. I think you may be familiar with that area of the country. We did discuss this. There's nothing concrete, and nothing in the budget at this juncture reflects that particular amount.

Mr. MacDonald: So of the total estimate here, excluding capital of \$725 million, there is not a penny that is dedicated to what the federal government may do through that legislation.

Mr. Denis: No. That's correct, actually. There is no money allocated at this juncture to deal with Bill C-10. The increase in the amount is primarily due to the AUPE settlement, as I mentioned in my preamble, and the additional cost to open the Edmonton Remand Centre. At some point we will have that discussion with the federal government, but that has not yet happened.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. Before I move on, I have one more question for you, sir, regarding the federal initiative. I noticed that Alberta Health and Wellness now has a dedicated line item for resources that are devoted to inmates or individuals in correctional facilities. There is no way in your budget to determine in a line

item how much or if any money is dedicated to corrections services for health care?

Mr. Denis: I follow your comment, but is there a question that you're driving to? I just want to make sure that I understand your comment.

Mr. MacDonald: If I compare your budget to last year's, 2010-11, year-end of March 31 Health and Wellness budget, I see that there is a dedicated line item for money spent providing health services to those who are incarcerated. The \$725 million that is in your budget: is there any tracking of how much money is spent in that way?

Mr. Denis: Yes. I understand your question now, and I apologize. On the topic of the health transfer there was \$14.1 million that was transferred to Alberta Health and Wellness effective April 1, 2010. The rationale behind this was because there was a high prevalence of infectious diseases, mental health, and addiction issues in the inmate population, so we felt that there was a need to significantly strengthen the provision of these services in these areas to improve health outcomes for inmates. Does that answer your question?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. That's helpful. Thank you.

Now, in your opening comments you talked about, you know, some functions that were leaving your department, including the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission, and you got fish and wildlife enforcement, commercial vehicle enforcement, and parks conservation enforcement, an increase of about \$45 million. Is that correct?

Mr. Denis: That's roughly correct, yes.

Mr. MacDonald: And they came from Sustainable Resource Development?

Mr. Denis: Those particular items, yes. Basically, you have all of the enforcement under one branch, and the AGLC, the acronym that you quoted, has moved over to Finance because it has a financial element.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. With these three elements here, whether it's fish and wildlife or parks conservation or commercial vehicle enforcement, whenever those officers or those individual departments detect or find that a law has been broken, could you walk me through the process? Do they then have to present their case to Alberta Justice to see if there is going to be a follow-up through the court system when a law is broken?

Mr. Denis: It's typically the same thing as it would be for a traffic ticket, the same type of infraction, unless you're dealing with a specific criminal infraction, and then of course that's at the election of the Crown. I'll leave it up to the Justice minister to comment on that specifically.

6:50

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. We were quite surprised, when your colleague the Minister of Justice was here, to learn just exactly the total amount of resources in the department that's used, for instance, to pursue drunk-driving charges and some other traffic violations. You don't track that? Your department doesn't track that?

Mr. Denis: No, we don't track drunk-driving violations at this juncture. That's a Justice issue, and of course it's at the election of

the Crown whether and how they proceed. As I'm sure you're aware, the Minister of Justice himself doesn't make that direction. It's the Crown as independent.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. Now, you talked about the new remand centre that's going to be located on the north side of Edmonton. The budget increases that I see here for court security and prisoner transport went up from two years ago, from \$32 million to close to \$40 million. Given that the courthouse is located in downtown Edmonton and the new facility is, I think, eight kilometres away . . .

Mr. Denis: I'll take your word for it. I haven't driven it.

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah. It's a fair distance. Is that the reason we're seeing this increase in this specific budget, in element 2.13, sheriffs court security and prisoner transport?

Mr. Denis: Just give me one quick second, please.

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah.

Mr. Denis: That primarily relates to the additional sheriffs that I had mentioned as well. The courthouse security is remaining constant. I could go into detail with how the courthouse security works with the sheriffs, but I don't think that's where your question is, and I don't want to waste your time.

Mr. MacDonald: No. But while we're on the subject of sheriffs and courthouses, I was certainly made aware of the unfortunate incident that happened in Red Deer after Christmas, and I think, sir, that you did the right thing.

Mr. Denis: I'll take that. Thank you.

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah. That will get to my next question. How are you recruiting these sheriffs, and how are they trained?

Mr. Denis: I'm just getting some information here, but I just wanted to mention as well that the particular case in Red Deer that you're talking about was very unfortunate. The gentleman is no longer a peace officer and is no longer employed. We've all seen the video, a very unfortunate incident. I'm happy that the individual who was removed was not more seriously injured. I'm happy that he is all right.

I'll tell you what. I'll undertake to get you some specific information at a subsequent juncture if that's okay.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. Now, I have another question about traffic sheriffs. Two years ago we were spending roughly \$8 million on the program. It's gone up to close to \$10 million. How many traffic sheriffs are employed in that element, 2.14?

Mr. Denis: One hundred and ten.

Mr. MacDonald: One hundred and ten.

How much revenue do they generate by writing tickets for individuals who violate the traffic laws?

Mr. Denis: We don't specifically track that amount. If you're asking if I've ever had a ticket from a sheriff, the answer is no.

Mr. MacDonald: So there's no indication in the department, there is no data on just exactly what these 110 individuals would do in the run of the year? There is no count on the number of tickets that are written and the value of those tickets?

Mr. Denis: That's not tracked. Also, there is not a quota in particular. We expect the sheriffs to enforce the law to everybody equally, and if there are no offenders, that's great.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, I'm glad to hear that there is not a quota, but at the same time I'm surprised to hear that there is no tracking of their activities and the revenue that is generated from those activities because there are those in Edmonton, certainly, who would complain about some of the activities.

Mr. Denis: Tickets?

Mr. MacDonald: About speeding tickets in particular, yes, and about where it occurs. It's usually the same spot all the time, you know. I guess a bear will go back to the same source of food if it's . . .

Mr. Denis: Similarly, I don't make the directions as to where they should go. We don't live in a police state here.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. Now, budget item 2.11, organized and serious crime. The actual two years ago was \$28 million, the forecast was to go down a little bit for 2011-12, and then this year it is going up to \$38 million. Could you explain this element to me, please, organized and serious crime, and why it's necessary to increase the budget at this time from the \$25 million forecast last year to \$38 million?

Mr. Denis: Okay. I'm going to get into some specific information, but just from a policy standpoint I'll answer your question. You can stop me if it's not exactly what you're looking for. Under this amount, actually, is a group called ALERT, which is the Alberta law enforcement response team. Recognize that crime doesn't stop at Edmonton-Gold Bar. Crime also doesn't stop at Calgary-Egmont. It's becoming more integrated throughout the four corners of the province. Under this group we have things like ICE, which is the integrated child exploitation team, which tracks child predators specifically online.

I have some more specific information for you as well. There are 411 police officers and support positions here. As I mentioned, there are 324 ALERT positions. That includes 62 sheriffs. Since '06 ALERT has arrested about 4,500 people, laid about 12,000 charges, and seized about 400 firearms. In 2010-2011 ALERT took about \$115 million worth of illegal drugs off Alberta streets.

Does that answer your question?

Mr. MacDonald: In a way it does, but I'm looking at your actual from last year. The actual expense was \$28.2 million, and that was overexpended. As you explain the program, I can understand why it may be overextended by \$3.1 million. If you were to add that to what you spent last year, the overexpended amount, you would be in the range of \$32 million. What is the reason you would need to increase it by this additional \$6 million? Is the program expanding? What's with this budget request, please?

Mr. Denis: As I mentioned, just as part of ALERT we find that throughout the four corners of the province we're having more and more issues with organized crime. We are laying a significant amount of charges under ALERT. We want to be able to keep up with what is, fortunately I guess, a growing population, but along with a growing population you have a growing amount of offences as well. The funding has been increased to maintain the correct levels of ALERT, that has actually depleted its accumulated surplus over time as well.

Mr. MacDonald: How much of this money, if any, in this element to fight organized and serious crime is used to monitor money laundering that occurs at our casinos and our gambling facilities?

Mr. Denis: As I mentioned, this department is no longer responsible for AGLC.

Mr. MacDonald: I realize that, but you are monitoring lots of things, including organized and serious crime, and money laundering is a very serious crime.

Mr. Denis: I agree with you that money laundering is a very serious crime, but at the same time it also falls under a federal component. Of course, where a person reasonably believes that there could be something untoward either at a bank or, as you mentioned, at a particular casino – my understanding is that AGLC does follow up with casinos on a regular basis. Like, if someone is coming in with \$9,000 on each of five days – I've never done that myself, for the record – that is something that's largely monitored by the AGLC and the local police.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. So the Solicitor General's department has no interest at this time in whether or not a group, a gang, or an individual drug dealer comes into the casino with a lot of cash and wants to shift it around.

Mr. Denis: Well, I didn't say "no interest." But, in particular, with the licensing portion of the AGLC, my understanding is that if, for example, I were running a casino – let's say that you and I were the partners in the casino and somebody comes in. We can have our licence pulled if we actually don't report this. As well, I'm also advised that the RCMP's commercial crime unit does focus on this directly.

I would share your concern. I do think that money laundering/proceeds of crime legislation is one of the biggest hammers against organized crime.

7:00

Mr. MacDonald: I would agree with you, yes.

Now, element 2.7, law enforcement standards and audits. Could you explain this element under public security in a little bit more detail for me, please?

Mr. Denis: Just give me one second, please.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. It's 2.7.

Mr. Denis: Again, just stop me if I'm going off on a tangent here. This program development covers the law enforcement standards and audits section, and it works with the police services from municipal, provincial, and other stakeholders to draft standards of practice, offer advice and assistance, ensure compliance with standards, and manage existing legislation. The legislation includes the Police Act, the Peace Officer Act, and the Security Services and Investigators Act. It provides oversight to the peace officer program and to the security investigator industry.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. If you can forgive me for a second, I've got to make sure that I'm on the right line item in your budget.

Mr. Denis: You've been forgiving to me; I'll do the same for you.

Mr. MacDonald: There's a little bit of a difference in the elements in the amount of money that is reflected in the columns to the right. In the law enforcement standards and audits in 2010-11 the actual amount was indicated to be \$2,049,000, and of that

amount \$400,000 went unexpended. So now in this year's budget, which is going to be reflecting two years into the future, we're looking at an amount here, a request for \$3.1 million give or take. Why is this 30 per cent increase over a two-year period necessary?

Mr. Denis: I'm just going to give you a bit of a breakdown first if I may.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. Sure.

Mr. Denis: Two point six million dollars in human power funding supports 26 FTEs that provide support for adequate and effective policing, as I mentioned. The remaining \$0.6 million – that's why I said give or take to your earlier comment – is in supplies and services that include expenses such as travel, contracts, services, materials, and supplies. I'll get you some further information here if you'll bear with me for a quick second.

Mr. MacDonald: Sure.

Mr. Denis: The 8.8 per cent increase vis-à-vis last year's amount – I'm sorry; I don't have two or three years back – relates primarily to the AUPE settlement.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. So this is just contractual wage settlement.

Mr. Denis: That's correct.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. Now, if we could move up to ministry support services, I was looking at this program last night, and I must admit I was confused. Maybe you can clarify this for me. In your 2010-11 annual report from March 31, 2011, information technology operating expense is indicated to be \$22.5 million. That's the actual for operating expense. It was an amount that was overexpended by \$10.4 million. First off, why in this budget document would you have the information technology budget for 2010-11 to be \$12.9 million, which is significantly less than the \$22.5 million that is noted in the annual report for the same year?

Mr. Denis: I'll tell you what. It seems to me that this is more of a Public Accounts type of question, but I will take this away and get you some more information as well.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, I don't think it's a Public Accounts type of question.

Mr. Denis: I mean no disrespect.

Mr. MacDonald: It's noted in your program here. You do have an amount for 2010-11 actual so that taxpayers can compare what we spent two years ago in estimates to what we're spending now. I don't know if it's related to the Alberta first responders radio communications system.

Mr. Denis: This is a very detailed question, and I will undertake to get some more information if you'll accept that, please.

Mr. MacDonald: Fair enough.

In writing, Madam Chair?

Mr. Denis: Yeah. You and I have two take-aways now.

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah. Okay. I'll wait and get the answer from you.

Now, we have to have a look at your communications budget. You introduced a gentleman back there as the chief of communications.

Mr. Denis: Director of communications, actually.

Mr. MacDonald: Director. Okay.

In 2010-11 the actual amount spent on communications was \$522,000, and you had an unexpended amount of \$73,000, so I guess you did a lot less press releases, or the Public Affairs Bureau wrote them for you; I don't know. But you're increasing the budget here to \$710,000. Why is it necessary? In light of the fact that last year you had this unexpended amount, why would you need to increase the budget to \$710,000?

Mr. Denis: There are two items. First of all, there's the AUPE issue that would apply, but we also had a significant amount of additional communications within the last year. I'll give you a breakdown as well. There's \$0.6 million to fund the seven FTEs and also \$0.1 million for supplies and services.

Mr. MacDonald: Is the Solicitor General's department the only department of the government where its key communications team is involved with the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees? I didn't realize that your communications team would be involved with AUPE. I thought they were – what are they called? – senior management opted out or something.

Mr. Denis: They receive, actually, the same amount as what the AUPE settlement would be, an amount commensurate through that. And it's throughout the government; it's not just my own department.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. Well, I think it's very unfair, you know, to compare them to the AUPE settlement when they're opted-out management or whatever they are, whatever they're considered in the public service.

Mr. Denis: That's your opinion.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. And I'm going to hold to it.

So all of this increase is just to adjust salary; it's not to increase the number of staff?

Mr. Denis: No. The amount of staff is the same, actually, as the previous minister had as well.

Mr. MacDonald: How much of your communications work do you send over to the Public Affairs Bureau?

Mr. Denis: I don't know specifically what you are asking for. The director of communications that I have is a member of the Public Affairs Bureau if that's what you're asking.

Mr. MacDonald: No. I'm asking if any of the communications work in the course of this year will be done over at the Public Affairs Bureau and not in your office.

Mr. Denis: No.

Mr. MacDonald: No?

Mr. Denis: Not to my knowledge.

Mr. MacDonald: Not to your knowledge. Okay.

Your corporate services budget now. We see that increasing as well and – surprise, surprise – you were, I think, very diligent and resourceful last year where the . . .

Mr. Denis: Say that to the previous minister.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, you're in charge. You're responsible for the good and the bad.

Mr. Denis: Yeah. I just want to give credit where it's due.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Now the actual expenses last year. The operating expense for corporate services was \$8.1 million, and there was an unexpended amount of \$1.1 million. Why, then, would it be necessary in the budget 2012-13 for you to increase this amount by over \$2 million? Whenever you were putting it back, hopefully, you were giving that money back to Mr. Snelgrove so that he could put it in general revenue.

Mr. Denis: No. Actually, I would be giving it back to Mr. Liepert.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. But in the former year, that I'm referring to, it would have been Mr. Snelgrove's command.

Mr. Denis: Correct.

There were a number of staffing vacancies in that particular department that have since been filled.

Mr. MacDonald: How many vacancies?

Mr. Denis: I'll take that away. I'll get you further information on how many vacancies there were that were filled.

7:10

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. What exactly has changed in your count for your – I thought the increase in manpower was just in sheriffs and in officers to protect citizens.

Mr. Denis: Sheriffs and RCMP. In this year's budget there are 48 in total.

Mr. MacDonald: So there is additional staff as well is what you're now telling me?

Mr. Denis: These staff were filling vacant positions because there was a hiring freeze at the particular junctures. There were some vacant positions, and these staff now have simply been filled.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. So, for instance, whenever I look in the consolidated financial statements and I see the number of full-time equivalents or whatever for a respective department, you're telling me that that also includes vacant positions?

Mr. Denis: That's the total number of authorized positions. So if a position there was vacant, it would be included as well. And there was a hiring freeze in the last few years, as I'm sure you are aware.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. So there's a difference between an authorized position and a vacant one. What is that difference?

Mr. Denis: I'm not quite sure what you're getting at here.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, I'm just responding to your answer.

Mr. Denis: I'm not sure what your question is, with no disrespect intended.

Mr. MacDonald: No. What, again, is the difference between an authorized position and a vacant one?

Mr. Denis: I'll get your response in writing as well.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. That's fine.

Now, the human resources budget. We're seeing a slight increase in that. Am I correct in assuming that this is to meet your personnel requirements or your recruitment requirements?

Mr. Denis: You're correct with your first assumption. There is the AUPE impact there, but we've also added one additional position to deal with occupational health and safety issues.

Mr. MacDonald: Could you explain that? Are you now hiring people that are going to enforce the Occupational Health and Safety Act?

Mr. Denis: No. It's an in-house person to deal with occupational health and safety within the ministry.

Mr. MacDonald: Internally.

Mr. Denis: Yes.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Denis: Particularly given the nature of the business that we're in, we felt that that was important.

Mr. MacDonald: Now, if I could now go down to element 3, correctional services, and 3.1, program support services. That budget has remained basically the same at \$2.4 million.

Mr. Denis: Give or take.

Mr. MacDonald: Give or take over the last couple of years. You bet. Could you explain in detail to us, please, what that \$2.4 million would be used for?

Mr. Denis: Could you just give me a moment, please?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. For sure.

Mr. Denis: Okay. I'll give you a rundown here. Stop me if I'm giving you too much information. The strategic services branch provides program and budget support for the correctional services divisions, ADM, as well as the following branches: community corrections and release programs and adult operations and young offenders programs. It administers the adult offender education program in collaboration with Advanced Education, and this branch also manages contracted services, research and analysis.

It's also responsible for operational planning, performance measurement, strategic training initiatives, employee awards and recognition – one of which I was at today, actually – employee wellness and engagement initiatives, special projects such as Corrections Week, and the implementation of a new integrated offender management system, which is called ORCA, not to be confused with the whale. The security standards audits and information unit and the correctional services intelligence unit fall under the strategic services branch as well.

Does that give you enough information?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, it certainly does.

My next question would be that when I compare the program support services budget under correctional services with that of the public security program support services, which is significantly less, the public security budget is \$596,000, and this one is \$2.4 million, yet the public security budget is so much larger. After your detailed description of the purpose of the program support services, why would one budget be so much higher than the other?

Mr. Denis: Well, to answer your question, program support services is a much smaller branch. It just provides overall direction and support to the public security division. I'll give you a breakdown of the budget here as well. There is \$520,000 in human power funding to support four FTEs that provide this direction, but also there is the smaller amount of \$76,000 in supplies and services that help to support the office and include expenses such as travel, telephone, or contract services.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. So the correction services budget is half the size in reality of the public securities budget.

Mr. Denis: I think it's a little less than half if I'm doing the math. It's more like a quarter.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, I'm looking at \$236 million in element 3. Anyway, one is significantly larger than the other, and it has a significantly smaller support services budget. I find that interesting, to say the least.

Mr. Denis: Well, somebody said to me once when I was in law school that interesting is an adjective that could mean absolutely everything.

Mr. MacDonald: Uh-huh. Yes. Someone also said to me today earlier, sir, about a Conservative MP from Calgary that was asleep.

Mr. Denis: I am wide awake, sir.

Mr. MacDonald: Anyway, this MP was asleep, and the constituent at a public meeting said to me: how would they have noticed?

Mr. Denis: Thank you for a good laugh, but I want to assure you and all the members here that I am wide awake tonight.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, and you are.

Now, the adult remand and correctional centres. We're going to spend \$156 million here in the estimates. That has gone up significantly from two years ago, and even from last year it has gone up by \$20 million. Is this all to do with the new remand centre? How many correctional centres are we talking about here?

Mr. Denis: Okay. That's to do with the AUPE settlement again – and I won't beat that dead horse on the ground here – but also with the new Edmonton Remand Centre.

I'm sorry, your last question was?

Mr. MacDonald: How many of these correctional centres are there across the province?

Mr. Denis: There are eight adult and two juvenile correctional centres.

Mr. MacDonald: Eight adult and two juvenile.

Mr. Denis: I think you and I are both too old for the latter.

Mr. MacDonald: I hope so. Okay.

Now, the young offenders centres: how many are there?

Mr. Denis: There are two, that I had mentioned.

Mr. MacDonald: There are two, so this is a separate item, then. The adult remand and correctional centres: the \$156 million budget is for eight institutions. Then the next line is for the two young offender centres. Am I correct?

Mr. Denis: That's correct, yes.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. Thank you. The young offenders centres budget really hasn't changed whatsoever since 2010-11. Are there fewer individuals living in these centres, or are there more?

Mr. Denis: You're talking just the adult centres?

Mr. MacDonald: No. I'm talking about the young offenders centres, where the budget has remained flat over the last two years.

Mr. Denis: In 2010-2011 we had 1,961 youth admissions into these two centres. The average daily youth population is 198. There are lots of other numbers here, but that's not what you had particularly asked for.

Mr. MacDonald: Do you anticipate there will be fewer offenders in these centres now than there were two years ago?

Mr. Denis: What we forecast on is typically a percentage of offenders per hundred thousand in population. In the last few years you have seen a significant increase in Alberta's population. We also would look at the crime rate as well. We anticipate that it's roughly the same. But, again, the reality is that with 3.8 million people – if it increases, say, to 4.3, you are going to have a larger population even though the crime rate per hundred thousand, we would estimate, would stay constant. Does that answer your question?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you. It does.

Let's pick me as an example. If I was to enter a young offenders centre, what is the average length of stay of an offender in one of these centres?

7:20

Mr. Denis: Are you talking about the young offenders?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

Mr. Denis: Okay. The average length of stay in remand, again for 2010-2011, the last year available, was 15 days. The average length of stay in custody is 46 days in particular.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. Thank you very much for that because I was going to ask you about the remand. I appreciate that.

Now, the next element in this specific request is the adult community correctional services budget. Again, I'm going back two years, to 2010-11, because I look at your last annual report, and I look at that as the place to start.

Mr. Denis: Fair enough.

Mr. MacDonald: I see the budget is increasing by \$7 million in two years. Are you increasing the number of correctional services that are available, or are there just more people using the services?

Mr. Denis: If I may, your permission to digress for a quick minute.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

Mr. Denis: Since '08 we've hired 130 probation officers, and 110 of those were funded through the Premier's safe communities initiative when she was Justice minister. These are types of community-based supervision programs that include probation, conditional sentences, temporary absence, pretrial release, fine options, and alternative measures. You get the drift.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay.

Mr. Denis: Does that answer your question?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, it does.

Now, the young offender community correctional services: can you explain that program in detail to us, please?

Mr. Denis: If you'd give me a second, please.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. For sure.

Mr. Denis: Okay. You're referring to program element 3.5. This gives community-based supervision programs to just over 4,000 youth. Again, those are 2010-11 stats. All stats that I quote are from that year unless otherwise indicated. This is through the operation of two youth attendance centres, two young offender community corrections offices in Edmonton, four open-custody group homes, and the community supervision of the city of Calgary. This administers the young offender mental health initiative, which includes the intensive rehabilitative custody and supervision program.

Do you want some numbers of the people who are in there?

Mr. MacDonald: Sure.

Mr. Denis: Okay. There are 1,622 youth on probation; 489 pretrial supervisions; 766 on extrajudicial sanctions; all other programs, 1,138. So the total caseload is 4,015.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. You'll have to forgive me. Maybe it's easier just to ask you directly. There is no money from the lottery fund that is going to the Solicitor General and office of Public Security this year, correct?

Mr. Denis: Nope. None.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. The First Nations policing budget of essentially \$12 million: that is your allocation, and any money that may be coming to First Nations policing from other sources would be in addition.

Mr. Denis: That's correct as well. I know the federal government obviously has some cost-sharing agreements there, so that would be in addition to that amount. Are you referring specifically to Kainai or any other particular item?

Mr. MacDonald: I'm looking at element 2.9, First Nations policing. I do know that some money goes from the First Nations development fund to individual First Nations communities to hire and, I assume, to train the hired police officers. That would be completely separate from this \$12 million, correct?

Mr. Denis: That's correct. Could I give you some background on where the \$12 million comes from, give or take?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, please.

Mr. Denis: Okay. As I mentioned, with First Nations there are a lot of shared agreements. There are 10 community tripartite policing agreements with 36 officers, and that provides an enhanced level of policing to 12 First Nations. There are four self-administered First Nations police services with 54 officers. That's on nine First Nations. On top of that, the aboriginal community constable program provides enhanced policing to 28 First Nations with 38 RCMP officers. I could go on, but I think I've answered your question.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. The capital investments, the public security part of your budget: you have over \$106 million requested here. You're anticipating to spend \$90 million in the Alberta first responders radio communications system.

Mr. Denis: Yes.

Mr. MacDonald: Could you provide us with some details, please, on this capital request? Is this to each individual respective municipality across the province? Is this where this money is going?

Mr. Denis: Let me just go through some details here. The total amount of the project is \$374 million over five years. The feds have given us about \$80 million on that. Some other highlights I'll tell you as well. This provides province-wide two-way radio communications. That includes all first responders. My department and Harris Canada finalized a contract, which received approval from the Treasury Board in January 2011. The construction began on March 1 of last year, and over the next year the ministry and Harris will conduct prototype activities to demonstrate system capability and performance as initiation of the provincial implementation. We're anticipating that the rest will be available at the end of February 2014.

Now, to deal with your specific comment just about funding, if you would just give me a moment, please. Could I just get you to restate your query? You were wondering if the funding goes to specific areas?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, the different municipalities across the province. Each of them gets a share of this money. Am I correct?

Mr. Denis: No. It just goes to the project, like the towers. It's just the project.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay.

Mr. Denis: We have to build the backbone of the system throughout the entire province, but the municipalities don't have a direct hook into this. It does affect them.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. I was led to believe they did, and I'm glad you clarified that.

Mr. Denis: It does affect them, obviously, because we have the Edmonton police, the Calgary police, you know, and other places as well, but this is a provincial initiative.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay.

Mr. Denis: Does that answer your question?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, it does.

Now, the Alberta police integrated information initiative: this budget in the last two years has essentially remained the same at \$17 million. This estimate indicates you are going to use \$12 million. Why is this initiative now so much cheaper, almost 25 per cent cheaper?

Mr. Denis: It's very rare that I get a question as to why something is cheaper this year, so thank you very much for that, hon. member. Basically, that's just what is required this year for that stage of the construction. Are you familiar with what the API3 system involves?

Mr. MacDonald: No.

Mr. Denis: Would you like me to talk to you about it?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, if you don't mind.

Mr. Denis: Okay. I just didn't want to waste your time.

If you'd ask the average person in Calgary, Edmonton, or rural Alberta if, when they go to the police, they have access to other police information from across the province, I would say that most people would say yes, but the reality is that the answer is no at this point in time.

Mr. MacDonald: No.

Mr. Denis: You're getting the same page that I'm on.

We started this particular project so that, for example, if someone commits an offence in Fort McMurray, comes down to Edmonton later that day, and is then picked up, there will be information, when that person is picked up, that there is a warrant or that that person is otherwise a person of interest. We're working with the Privacy Commissioner on this to ensure that privacy is protected. There are different levels of access on the system in and of itself, but I can tell you that there have been situations in the past where the police did not have access to this information, and it has put the police officers in harm's way. Again, knowledge is power. If they would have had that knowledge in particular, they would have been able to call for backup. So I'm a little bullish on the system, as you can probably tell by my tone.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. I have one more question under this capital investment, and it's fish and wildlife enforcement. You're seeing a doubling of the budget from 2010-11. Is that a reflection of the increased number of officers?

Mr. Denis: If you would just bear with me for one second, please.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

Mr. Denis: The capital actually was \$85,000 last year, and it stays the same at \$85,000 this year.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. For the 2010-11 year that ended, the actual was \$40,000.

Mr. Denis: I don't have access to anything two years behind, so I'll take that away and undertake to advise you with some more information.

7:30

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. But am I right in assuming that there has been an increase in the number of fish and game officers?

Mr. Denis: I don't have that information in front of me. Actually, I'm advised that, no, that's not correct.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. Now, I have one more question regarding public security. In what item in this budget would be the office in your ministry that would look after private investigators and loss prevention officers in department stores, individuals that police large commercial buildings, whether they're buildings that house offices or those that would house, say, a mall or something like that?

Mr. Denis: First of all, I'm going to get you some specific information. But while that's being prepared, I just want to put on the record that we don't employ people that are private security people, like in a mall, that you had mentioned. We have the over-

sight, but we don't actually employ those people. If you go to Chinook Centre, there's somebody there. A mall person is there. There are no taxpayers' dollars that go into that as well. They are governed by the Security Services and Investigators Act, and that's one of the acts that's responsible under this particular ministry. There are 26 FTEs that provide support in this area, but there are also some additional supplies and services. The total amount allocated there, 26 FTEs, is \$3.2 million.

Mr. MacDonald: Where would this money be in the budget? Is it in protection services?

Mr. Denis: It's under law enforcement standards and audits. That's item 2.7. Just for your information as well, there are also 15,000 licensees that participate in this program as of January of this year.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. The law enforcement standards and audits: there's a 30 per cent increase in the budget in two years, from \$2 million to the request this year for \$3.1 million. Is there an extra workload for these folks to enforce or provide oversight? Why do you need this 30 per cent increase over two years?

Mr. Denis: Again, I don't have information here for two years back, so I will take that away and get you some information, Member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much.

Now, I have some questions on the victims of crime fund if you don't mind.

Mr. Denis: Not at all

Mr. MacDonald: The Criminal Injuries Review Board. I'm on page 262 of the budget estimates for Solicitor General and Public Security. Again, I'm looking at the actual here for 2010-11, which indicates that \$528,000 was spent on the Criminal Injuries Review Board. The estimate this year is for \$455,000. Why is this budget going down? I would consider this to be a very important review board.

Mr. Denis: We're just getting to the correct page if you would just give me a moment, please.

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah. No problem.

Mr. Denis: It's fairly consistent this year and last year, but again I can't really comment two years back. I appreciate your support for the Criminal Injuries Review Board. We're continuing with that. We've just reappointed Dr. Peter Allen as the chair for another year on that as well.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. Well, I'm puzzled. I appreciate the people who developed this budget. You know, they're going back two years to compare actuals to forecasts for last year or for the year we're currently finishing and the estimates for next year. But I will move on.

I'm curious. If you don't mind, what are the administrative costs for the victims of crime fund?

Mr. Denis: Could you be a little more specific as to what you would define as administrative costs, please?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, I will. Now, you're going to have to forgive me, but I'm looking at a breakdown, a comparison of expenses directly incurred in the victims of crime fund. You know, the financial benefits, the victims' programs. There's,

again, the Criminal Injuries Review Board, which was over-expended in the year 2010-11 by close to \$89,000. I'm curious what you anticipate in this year, 2012-13, your administration costs will be for that fund.

Mr. Denis: Okay. Now, I'm just going to go through some figures first. Stop me, please, if I'm getting beyond the scope of your inquiry. There's \$0.6 million in human power funding. There are three FTEs. There's not a lot here. As well, there are cost-shared allocations for corporate services. There's just \$0.1 million in supplies and services as well. That also includes CanTalk, a telephone-based interpretation service to ensure that language isn't a barrier when we provide services to victims.

The victims of crime fund itself, as you probably know, provides financial benefits to eligible victims who suffered injury or death as a result of a violent criminal offence. Last fiscal year there were 2,427 new financial benefit applications compared to 2,543 the year before. That may be a reason as to why the amount has marginally gone down with regard to your earlier query.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. Now, am I confused? Is program support services the same as an administration fee?

Mr. Denis: Those are administration costs specifically related to the victims of crime fund.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. And you cannot tell me what you anticipate those administration costs will be.

Mr. Denis: I think I've gone through those. You know, roughly \$740,000.

Mr. MacDonald: It will be your \$740,000.

Mr. Denis: Yeah, give or take.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. That's interesting because the amount from last year was unexpended. There was a significant amount unexpended.

My next question would be: given that there was a significant amount of that administration allocation unexpended in the past, what is the time frame for someone who was a victim of a crime from the time they apply to this fund until the time it is studied and there is an amount of money provided to that victim of crime? What sort of time frame are we looking at here?

Mr. Denis: The average in the past has actually been high. It was about 300 days in the past, but I'm very proud to say that today it's down to 99 days.

Mr. MacDonald: So it has been as high as 300?

Mr. Denis: Yes. And we brought it down to 99 days. Now, I should give you a caveat. Every case is different. Some will take more; some will take less.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Okay.

How many active applications for financial benefits do you anticipate there will be this year from the fund?

Mr. Denis: Forecasting here. The amount of applications we had, just to give you some background here: in 2000 we had 1,064, in 2010-11 we had 2,427, and this last year we've had 1,994. We're expecting roughly the same. As I've indicated before, there has been a slight reduction in the amount of applications. That's beyond any of our control.

Mr. MacDonald: Just to clarify that, Madam Chair. Sir, did you say that two years ago it was 1,064?

Mr. Denis: That was in 2000, so 12 years ago. It reached a high of 2,427 in 2010-2011. We expect coming into this year 1,994. So just a slight decrease.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. I appreciate that. That's very useful and helpful.

Now, what do you expect will be the average benefit paid out this year in question from the victims of crime fund?

Mr. Denis: This is really a tough thing to forecast because it does depend on the individual cases. Realistically, I'd rather there was nothing paid out, meaning that there were no injuries, and I think you'd agree with me on that. But the reality is that everyone is on an individual case-by-case basis, and I can't forecast the amount of applications we will have. I don't think anyone could have forecasted more than 40 murders in Edmonton last year either.

Mr. MacDonald: No.

Mr. Denis: And I don't wish that this year either.

7:40

The Deputy Chair: Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Minister, there are about four and a half minutes left.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. Thank you.

Now, in this budget estimate there is going to be no assistance to victims' organizations to help out with their capital assets or their change in capital assets. Two years ago, if I am reading your estimates correctly, there was an amount, a total capital investment . . .

Mr. Denis: Just asking capital here, correct?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

. . . of \$43,000. Why is it no longer necessary to provide this form of assistance to victims' organizations?

Mr. Denis: That actually was in costs related to our systems. That's not an assistance to victims, just our systems.

Mr. MacDonald: That was capital assets.

Mr. Denis: Yes, but that's just to our specific systems. As I'm sure you're aware from my preamble, the vast majority of cost in this ministry is human power.

Mr. MacDonald: So was this a computer program?

Mr. Denis: That's correct. Yes.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. I don't know how much time I've got left, and I still have a few questions I would like to ask, please. When you examine your ministry by function, you know, there are a lot of different functions. There's health, recreation and culture, general government, and the list goes on. For Solicitor General and Public Security last year it was anticipated that \$27 million of the budget would be allocated for social services. How much do you anticipate in this year's budget estimates will be allocated for social services?

Mr. Denis: Roughly \$29 million.

Mr. MacDonald: Roughly \$29 million.

Now, there is a function defined as agriculture resource management and economic development, where there has been in the past a \$23 million allocation from Solicitor General and Public Security. In this year's budget estimates how much do you anticipate will be spent under this agricultural resource management and economic development function? And if you could explain that to me, I'd be a happy taxpayer.

Mr. Denis: I'll take that away as well. Okay?

Mr. MacDonald: Okay.

Mr. Denis: But I'm happy that you're a happy camper.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, I would be a happy taxpayer if you could explain that.

Mr. Denis: Is it just because I'm awake tonight?

Mr. MacDonald: No, no, no, no. With no disrespect to your managers, I hope they haven't been reading too much George Orwell with that handle there.

Protection of persons and property: \$588 million was spent last year. Is the remainder of your estimate – am I correct in assuming that that's how you would classify the expense?

Mr. Denis: Can you be a little more specific, please?

Mr. MacDonald: Whether it's personnel, whether it's your administration costs within your department, your expense by function indicated, you know, that you were going to spend \$588 million for protection of persons and property. The total government expense for that is \$1.5 billion. Roughly one-third of that is allocated to your department. Is that the rest of your budget allocation here?

Mr. Denis: It's about \$719 million in total. This is the enforcement branch now. We have everything from SRD. We got rid of AGLC. This is just the enforcement branch of the whole administration.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. Thank you.

I have a couple of questions on the business plan if I can find it now. I'll be out of time before I find that.

Mr. Denis: Thank you for some good questions tonight.

Mr. MacDonald: Is that it?

The Chair: Five seconds.

Mr. MacDonald: Oh, well, that's it, then. I'll get back on the list, I guess.

The Chair: Thank you. Would you like us to put you back on the list, Mr. MacDonald?

Mr. MacDonald: Sure.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

I'd just like to note that Mr. Mel Knight had joined us for this discussion earlier.

Also, Mrs. Forsyth, the next 20 minutes will be for you to discuss the budget with the minister. Would you like to combine that discussion with the minister's time?

Mrs. Forsyth: I'll go back and forth with the minister.

The Chair: Okay.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister and your staff, for being here. I appreciate them taking the time to be here. I'm going to ask you a bunch of questions, so I'm going to go back and forth. I'll try and keep my questions short. If you can keep your answers just as short.

I want to talk to you about your mandate letter from the Premier: "work with the Ministers of Justice and Attorney General and Transportation to design proposals for administrative penalties related to impaired driving." I wonder if you can tell me what it means exactly by administrative penalties.

Mr. Denis: Okay. The reality is that we have had a .05 limit since 1990. We have not changed the limit. We have increased the penalties for people who are drinking and driving over .05.

Mrs. Forsyth: When we're talking about the administrative penalties – and I know you're talking about your suspensions and things like that. I'm well aware that we can suspend. It was my private member's bill that brought that forward about specifically increasing sanctions. The sanction, I'm assuming, is the three-day licence suspension.

Mr. Denis: It includes that, but that's not the total amount. You know what it is; I'm not going to waste your time.

Mrs. Forsyth: When you talk about administrative penalties, what do you mean exactly by an administrative penalty?

Mr. Denis: A person can get an administrative penalty, which is like a traffic ticket, for example. It doesn't involve a criminal sanction; it involves a civil sanction. The British Columbia Supreme Court has upheld the province's constitutional right to impose such penalties.

Mrs. Forsyth: No. I'm not arguing with you about that. I'm asking you specifically: when you say that it's like a traffic ticket, when you talk about an administrative penalty, does that mean it's the three-day licence suspension?

Mr. Denis: I'll be quite honest – and I'm not meaning to be difficult here – I really don't understand your question.

Mrs. Forsyth: Okay. I'm going to ask it one more time. It says: "work with the Ministers of Justice and Attorney General and Transportation to design proposals for administrative penalties related to impaired driving." What I'm asking you is: what does "design proposals for administrative penalties" mean exactly?

Mr. Denis: Noncriminal penalties.

Mrs. Forsyth: Then I'm asking you, Minister: does that mean that your first offence, the three-day licence suspension, is a sanction or an administrative penalty?

Mr. Denis: Both. Anything the province imposes that is noncriminal is an administrative penalty.

Mrs. Forsyth: If we're talking about administrative penalties, what other things in your department can you use as an example so I can understand the administrative penalties?

Mr. Denis: For example, if you would have a speeding ticket, if you would have a ticket for making unsafe lane changes, if you would have a ticket for talking with a hand-held cellphone while driving, those are all administrative penalties, anything that's not criminal.

Mrs. Forsyth: So if I get a ticket for a cellphone or I get a ticket for speeding, I pay a fine.

Mr. Denis: That's an administrative penalty. It doesn't involve going to jail.

Mrs. Forsyth: Does that mean, then, that you're going to come up with some sort of fine for the .05?

Mr. Denis: Absolutely not. There are no fines whatsoever under Bill 26, nor are we bringing any fines in for drunk driving. There are no fines whatsoever.

Mrs. Forsyth: Okay. I want to talk to you a bit about money laundering, that Mr. MacDonald alluded to earlier. I understand you don't have Alberta gaming underneath you, but you are responsible for the policing in this province. How many officers have you got now working compared to last year in regard to money laundering?

Mr. Denis: If you give me a moment. I just want to reiterate that the RCMP have a unit that deals with money laundering and the proceeds of crime. I won't waste your time dealing with the details because I'm sure you know that as a previous Solicitor General. I don't have commercial crime numbers. I can undertake to ask the RCMP if you like.

Mrs. Forsyth: Last year you had two RCMP, you had an EPS member, you had a CPS member, you had members involved from Camrose, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, and the Tsuu T'ina First Nation, so I'm trying to figure out how many you have this year.

Mr. Denis: You're moving into the ALERT, the whole aspect. Is that correct?

Mrs. Forsyth: No. Under money laundering they had specific police. You can get back to me, Minister, honestly.

Mr. Denis: I will get back to you on that, okay?

7:50

Mrs. Forsyth: Let's talk for a minute about the pilot project that you've got going on on electronic monitoring with the bracelets. I wonder if you could give me some information on that: how many you have, how many people have been put under suspension on the electronic monitoring.

Mr. Denis: Could you just bear with me one moment, please?

Okay. On average at any given time there are between 50 and 55 offenders that are part of the electronic monitoring program. Does that answer your question?

Mrs. Forsyth: What type of offences are those that are on the electronic monitoring?

Mr. Denis: It's always within the discretion of the court as to when someone actually is given that on an individual basis.

Mrs. Forsyth: So if you've got 50 to 55 offenders on electronic monitoring, they're on electronic monitoring for what offences?

Mr. Denis: I can't say specifically what offences they are, but typically it's lower risk offenders. You wouldn't have people charged with murder or child predators in that particular case. It's typically lower risk offenders.

Mrs. Forsyth: Offenders are put on electronic monitoring because they have an outstanding warrant or they're serving two years less a day. Originally their criminal offence could be pedophilia, et cetera. How many sex offenders do you have on the electronic monitoring system at this particular time?

Mr. Denis: Just bear with me one moment, please. Zero.

Mrs. Forsyth: Okay. If we know that they have no sex offenders on the electronic monitoring system right now, what kind of offenders are wearing the electronic monitoring? You know what? It's a difficult question, so you can get back to me.

Mr. Denis: Well, one thing I just want to mention. The electronic monitoring is separate from the SafeCom pilot. I will get back to you with some other information. Again, as I'm sure you're aware, with no disrespect intended, it is in the jurisdiction of the court as to where the sentencing goes.

Mrs. Forsyth: I understand that, but also your probation officers that are under your purview are your responsibility.

Let's talk about the attendance centres. You have attendance centres here. Can you tell me if the monitoring on the attendance centres is done out of B.C. or not?

Mr. Denis: Yes. That's correct.

Mrs. Forsyth: Can I ask why?

Mr. Denis: Simple economy of scale. We do lots of business in other provinces as well. It's simply cheaper for the taxpayer.

Mrs. Forsyth: So we have no one in the province that could monitor the attendance centres?

Mr. Denis: Not as cheaply as we do there.

Mrs. Forsyth: Could you provide me the cost figures for the attendance centre, for the monitoring of the attendance centre that's done in B.C.?

Mr. Denis: I must correct myself. We do some telephone monitoring from our own centres, but the majority is out of B.C.

Mrs. Forsyth: All right. If you could give me the information on the cost for the attendance centres.

Mr. Denis: Yeah. We could do that for you.

Mrs. Forsyth: The body armour bill: proclaimed or not?

Mr. Denis: No, it has not been.

Mrs. Forsyth: Okay. I understand from last year's *Hansard* that that's a co-operation between the Solicitor General and the Minister of Justice. A year ago they were looking at the regulations. Can you maybe explain why it hasn't been proclaimed?

Mr. Denis: Just bear with me a moment, please.

It has received royal assent, but it has actually not been proclaimed. I don't have any specific information other than that for you at this juncture.

Mrs. Forsyth: I would imagine that under your partnership with the Justice minister one of the things that was brought up last year was that at that point, a year ago, you were looking at regulations. That was a co-operation between Justice and the Solicitor General. Any idea when you're going to be proclaiming that bill?

Mr. Denis: This is Justice's bill, so I would ask you to direct your questions to Minister Olson as to when he plans on proclaiming it.

Mrs. Forsyth: I have no problem with that except that last year's *Hansard* said that you were working jointly with Justice.

Mr. Denis: That is correct, but at the same time this is a Justice bill, so as the responsible minister he'd be the one that could answer your query.

Mrs. Forsyth: Let's talk about the AUMA and the AAMDC and the municipal policing assistance grant, that was brought to your department's attention and actually has been for several years. Last year the Solicitor General commented that they're looking at the municipal policing assistance grant. What's transpired since last year in regard to that?

Mr. Denis: We're still in the process of working with the other party on that.

Mrs. Forsyth: What other party was that?

Mr. Denis: The AUMA.

Mrs. Forsyth: And the AAMDC?

Mr. Denis: That's correct. Yeah.

Mrs. Forsyth: What's the status of that? Where are you on that?

Mr. Denis: We're doing a draft report at this point, and I'm not sure when that will be public.

Mrs. Forsyth: Let's talk about the police ratios. I'm talking police officer to police officer, not incorporating our sheriffs, that do a fantastic job in this province, or any of the other peace officers. What's the status on that? It's, I think, the second lowest in Canada at this point in time.

Mr. Denis: Well, I must, with no disrespect, correct an earlier statement. The police ratios are very difficult to actually compare province to province because, as you mentioned, other provinces do not have the sheriffs, who perform some of the police functions such as patrolling our highways as peace officers. That's just the one thing that I would mention as well.

Mrs. Forsyth: Yeah, and I'm aware of that. That's why I said: let's compare police officer to police officer across the country. Don't include the sheriffs; don't include all the other peace officers that we have working. I'm talking police officers, police to police.

Mr. Denis: Okay. The problem with that, though, is that, as I mentioned earlier, other provinces don't have sheriffs, and the sheriffs perform some of the duties here that other police officers perform in other provinces. I'm saying that the statistics that you have may be somewhat skewed, and it's very difficult to actually go from a function-to-function perspective.

Mrs. Forsyth: Okay. Let's go to the Edmonton Remand Centre and the training. We're looking at a whole new facility, that's brand new, our remand centre, and looking at pods throughout the remand centre. Where are we on the training aspect of our corrections officers?

Mr. Denis: We're actually in the process of recruiting these officers that you mentioned.

Mrs. Forsyth: Where are we on the training with the corrections officers that we currently have in the province that will be transferring to the facility?

Mr. Denis: We just graduated a number of them last week, actually. It's on an ongoing basis.

Mrs. Forsyth: Okay. So we're in the training of some. We've got corrections officers that are currently employed and currently providing correction to the offenders in the facility. They will be, I'm assuming, transferring. The corrections officers you currently have: where are we on the training of those corrections officers? It was brought up a year ago that we were starting to train them.

Mr. Denis: We have trained some, but we will be orientating existing staff to the direct supervision model. Are you familiar with that model as well?

Mrs. Forsyth: Yeah.

Mr. Denis: Okay. Then I won't get into it.

Mrs. Forsyth: I want to talk about the API3, and it's to facilitate interjurisdictional investigation in automated preparation of prosecution packages. Where are we on that?

Mr. Denis: Okay. What's happened, as I mentioned to Mr. MacDonald, is that with the API3 initiative we are in the process of getting a privacy assessment, and we're in the process also of rolling out the API3 initiative. Medicine Hat is the first one that is going to be going online. They're already actually using it in Calgary just with what I would call dummy data or dead data, whatever you want to refer to it as. You get my point. The goal is to have it in a province-wide rollout in 2013.

Mrs. Forsyth: Okay. Thanks.

Mr. Denis: Does that answer your question?

Mrs. Forsyth: Yeah. If you've got a privacy issue, obviously they haven't made any movement in regard to what the Solicitor General mentioned last year on the interjurisdictional investigation of prosecution packages. Is that the privacy concern that you're showing?

Mr. Denis: No, no. I'll just back up. I'm sorry. I didn't explain myself well enough. We are working with the Privacy Commissioner on the API3 initiative concurrently, so it's not after the fact. We're working to resolve any privacy issues that may happen right now. Mr. MacDonald had talked about Orwell. Well, that's what we're trying to get away from.

Mrs. Forsyth: Let's talk a minute about the sheriffs and their responsibilities. Are you going to increase their responsibilities to deal with impaired driving? Right now a sheriff cannot do anything other than let an RCMP officer know that they have stopped an impaired driver. Are you going to expand their ability to do more work on their police duties?

8:00

Mr. Denis: No, not to my knowledge. The sheriffs, as I'm sure you know as a previous Solicitor General, are not police officers. They are peace officers. If they come across somebody who has been drinking and driving, it is a criminal offence over .08, and what will have to happen is that they will have to call an RCMP from the nearest detachment.

Mrs. Forsyth: The safe communities task force talked about expanding their duties as far as transporting prisoners and all of those things. Where are you on the status of the expansion of the sheriffs' roles?

Mr. Denis: Would you just give me a moment, please?

Mrs. Forsyth: You can get back to me.

Mr. Denis: Okay.

Mrs. Forsyth: You can get it out of the – this was accepted by the Premier.

Mr. Denis: It was, but I just want to give you the correct answer.

Mrs. Forsyth: No. You can get back to me.

Mr. Denis: Okay.

Mrs. Forsyth: Let's talk about 2.2, "Enhance community supervision for highest risk and greatest need individuals by utilizing targeted caseloads and evidence-based risk and need assessment tools." Where are you on that?

Mr. Denis: Just bear with me a moment, please. We'll get back to you.

Mrs. Forsyth: Okay. Let's talk about 2.3, "Improve the management of individuals under correctional authority through the implementation of best practices in staff training and new technology such as the Offender Records and Correctional Administrative system." What's the status of that?

Mr. Denis: I'm not quite following your question. I'm sorry.

Mrs. Forsyth: Okay. Well, it's under the Solicitor General and Public Security business plan 2012-2015, page 72, your priorities. The previous question was 2.2, and now I'm asking you about 2.3.

Mr. Denis: I'm just going to cover off a few things here. We talked about safe communities. It's through evidence-based best practices. The ministry provides custody and community facilities and services to ensure that inmates and offenders are securely held in custody as well as safely transported. You get the drift. Opportunities to access rehabilitative services and supports to promote positive behaviour are also provided.

The ORCA system, as I mentioned earlier, actually, is planned to go live on November 12, and the future of Alberta correctional services is to address changing offender profiles, currently six correctional and two remand centres, two young offender centres, four attendance centres, and more than 40 community corrections offices throughout the province.

Mrs. Forsyth: So, then, I'm going to go back to my first question about utilizing targeted caseloads, which means you're going to take caseloads that a probation officer probably has because they're dealing with more than they can handle in their caseloads, and because they're a higher risk, they're going to have a smaller caseload. What I'm trying to figure out is: where are you on the status of that?

Mr. Denis: It has been implemented in some areas, and we're rolling out to additional areas.

Mrs. Forsyth: What do you mean by that?

Mr. Denis: I'm sorry. I don't follow your question.

Mrs. Forsyth: What do you mean by that? It's been rolled out.

Mr. Denis: Rolling out, meaning implemented in some areas.

Mrs. Forsyth: Okay. So what areas are you implementing it in to achieve what?

Mr. Denis: Primarily into the urban centres of the province.

Mrs. Forsyth: So in the urban centres if you're targeting caseloads of individuals that are considered a higher risk, what kind of a higher risk would you consider? Minister, it was very clear from the task force about targeting your high-risk areas. You might have the downtown core where you have a higher percentage of offenders. I'm trying to find out on behalf of the probation officers how you're targeting that and who you're targeting.

Mr. Denis: We use evidence-based assessment tools. For example, if you have a higher rate of a certain crime in a certain area, obviously, we're going to target it a little more. The reality is that most crime is urban, but at the same time there are rural instances, for example, such as the two RCMP shootings near Killam. If we found that based on empirical evidence, there was a particular issue in that area versus just a one-off situation, which, God willing, it was, we would target more of our efforts into that particular area. Again, it's all evidence based just like our other legislation, including Bill 26.

Mrs. Forsyth: If we're doing evidence based, and we're improving the . . . [Mrs. Forsyth's speaking time expired]

The Chair: Go ahead. You can finish your question.

Mrs. Forsyth: I just want to know the status of the offender records and correctional administrative system. You know, you can get me that information.

Mr. Denis: I'll give you that as well. Thank you for your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mrs. Forsyth.

We're going to take a six-minute break, and then when we come back, Mr. Rogers will be the next person to ask questions.

[The committee adjourned from 8:06 p.m. to 8:12 p.m.]

The Chair: Thank you. We're going to reconvene the meeting.

Mr. Rogers, do you have any questions for the minister?

Mr. Rogers: Sure. Thank you, Madam Chairman. Mr. Minister, thank you for your summation and, certainly, the effort that you and your team have put into defending your estimates tonight. The question that I want to ask you is around your efforts towards the enforcement of Bill 26. Of course, as we all know, there has been lots of media and public attention over the new legislation. I'm just wondering if you can expand. I know that some of the previous speakers asked you some questions that – I don't know – in my opinion seemed more around policy. What is your intention, and what do you expect out of your efforts in terms of the new administrative penalty's outcomes and so on based on what's been put before us so far?

Mr. Denis: Well, that is a very good question. I just want to clarify again that we are not decreasing the blood-alcohol content limit. The .05 has been the policy of the police since 1990. We are just increasing the penalties. Police have been enforcing the

existing laws. They have had 42,700 24-hour suspensions in the last five years. Obviously, we need to do something else.

If you look towards some other jurisdictions, Member, again every law is different, as ours is different from B.C.'s, but B.C. has seen a significant reduction in alcohol-related traffic injuries and fatalities. Also, in some states in Australia they've even boasted, the last number I saw, an 18 per cent reduction in fatalities involving alcohol as well. So I'm looking forward to the fact that we will have safer roads.

I quoted an article from Robert Remington in the *Calgary Herald* based on the University of Western Ontario study showing that 20 per cent of traffic collision injuries and fatalities involving alcohol are from .05 to .08 and that 300 people have died since 1998. Senseless deaths. I just got something on my iPad here that we had four people die in a crash in Innisfail last night.

I don't want to politicize any particular item. The problem is drinking and driving. I'm not against drinking; I'm against drinking and driving. I don't want to raise the liquor age. I don't want to put more restrictions on liquor stores. That's a legal product. The problem is drinking and driving in and of itself.

What I'm looking forward to is that as a result of the greater tools that the police will have, the public will get the message. I also think that some of the cities should look at putting in more taxi licences so that people can plan ahead.

I've probably digressed a little bit more beyond your comments. I apologize.

Mr. Rogers: Well, that's fine, and I thank you for that.

Certainly, I guess it's my hope – and I'm looking for your thoughts – that we'll be able to see some of the kinds of results that, for example, they've seen in B.C. If that's your intent, I'm curious as to what costs you anticipate to your budget to enforce these provisions to get that kind of result that, for example, we've seen in B.C.

Mr. Denis: The only costs we've been able to identify as a result of the new legislation, Bill 26, when it is enforced later this year, are two FTEs in toxicology. Those are the only costs that we have been able to identify. Realistically, there is no registry, like others have claimed. The two FTEs are a rather trivial cost given the actual loss of life that we see, unfortunately, all too often on our roads as a result of drunk drivers. I think that the two FTEs are a good investment given the loss of life that we continually see on Alberta's roads.

Mr. Rogers: Okay. I think I'm good, Madam Chairman. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rogers.

Mr. MacDonald.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you. My first question would be again on the business plan, page 74. In your statement of operations the revenue transfers from the government of Canada for the budget estimates this year are anticipated to be \$31.6 million, and you are anticipating that it will go down significantly to \$25.7 million. What is the reason for this decline in transfers from the government of Canada in your revenue projection?

Mr. Denis: This primarily relates to the police officers recruitment fund. The feds do transfer some money to us there, but it does taper off in subsequent years.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. You know, in the past I was surprised at how much of that police officers recruitment fund, the three-year

program, how much of that money was left on the table given the rate of crime in this province. It was slow to be utilized. The money that is allocated from the federal government under the police officers recruitment fund in this current year in question: is it all going to be utilized?

Mr. Denis: There's \$9 million in total under the police officers recruitment fund. It is our anticipation that that will be totally utilized this year.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. I can appreciate that.

Now, I'm looking at page 12 of your strategic plan. These are the performance measures tables, and this particular grouping: investing in families and communities. I certainly hope you were absolutely right, hon. minister, that the homicide rate in the city of Edmonton was just a statistical blip last year.

Mr. Denis: Homicide, you said?

Mr. MacDonald: Homicide, yeah.

Mr. Denis: Okay. Sorry. And I hope you're right, too.

Mr. MacDonald: I certainly was surprised at that. That was almost one incident a week. Our police forces worked very, very hard to try to investigate as many of those violent crimes as they could with the resources that they had. We can only hope that we never see that kind of activity again.

Mr. Denis: Sadly, I do think you're wrong. I wish you weren't.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. Now, I have to be careful here because your performance measure is slightly different than what you produced in your annual report. I'm looking at the violent crime rate.

Mr. Denis: Could you tell me what page you're on just for my reference, please?

Mr. MacDonald: Page 12 of the strategic plan.

8:20

Mr. Denis: Thank you. We're on the same page, yes, literally.

Mr. MacDonald: At the bottom of the performance measures tables, investing in families and communities, the violent crime rate per 100,000 population: the results, the last actual, were 1,476, and that's for the year 2010. It's anticipated that there will be a 1 per cent annual decrease. If we look at the violent crime rate going back to 2008-09, it was roughly 1,540, and in 2009-10 it was 1,513. It's gone down slightly, but it is still 15 per cent higher than the national average, according to your annual report last year. Do you think the hiring of additional police officers will reduce that violent crime rate to at least the national rate?

Mr. Denis: Well, I don't have a crystal ball in front of me, you know, but that is my hope. I will tell you, though, that of the four western provinces Alberta does have the lowest violent crime rate. The reality is that one incident is too many, but at the same time we are investing in additional officers. When the Premier was Justice minister: 300 additional officers. This year in particular there are additional RCMP and sheriffs. But that's only part of the solution, Member. I think that early intervention with at-risk youth is also very important. I think it's a bit of a two-pronged approach, with the safe communities initiative really leading the way. You want to target some of the root causes of crime, but then, on the

other hand, there are, unfortunately, some people who have a flagrant disrespect for our laws who simply belong behind bars.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. We've talked in the past about the number of police officers we have on a per capita basis, and you compared us to other jurisdictions across this country. I think we can do better. We can get more boots on the streets, no disrespect to your sheriffs. We brought this up last year, and I heard from the sheriffs who provide protection services in and around this building. I have every right to bring up their use in budget estimates, and some of them took exception to it. It's tough, as far as I'm concerned. I think they should be out on the streets defending citizens, and I think the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires should have much more of an active role in providing protection services around this building and the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Denis: My father is a commissionaire. I'll have to tell him you said that.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. I think we should be making more employment opportunities for veterans. If you looked at the *Edmonton Journal* in the last number of days, they had some wonderful features on our military and military families. It's a good place for them to go after they've finished their careers.

Mr. Denis: You won't get an argument from here.

Mr. MacDonald: I would put these high-priced sheriffs out on the streets and get them chasing down criminals.

Mr. Denis: Would I be able to make a quick comment on that?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

Mr. Denis: Specifically, sheriffs are not police officers; they are peace officers. They enforce administrative penalties, as Mrs. Forsyth has referenced. They do not enforce criminal penalties. We're not creating a provincial police force. If you look at other provinces, most other provinces don't have the sheriffs program. If you take out the functions that the sheriffs provide in addition, you will see that we have roughly the average amount of police officers here. Interestingly enough, other jurisdictions are looking at our sheriffs program. The sheriffs cost \$24.60 an hour; commissionaires, \$20.10 an hour, just for your information.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. Sheriffs do carry guns, and they do have bullet-proof vests.

Mr. Denis: Yes, sir, but they are not police officers. They are peace officers.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, well, I think if we're going to have them, we can put them on the street corners.

Now, sticking to crime rates, property crime, it is interesting to note – and these are your own statistics – that the property crime rate in your strategic plan just gives you one result from one year. To put this in perspective, I think we should go back a number of years. In 2006-07 the property crime rate per 100,000 population was 6,229. In 2009-10 it went down to 5,336 per 100,000 population.

In the budget year that we have for the strategic plan, the actual result is 4,908 per 100,000 population, and that is again going in the right direction. It's going down. You anticipate that there would be a 3 per cent decrease. That's your target for this year, next year, and the following year. Still, that, I would say, is close to 30 per cent, not quite 30 per cent but 28 per cent higher than the

national rate. Again, with our resources, the resources that you have available to be deployed, how can we reduce that property crime rate to at least the national rate?

Mr. Denis: Okay. I'm just going to mention a few things. Again, if I go too far away, just stop me.

We have had, as you've mentioned, a 22 per cent decline since 2005. Again, that is a good-news story. I've been a victim of property crime a few times, and I can tell you that it's not fun. I don't wish it on anyone. A lot of people feel violated, as they should, as a result. Now, that being said, I think one property crime is too much, but we also have to look at more innovative ways of reducing this crime.

I mentioned safe communities. I mentioned community policing. But there's also a limit here as well. I don't want to get in a situation where you have a cop on every corner. I don't want to get in a situation where we have a police state either. We are committed to the additional officers that we do have, and we have to commit to additional officers as Alberta continues to grow.

I've lived in Calgary for 12 years, and it has grown greater than the size of Regina, where I grew up. The reality is that the amount per hundred thousand continues to decline, but our population increases, so you see the aggregate amount, unfortunately, increasing. That's going to be something that we have to continue to tackle, as you've mentioned.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. Well, I think there's a lot of work yet to be done on that file.

Now, I would like to go back and get a detailed explanation. I'm going back to program element 2.13 from the general estimates, page 254, sheriffs court security and prisoner transport. The budget is increasing over two years by roughly \$6 million.

Mr. Denis: Sir, which line item?

Mr. MacDonald: I would be on line 2.13.

Mr. Denis: Thank you.

Mr. MacDonald: Now, I was surprised to turn on my television one evening and there was, I believe, a Queen's Bench justice from Edmonton commenting on how the wheels of justice have slowed down in some courtrooms because the government had failed to provide the necessary security. As we know, provincial sheriffs are responsible for security details. There was at that time, yes, \$33 million budgeted for court security and prisoner transfer. My first question to you is: of the \$39 million in that item, how much is for prisoner transfer and how much is for sheriffs court security across the province?

Mr. Denis: I just wanted to address an earlier comment of yours. Then I'll get to the actual numbers that you asked for.

Courts in this province are more secure than they have ever been. When I began practising law almost 12 years ago, you would just go in, and there were a couple of commissionaires, which you mentioned. No disrespect to the commissionaires. Now there are four levels of security. We have outside security. We have airport-style security, where you have to go through an X-ray scanner. There is roaming security on top of that. Then on top of that, if there's a problem in a courtroom, the clerk or the judge can actually hit a panic button, and one of the roaming people comes in. On top of that, if it's a matter that requires imminent security, they can ask for a sheriff in every room.

My concern is also for the taxpayer. I don't think that we need a sheriff in, for example, a \$5,000 small claims trial. In the interests

of the taxpayer we don't need that, only on an individual basis as well. So I'd have to disagree with that particular justice in and of itself.

Budget 2012, though, does include \$3.8 million for 41 additional sheriffs in courthouses throughout the province. There are 32 of the additional sheriff positions that will further enhance the security for the Court of Queen's Bench and the Provincial Court in Edmonton and Calgary. The remaining provisions are distributed in several other provincial locations. However, the bulk of the trials and the court activities do happen in the two major centres.

Also, court security and transport are under the same budget item, and these sheriffs are trained to do either function, either court security or transport.

8:30

Mr. MacDonald: Well, while we're talking about court security, I would point out that perhaps there's a CFL team that can use that ex-sheriff's services.

Mr. Denis: Not the Riders.

Mr. MacDonald: I don't say that lightly. That was totally unbecoming of a sheriff.

Mr. Denis: I couldn't agree with you more.

Mr. MacDonald: But I did hear today, I believe, of an incident in our courthouse in Edmonton within the courtroom. I would think that we have to provide adequate security so justices and judges can carry on with their activities within the courtroom in a safe and secure manner not only for themselves but also for the staff that accompany them.

Mr. Denis: I would agree. Just for the sake of your time I'm not going to go through the different levels of security again, but we have beefed up security significantly in the last 10 years, and I do think that that is very important for the administration of justice in this province.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Well, I just hope we have the budget so that court proceedings can proceed in a timely fashion.

Mr. Denis: As I mentioned earlier, though, with that particular incident in Red Deer, we do expect all peace officers to adhere to a certain level of conduct.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

Now, the adult community correctional services – we talked about this earlier – and the budget of \$43.3 million.

Mr. Denis: Sorry. Which line item are you referring to?

Mr. MacDonald: I'm on line 3.4 on page 254. This is the provincial correctional services. Could you tell me what provincial caseloads you anticipate in this year? You gave me some numbers earlier, but I don't think I heard the numbers of caseloads that you are anticipating for the year 2012-13.

Mr. Denis: I'll just run through this here, and then you can ask a follow-up if necessary. The statistics are all for 2010-2011: probation, 9,091; pretrial supervision, 4,254; alternative measures, 939; conditional sentences, 1,359; other programs, 2,439. The total caseload is 18,082. That doesn't include the supervision for the Liberal and PC caucuses tonight.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. Well, I was asking you specifically, Mr. Minister, for 2012-13, and you simply read to me the information I have before me from your 2010-11 annual report. I asked you respectfully: what are your anticipated caseloads? I didn't ask you for 2010-11.

Mr. Denis: My apologies. My bad. I'm not going to have these stats till the end of the fiscal year, frankly.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. So what did you base your budget of \$43.3 million on if you don't have an anticipated number of provincial caseloads for these adult community correctional services programs?

Mr. Denis: Would you bear with me for a moment, please?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

Mr. Denis: Okay. We do have a forecast here, but again we won't have the exact forecast, as I mentioned, till the end of the fiscal year. We'll get back to you on that, Member.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. Now, that's a lot of money, and there has in my view been little information provided to support it.

However, the pretrial supervision. The provincial caseloads for selected community supervision programs for adults: in the 2008-09 pretrial supervision caseload there were 2,644. In 2009-10 it went to 3,700. In 2010-11 it went to 4,254, which is a significant increase of 1,600 from two years previous. Can you tell me why the caseload for pretrial supervision is going so high?

Mr. Denis: Typically these are conditions imposed by a judge or justice of the court, and I leave the sentencing and other requirements within the jurisdiction of the court, which it is.

Mr. MacDonald: So this has nothing to do with an individual waiting a long period of time before their court date or their court dates.

Mr. Denis: No. Typically if somebody is sentenced for whatever particular item, you may have a pretrial supervision order. That's solely within the jurisdiction of the judiciary.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. Now, do you have any idea – you're looking at the young offenders community correctional services program here.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacDonald.

Mr. Denis: Thank you for some good questions.

The Chair: Now we'll ask Ms Woo-Paw.

Ms Woo-Paw: Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Minister, ensuring that Alberta has safe and secure communities is the paramount goal of your ministry. I understand that you have also increased the budget in this regard. My first question is on page 73 of your business plan. How did you derive the 82 per cent performance measure as a goal, you know, to measure the percentage of Albertans who feel reasonably safe to very safe walking alone in their area after dark? Why 82 per cent?

Mr. Denis: It's based upon past goals that we've had but also in the future, also in conjunction with what some other jurisdictions

do as well. I imagine all of us like to feel safe walking alone at night, especially if we're knocking on doors.

Ms Woo-Paw: Why not aspire to a higher percentage? Why 82?

Mr. Denis: It is always our goal to exceed our performance measures, but at the same time we do have to set a benchmark somewhere. Ideally, I'd like to see it at a hundred per cent, but if we can set a benchmark at 82 per cent and if we can exceed that every year, that's what the goal is.

Ms Woo-Paw: Okay. My next question is on the AFRRCS, the Alberta first responders radio communication system. From your perspective has this been an effective tool?

Mr. Denis: This whole system is actually still being developed. I do anticipate it will be an effective tool, but at the same time I can't comment on something that hasn't fully been implemented yet. As I mentioned to Mr. MacDonald, it should be in place in 2014. Also, from chatting with even rank-and-file police officers throughout the province, this is something that they expect. They've had problems with the radio system for a number of years. This is something that I think we should be supporting the police on.

Ms Woo-Paw: On page 255 it shows that the system investment in 2011-12 was \$93.4 million less than forecast. Why was it?

Mr. Denis: This is a result of some delays we had experienced in site acquisition with respect to some of the towers in and of themselves.

Ms Woo-Paw: Okay. So you expect progress will be made.

Mr. Denis: We do expect progress. We expect it by 2014, and I'm very proud to support our police officers on this file.

Ms Woo-Paw: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Woo-Paw.

Are there any other questions for the minister?

Seeing no further questions, Mr. Minister, I'd just like to remind you that for the people that had questions they may have put on the record and didn't receive full answers for at the time, you said you'd get back to them.

Mr. Denis: We will in due course.

The Chair: Yes. It doesn't come back here to the committee. Table that with the Assembly.

Seeing that there aren't any further questions, pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5) the estimates of the Department of the Solicitor General and Public Security are deemed to have been considered for the time allotted in the schedule.

I would like to remind the committee members that this is the last meeting scheduled for the Standing Committee on Public Health and Safety to consider the budget estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2013. Thank you all very, very much.

Mr. Denis: Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 8:40 p.m.]

