

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Tuesday, March 31, 1987 8:00 p.m.**

Date: 87/03/31

[The Committee of Supply met at 8 p.m.]

head: **COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY**

[Mr. Gogo in the Chair]

Department of Social Services

MR. CHAIRMAN: The department before the House tonight is Social Services, page 301 in your government estimates book. The authority for the programs is found commencing on page 306. Are you ready for the question on Vote 1? [interjections]

It's customary for the minister to make opening comments to the committee. If the minister covers the three votes, then of course committee members may put questions based on the three votes. The hon. Connie Osterman, minister, would you care to make some opening comments?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'd be most pleased to open comments on the 1987-88 budget of the Department of Social Services.

Mr. Chairman, over the course of the evening we will be deliberating in both philosophical, I suspect, as well as detailed terms about a budget that I believe to be fair, decisions that are fair. And the decisions appropriately challenge both individual initiative and responsibility. Before getting into some detail, I think the budget process should be discussed, even if briefly, tonight, because it's been quite an incredible year since I was last on my feet discussing the 1986-87 departmental budget. A number of things have happened, not the least of which has been a major shortfall in our energy revenues and the position that the government has had to take to call upon the taxpayers for far more resources.

Mr. Chairman, I have found myself in the position of being an advocate on behalf my constituents in the whole discussion about department budgets and their position that they are taxpayers and obviously want accountability in terms of what every minister does, and particularly this minister with a very large budget serving very, very many people across the province. In that discussion I obviously had to be an advocate, an advocate on behalf of the clients that we serve, last year some 5,500 people, and you will notice a somewhat lesser amount this year now part of the delivery system.

In developing the budget, we had a number of challenges. The challenges were put to all of us who have responsibility in developing budgets, and that is: are you doing the very best you can with the resources that have been allocated? I think it's fair to say that over time we have continually every year built onto the budget of this department. There hasn't been for some time a major review of the various program areas, so the challenge coming all in one fell swoop, so to speak, I think if nothing else caused a great deal of work not only for my office staff but particularly for the senior people throughout the department and, as well, in the regions throughout the province.

They were asked to develop a number of scenarios, scenarios that would look at: what if we were dealing, for instance, with a

5 percent cut, holding the line, a 10 percent cut? All of these things had to be addressed so we could assure ourselves that we in fact would know precisely what would occur if we had to deal with any one of those scenarios. And on that basis I had to become a very strong advocate on behalf of the people we all serve and the members of the Legislature wish to serve. I think it should be noted that many, many of my colleagues have taken much, much larger cuts, some more than others, in their departments -- because certainly we are not addressing a cut here -- in order to accommodate the services that should be delivered to the people of Alberta.

Also over the course of the past year, when you look at a regional system, six regions across the province with the multitude of people that are being served and are serving, I think it is important to look at how those regions are operating vis-à-vis one another, not necessarily from the standpoint of a cookie-cutter approach -- that is, that every single region should be addressing the people they are serving in precisely the same manner -- because I think we all realize that communities vary a great deal. Our regional system should contribute to that mosaic, if you will, and the understanding that we like to operate differently. We don't like to be told what to do by Ottawa, the municipalities don't like to be told what to do by the provincial government, and people who are working in the regions, directly associated with the clients they're serving, would like to have some autonomy in delivering that service. To the greatest extent possible we try to achieve that.

But still we must look at: are the resources being fairly shared? I say that because in developing regional budgets, while you may look at the population in the region, there still are those differences and we want to make sure that in the overall allocation there has been a fair sharing based on the identification of needs throughout the region. So I think it's fair to say, Mr. Chairman, that that has presented an incredible challenge. It's meant that from one month to the next the department has had to produce information both to satisfy the minister over the course of the last year that in fact we did have some reasonable continuity in the delivery of services -- and in some cases I haven't been satisfied. I'm sure as department staff have seen the results of their investigations for my information, they are not satisfied either. There are always things that can be done better. But I think it's also fair to say that more dollars don't necessarily make a better program. I think we must be inventive, innovative, and make sure that we're looking at every possibility in terms of the delivery of service.

So we get into some specifics, Mr. Chairman. For the information of the hon. members I thought I would just do a quick overview of each vote and also say that you will notice the votes are reorganized this year. There are three votes, and of course that reflects the change from community health now being part of another portfolio and more accurately reflects the manner in which we do the support programs for Albertans. First of all is administrative support, the next is financial support, and the third is social support. And in looking at the overall, as I've mentioned earlier, you will see that we have gone from a component of 5,573 full-time equivalents. We seem to have a new name for manpower and permanent positions each year. I was thinking that the hon. Member for Edmonton Gold Bar is probably as frustrated as the minister is sometimes in dealing with new terminology for man ... I wanted to say manpower; that's not appropriate anymore. We are now talking about full-time equivalent spaces here. So we did have last year 5,573 places, and this year you will see it is 5,348, which is down 225. Ac-

tually, if all things had been equal, there would have been a difference of 342 in number of positions, but because of the increase in the social allowance area there are 117 new positions there. So that is why you see a net decrease of only 225. After all, we wanted to rationalize our department as much as any other minister was being requested, to make sure that we were organized the very best possible way to deliver the services. But I think it's obvious from the number of people we need to serve that these additional positions were needed.

Mr. Chairman, in going into vote 1 and dealing with just a few specifics that I'd like to highlight -- then I'm sure many hon. members will have either comments or questions they would like to have answered -- I will first do an overview from my perspective. Hon. members will note first of all that in vote 1 we have a difference here of 191 positions down, so you will see that the bulk of the decrease in staff is in this particular vote. I think hon. members in the opposition will be particularly interested, in light of their comments about where we might save in the budget, that there is one less assistant deputy minister. In fact, there is no longer an associate deputy minister; that position has been now designated as an assistant deputy minister position. And we do have one of the lowest ratios of management to front-line workers of any department in government. So I think the administration who have worked very hard to do this rationalization obviously should be congratulated, because they have indeed succeeded in seeing that additional people were allocated to the front line, as had been my request last summer.

There are two areas I'd like to highlight, again especially speaking to comments that have been made about the budget by the Official Opposition, and that was that they thought there could be less public communications. You will see that there is a significant decrease in that one particular area; that's 1.0.9.

One other highlight -- though it's not large, in my view it's very significant in the human resources area -- is the native bursary program. This year, Mr. Chairman, we will expend some \$120,000 in that area, and I had spoken to it last year. I'm very pleased, because you like to meet the living, breathing people who are actually participating in something that you believe is important. When we just within recent weeks were a party to the signing of the Yellowhead Tribal Council agreement, I met a number of people who in fact now qualify under the bursary program. They were telling me just how important this initiative has been for them. In fact, it will allow them to serve their native community when they are finished their education -- a very important initiative because our native people certainly are working very hard at speaking to delivering the child welfare services in their particular areas. A number of them have already accomplished that.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like now to go to vote 2. You will note that vote 2 is the program area where most of the income security is delivered, and of course that's where you will see that the full-time equivalent employment is up significantly. There are not only 117 new staff allocated there; there was also staff transferred in from other areas, so it did mean an increase of 212 positions, a very significant increase, Mr. Chairman.

Now, speaking to some specifics in vote 2. First of all, I think that in looking at the social allowance area, you will see many categories under that particular heading. But leaving aside the direct delivery to individuals for a moment, let's look at program support, Chairman, because that's where the job-finding centres are found. It's under that particular vote 2.1.1, program support, vote 2. Last summer, first of all, I did have a report, and an hon. member asked me about that. In thoroughly

looking through what files I might have, I discovered that it was a verbal report from the department on the basis of the first job-finding centre there was information on. I believe that's where my comment came from, that there was a 50 to 70 percent success rate for the people who were accessing that program.

Now, the information that has been subsequently gleaned -- I want you to appreciate that it's average. In other words, there were some centres that you could, I think, term were very, very successful and others who were not as successful. So what we have are some averages to report tonight, Mr. Chairman. That is, of the pilot projects in Edmonton, Calgary, and Red Deer, approximately 50 percent of the participants have found full- or part-time employment within six months of their participation in the programs. I think it's fair to say that the job-finding centres are cost-effective, and aside from the benefits to participants, the taxpayers are also saving money. It is my understanding there have been some 2,000 people participate in the job-finding centres, and we believe that there will continue to show a net gain in utilizing this type of program if you measure it against the cost in human terms of people who are unemployed.

Then grouping together, Mr. Chairman, the rest of the areas that are direct financial assistance to recipients, first of all there are close to 70,000 cases in the social allowance area. That is the umbrella amount for all the categories that are described in your vote 2 area, and I think some of them deserve special mention. While in most cases you will be aware that rates have been maintained the same amount for the aged, physically handicapped, mentally handicapped, guardian social allowance, there is a rise in the amount of dollars allocated basically simply because of the call on the program. The number of people coming forward has increased.

Now we can look at the single-parent families, and you will notice that there has been a significant increase there as well. That is not only to account, Mr. Chairman, for the numbers who have increased who are accessing the program but also the \$21 a month that we have allocated on top of what these people were formerly receiving.

Obviously, the other major area that has received a lot of discussion both inside this Legislature and outside is the single employable area. Of course there is an astounding increase there. This increase is worrisome. It is worrisome for not only this province but every province across the country, because our information is that notwithstanding the level of employment, or unemployment as the case may be, across the country there are significant rises in this particular category. So obviously, Mr. Chairman, we must continue to discuss that area and see if we can't seek not only remedies but the causes for this particular increase.

As you will know, there has been a decrease in the shelter allowance in that particular area as well as the \$5-a-month decrease in the food allowance, which of course I've described in the House before. But just to remind you, it is a decrease in the amount that is presently applied to the basic adult food allowance. There is a top-up over and above that for singles. It had been 20 percent, and we decreased that to 15 percent, which was the \$5 decrease.

Looking at the other income benefits, Mr. Chairman, first of all I think it's important to note that under the Alberta assured income for the severely handicapped you will see a significant rise. There are 2,600 more cases this year than there were last year, for a total -- we project for this year we'll be working with some 14,830 particular applicants.

The other element that I think is important to note is that in

the widows' allowance you will see a decrease. That is not a decrease because widows are now receiving less overall, but we have the federal government with their program more or less now fully participated in, and I think it is the age group from 60 to 65 that now receives a widows' pension. Of course, that federal participation enables us to handle more and more people as they come forward to apply for the pension, because the ceiling in ours is reached more quickly so our top-up doesn't have to be quite as much. That has been of great assistance, because hon. members will know that while that amount is down, we believe that the increases will continue to occur. A slight decrease to account for the federal participation may take some people over the overall that is allowed, but very large numbers still qualify.

Now going to vote 3. First of all, let's have a look at the full-time equivalent employment positions here. They're down 246, a very significant amount. We will go through a brief explanation in this program area. Obviously, it also has been the subject of some reorganization. We can start with the program support area, which again has had, if I recall correctly, some people transferred in as a result of reorganization. The other area that has just a slight decrease -- members will be interested in that the amount of foster care is down slightly. There are more services now being delivered directly to families, and we hope that will keep families intact as opposed to having to have children in foster care outside their parents' home. That accounts in the main, along with a small amount of reduced travel, for the slight downsizing in that particular budget area.

The contracted residence is again, I believe, a success story. We have more and more services delivered in the community through outreach programs, a lesser number of children in that area, so both there and in the residence and treatment in institutions area you'll see what I believe to be a significant decrease. Obviously, we don't transfer children overnight, but we're making steady progress. And I think that's a very important area, because it is our very strong belief that children should be maintained where possible in their own homes. In the handicapped children services area, I'm very pleased that my colleagues were supportive of an increase there. Presently we are serving some 3,565 families, all of these families to a greater or lesser extent handling the burden of having a handicapped child at home. So where possible we'll certainly endeavour to deliver the very fullest services possible.

I do have a note, that probably I'll refer to later, on the contracted residences and institutional services. Just going along, I think that again I should note the reorganization and program support also under the services for adults and families. The senior citizens, 3.2.3 under vote 3, of course is the advisory council and secretariat chaired by the very able Member for Highwood, and I would note that that group has worked very hard in trying to look fairly at how they're handling the dollars that are available, how they're delivering services, and also allocating grants to the organizations that they work with, and so have played their part in coming up with a 3.5 percent decrease. I very much appreciate the effort by the hon. member in that regard.

The agency payments, Mr. Chairman, for the information of all hon. members, include the women's shelters, and it's my commitment to have the women's shelters' budgets remain intact from where they were last year. If there is a slight change, it would only reflect in some cases. I am told, a reduced usage of the shelters. There would be a small component of their allowance that would be affected, and that's the variable expenditures, not the core expenditures that deal obviously with the upkeep of the residence, the heating, and the staff they must keep

in place. There are some small variable costs that are able to be decreased if they have a lower residency rate.

Worthy of note there also, Mr. Chairman, is what I believe to be a significant change in the awareness of Albertans about the work of the women's shelters and family violence overall, because there has been a write-in campaign. People from all across this province have been writing in response and to support not only women's shelters but support work in the family violence area. That's a very important area that needs to continually be addressed. I think that over the course of the next several weeks we may have some very exciting announcements to speak to in that area, because as I said, communities across this province are becoming more and more aware and saying to us that they want to participate and support work done in this area.

The hostels and institutions, Mr. Chairman. You will notice a significant decrease there of 27.5 percent. This is where, first of all, the single men's hostels in both Calgary and Edmonton are involved, and of course there's been decreased usage there. Also the area of Hilltop House was included there, and there's a significant budget decrease because Hilltop House is being phased out. I undertook this afternoon to describe in more detail to the members where services would be accessed by those people who would normally have been resident there and in other places. First of all, the number of clients involved in alcohol abuse, some 36 percent, will be looked after at McDougall House and by AADAC. Physical abuse: a number of those will be able to be looked after in a place called A Safe Place, Spaces for women without children: in the area of abuse there has been also a push to have a number of these people access the women's shelters. There's community counseling by a number of organizations for people who have suffered depression, and there have been approximately 25 percent of the people who have come to Hilltop House with that problem. A number that are on parole -- also counseling support is available there. And 2 percent only that their situation was one of pregnancy -- there's private or community residence services and community counseling support available for those people.

So, Mr. Chairman, I think that overall there are probably better services in the community available for the people that we're describing, and I think that while we may be able to still do it better, that's a start in the right direction.

Chairman, significant agency payments and institutions: basically I wanted to say that Michener obviously is the largest institution under 3.3.3. While there is a small amount of downsizing occurring there, it is not significant and we continue to offer support to Michener, hopefully in the future, as funds allow, to do some upgrading there as well as offer the other very important option that many, many people demand and expect now. And that is community living. There's obviously a very diverse opinion between those who believe in institutional care and those who believe in more independence for people.

Mr. Chairman. I can't believe I've been on my feet this long. I've covered, at least in the initial overview, the votes that are there, and I will sit down and expect comments from the hon. members. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before we proceed, it may be of interest to the public in the galleries to explain very quickly what is happening here. We're in the Second Session of the 21st Legislature. That means we've had 21 Legislatures since 1905. The throne speech was delivered on March 5, which showed the government's intentions for this session. This was followed by

the budget speech on March 20. The ministers are now -- and they are the only ones authorized to recommend the expenditure of money to the Assembly -- offering their programs for expenditures for the 1987-88 year. You've just heard the hon. Minister of Social Services presenting her \$1.23 billion budget to the Assembly. Members of the Assembly now have the opportunity of questioning, amending, and commenting on her estimates.

The hon. Member for Edmonton Calder.

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am grateful this evening to have the opportunity to talk about some issues within the Department of Social Services. There certainly are a number of issues that need to be addressed. I would like to thank the minister for her previous explanation of some of the votes.

The minister drew the attention of the Assembly to the layout of the votes this year. Last year we were able to look at seven votes within the department, although I realize it was with Community and Occupational Health. This year I find it very interesting to note that we have moved to three votes. It's very difficult to know exactly where a lot of the funding of certain services lies, but I find it interesting in the fact that we've got vote 1, which deals with the administrative levels. And if you look closely, you'll see that -- and the minister has explained this -- votes 2 and 3 . . . Vote 2 deals with the financial aspect of Social Services, is strictly the handing out of the money, which has been increased this year. But I think it's a little bit deceptive in that we do have increased usage of the social assistance programs. In vote 3, on the other hand, is our support services, and this involves things like counselling, referrals. To me it's the human element of the whole Social Services department. Here we've seen a cutback of almost \$7 million. It's clearly the area that helps people help themselves, so I'm a little bit distressed to see such a cutback in funding in the support services area. I feel that the more commitment you have in the support services area, the more you will be able to help people eventually get off the support services that are needed and become independent and be able to survive on their own.

Speaking of surviving, Mr. Chairman, I think that something worth talking about this evening is the major increases of the numbers of people that are using the food banks. I think it's absolutely deplorable that the trend is that we see increasing numbers of people utilizing the food banks. Now, according to a news release of March 24, 1987, put out by the Edmonton Food Bank, it stated that single people account for 40 to 50 per cent of the demand at the food bank right now. They estimated that with the \$5 decrease to food allowance which was recently announced by the department, they will see increases of at least a thousand people per month. Now those are figures that were put out by the Edmonton Food Bank, not myself.

MR. HERON: Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Stony Plain.

MR. HERON: Yes. Looking at *Standing Orders*, it says, section 62(2), the topic "must be strictly relevant to the item." I fail to see how the long discussion on food banks is relevant to the estimates under consideration. [interjections]

MS MJOLSNESS: Mr. Chairman, I'm quite surprised by those previous remarks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order. Order. Order please. Order please. It would appear to the Chair that the remarks are perhaps quite consistent with the votes before the House. The Chair, however, cautions the use of external media . . .

MS BARRETT: Media?

MR. CHAIRMAN: . . . sources as being the basis for any argument. [interjections] Order please. Order please. However, the hon. member's comments are quite consistent with the votes before the House.

MS BARRETT: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman. It occurs to me that the member was talking about conversations and studies done by the Edmonton Food Bank and not by the media.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Edmonton Highlands, the Chair heard the hon. member referring to press releases. The Chair assumes press releases were in fact carried by the media.

The hon. Member for Edmonton Calder.

MS MJOLSNESS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think food banks are indeed relevant tonight.

When we're speaking about social services or the need for social programs, I think it's very important to discuss what their purpose is. Why do we have social programs in the first place? Why do we offer these services to people in need? I'd like the members of the Assembly this evening to just think of the kind of neighbourhood they would like to live in. I think the first thing that would come to mind would be probably the physical makeup of a neighbourhood. You'd probably want it to be pleasant, have trees, nice roads, nice sidewalks, et cetera. But if we take it a little bit further, I think you would probably want to live in a neighbourhood where people didn't feel isolated, where neighbours cared about one another and were willing to assist if people were in need of assistance in some way. And I think all of us would like a secure, safe environment, probably free of poverty, free of violence. We would probably like to live in a neighbourhood where people are employed, where they feel financially and emotionally secure, where people have a decent place to live. And probably, Mr. Chairman, you would want to live in a neighbourhood where people have hope and optimism for the future. And if we look at this province as one large neighbourhood, I think those are the kinds of things we should be striving for.

There are many people in this province that are dependent upon services, and a large number of those people are dependent on those services not because they have had a choice. They need some support of some kind, and it's nice if they could go to their friends or to their neighbours, and many do, for that kind of support and help. But many of the problems they experience are so severe that they need trained professionals to assist them. I think that's where the government's role comes in. They play a very significant role in offering the professional kind of help available to people.

We have seen many cuts in the social services area, and in a recession like the one we're experiencing, of course those services are needed now more than ever. And I'd like to talk a minute about Hilltop House, although I asked questions in question period today. We know that the department has made a decision to shut down Hilltop House. I think this is a real serious move, Mr. Chairman, because I know for a fact that McDougall House, for example, is full right now. They have no room to take any

more women. A Safe Place does not take single battered women; that's a fact. They do not have any beds available. The women's shelters are set up right now to accept women with children, women with families. They're not in the position to take the kinds of women with the kinds of problems coming out of Hilltop House. So it's a great concern to me that these women will have no alternatives. The minister did speak of other counseling services, but I must remind her that Hilltop was a residential type of service in that women were able to live there; that was their home. So if we talk about isolated counseling services, we're not really giving these women an alternative in terms of the residential component of care.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to talk a little bit about the morale of the department in this province, because I have been told by some very reliable sources that the morale in the department is very low at the present moment. We've got certain programs being shut down, and those people working in those programs have been transferred to other programs where they might not have any expertise. I've been told that the caseloads in income security are as high as 400 cases in some district offices. I'm told that some child welfare workers are working with 300 cases in some instances. The day care subsidy workers are up to, in some cases, 800 and 900 cases that the social workers have to handle. Now, I feel these social workers have a general commitment to the people they work with and also to making this a better place to live, and what we're asking them to do is work under circumstances that they can't possibly do a proper job. They can't offer proper counseling; they can't do proper assessments under these types of conditions.

It's also true right now that many of the people working for the department quite frankly don't know how long they're going to have their jobs, and this is causing a lot of stress, a lot of uncertainty, at all levels of the department right up to management. These are the kinds of comments that have been coming to me, and I think they're very serious ones.

I would like to say that the anxiety is not just within the department; it's also felt out in the community. Before the budget came down, it seemed to me that we were hearing rumours from various ministers about where we were going to be cut. People were really frightened. We finally got the budget, and even with the budget coming down, we get new announcements every two or three days about where there are additional cuts being made. So the anxiety is being felt out in the community as well.

It seems to me, Mr. Chairman, that there's been a trend in this province by this government to privatize within Social Services. It seems to be a magic word these days with the government. And there are two kinds of privatization when we're talking about the Social Services area. One, of course, is the non-profit agencies delivering services, and of course they've got an elected board of directors. The other scenario is where we have commercial, for-profit agencies taking over service. And I think it's very important to make the distinction between the two.

The nonprofits, I feel, are for the most part doing a very commendable job in the best interests of their clients. I think we in the Official Opposition support decentralized services, but my real concern lies with the private companies or individuals delivering services, and this is happening more and more. Of course, their ultimate goal when they take over a service is to make a profit; that's why they get into the business. This might be fine for business in other sectors, but we must be very cautious when we talking about people services. I oppose this ideology that services should be given with an element of mak-

ing a profit when it comes to people in need, because what will happen when a company is trying to maximize their profits is that they will end up cutting corners, which will directly affect the quality of programs that are being delivered. They may hire untrained staff so that they can pay them lower wages, and consequently a lower quality of program is offered again. They may accept clients that are less of a problem or have less severe problems and refuse to take those that have serious problems so that this has serious implications on the availability of a certain program or of access to a certain program for many individuals.

I would like to note that as we privatize services in this province, we have yet to have been given any standards. I think the department was up to the eighth draft of generic standards when that was shelved. I would like to ask the minister: as we privatize, does she not see this as a very important step, to have these standards put in place? And I would also like to ask the minister: has there been an appeal procedure developed for people utilizing privatized services? Because I've had a case brought to my attention where somebody was being abused in a home, and I'm just wondering what kind of appeal procedure that individual has, what options they have.

I'd like to talk about the financial and program monitoring with agencies, because they seem to me to be virtually nonexistent in the province. I believe, as the minister does, that the agencies should have flexibility, that they should have autonomy. But I feel that when public money goes into these services, there's a certain amount of accountability that must take place, that the government has a responsibility to make sure the money is being spent in the best interests of the public.

In February my colleague from Calgary Forest Lawn and I visited an institute in Calgary that was delivering services to the handicapped. They had requested several meetings, apparently, with Calgary caucus members and with the minister but with no response. This is what they had told me anyway. And I'd like to report that between 1981 and 1985 that particular institute had no government audit done, no financial audit done on their books. They had to eventually request that an audit be done, and it was found that \$1.5 million had been misspent. So what I'm saying is that there is a real need for the government to tighten up on the kinds of audits -- well, they're not doing the audits -- but surely the kind of financial accountability that we should request of these agencies.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the money being spent in the area of day care. This government spends huge amounts of money in the area of day care; I think it probably spends the most in all of Canada. According to Christopher Bagley -- and I happen to agree with him -- we do have very low standards in this province. We're the only province that doesn't require training for day care staff, child care staff. So when we're spending this kind of money, you know, I'd really like to know: what kind of value are we getting for that money? I think that's a really important question to ask. We have the highest percentage of private day care in all of Canada. Consequently, we lose millions of dollars every year through the Canadian assistance plan. So we're spending the money, but where is the money going? What are we getting for spending that money?

The minister indicated during session last time, Mr. Chairman, when we were in estimates, that she herself was concerned about the lack of accountability on the part of day care operators in the area of spending money, in the area of accountability. And she also stated that the administration of day care was under review. So last month I phoned her department to find out a little bit about the review that was being done and was told that

they get 40 calls every day from parents. And that was their review. I don't know if the minister would care to comment about that, but I see that that falls short of the kinds of concerns I have in terms of accountability for day care.

There are a great number of community agencies in this province that are delivering service. I've mentioned that previously. And this is quite evident when it comes to services for the handicapped. Residential services are being delivered. Vocational training, rehabilitation services: they're all being delivered by various agencies. I'm sure the minister values the services they're delivering, yet the government has cut back on their finding this year, and many of these agencies have had no increases for the past three or four years.

I have received many letters from the Medicine Hat region, where they are experiencing cutbacks right now, from many families in that area, and they are very distressed about these cuts to their local associations. They feel that these cuts are going to have direct implications on the quality of life that their sons or daughters will experience. Also, in many instances it's clients and the people that are running group homes that are very concerned. The negotiation process between the department and these agencies and communities has been virtually nonexistent. It seems to me that the government has made decisions unilaterally, with no consultation whatsoever with these various organizations, so consequently there has been a real mistrust building out there in the community.

I just have to use the example that my colleague from Calgary Mountain View brought to the attention of the House: the handicapped children's services in Calgary, where contracts were signed by those families and the department and the department decided to renege on the contracts. I keep wondering what would happen if the families had done the same. I'm sure the department would have come down very hard on those families.

I had mentioned last session that there were a number of communities that were without services to the handicapped, and the minister had indicated to me at that time that she would be glad to receive that kind of representation because she was unaware of any services that were lacking. I took the liberty after that to write to approximately 150 community agencies because I wanted to get down in writing exactly what their concerns were. I compiled all of the information. I have six pages of services that are lacking within the handicapped community throughout this province, and I would be happy if a page would come and deliver this to the minister right now so that she's got it for her information.

One area I'm greatly concerned about is the family violence area and child abuse. The minister did speak of this a bit tonight already. It's difficult for any of us in this Assembly to really imagine what it would be like to be physically or mentally or sexually abused. I think all we can do, unless we've experienced it, is to just attempt to try and sympathize with many children and adults that have gone through this experience.

When a child decides to disclose, it's a very traumatic experience for the child, and they go through many hours of agony deciding whether or not they should in fact disclose in the first place because they may be threatened by the person who is abusing them or perhaps they feel that they are betraying their family. So when a child discloses, it's imperative that child welfare is able to respond immediately and investigates the complaint. There's a growing concern -- and these concerns have been brought to my attention along with other colleagues of mine -- that there are delays in the process with child welfare.

I think this is a very serious lack of action on the part of the department, and I would hope that the minister would really look into this because any delays in the investigation could cause serious, serious damage to a child.

We know that abuse is passed on from generation to generation, and I think we must teach our children that they have rights. We must educate parents; we must educate police, teachers; and we must educate our MLAs as well. I think that lacking sadly in this province is an overall plan to deal with child abuse and family violence. And with all due respect to the Member for Lacombe -- I see him sitting over across the way now -- he was stating to me a couple of days ago in the Assembly, as we have our little discussions back here ... [interjections] Not really. He has difficulty with the area of family violence, Mr. Chairman, and he was saying to me that he didn't feel that family violence existed or took place in the rural areas. Well, I would just like to say that I'm from the rural areas and I know what happens because it happened to a very good friend of mine when I was growing up in a small town. It does happen. I'd like to say that the department has put out an excellent book called *Breaking the Pattern* and I would really appreciate it if the Member for Lacombe would care to read the book. Perhaps he would have a little bit more compassion for people that are involved in family violence. Maybe he will be careful what he chooses to talk about from now on.

This is the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, and I'm dismayed that four people died in Edmonton last winter. We've got growing numbers of teenagers out on the streets right now. We've got a lot of chronically mentally ill wandering the streets with no place to go. I was rather surprised to see nothing under the budget allocated for this particular cause. Now, I realize that it comes under Municipal Affairs; I've been in contact with the gentleman that's heading up the committee for the Department of Municipal Affairs. But I'd like to say that it's a much more complex problem than building a few houses for a few people. We're talking here about some very complex problems, and I really think we have to pay attention. We've got a chance this year to do something meaningful about homelessness in this province, and I think this government should take action in this area. I have been to the women's emergency accommodation centre. Those women in there have absolutely no place to go. They're suffering from mental illness. You know, it really opens your eyes when you visit these places and you realize how serious a problem we're facing.

I have a number of other concerns. The minister has alluded to the job-finding clubs. She has stated a few facts about a review that's been done. I would hope she would table that review on the job-finding clubs in the House so that we could get the information she cited tonight. There are many other issues, and this evening some of my colleagues will address some of the other issues in more detail than I have tonight.

We have seen \$7 million in support services decreased in the budget here. I think this could cause irreparable damage to many men, women, and children, and we're talking specifically about counseling services, referral services -- all of the human-type services and preventative-type services within the department. I would hope that the minister would comment on some of the issues I have brought up this evening.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does the hon. minister wish to respond?

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, I think that the extent of

the hon. member's comments, if I don't respond now, may leave it to too late in the evening, and then it gives an opportunity for other members to ask questions and, again, possibly a response.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Minister of Social Services followed by the Member for Highwood and the Member for Edmonton Gold Bar.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Mr. Chairman, the member raised a whole host of questions, and hopefully I can respond, to some degree, in order because I think it's important to do so.

First of all, food bank usage. Alberta is a very interesting province. There are a number of communities with food banks, and the usage varies. It doesn't seem to vary with the degree of unemployment or the number of people on social allowance; it seems to vary in other ways. I don't know how you explain why Calgary has a far lesser degree of usage than does Edmonton, but it is a fact, and it would be interesting to study and find out why we have that particular set of circumstances.

The residential component that was spoken to and the concern the hon. member had about room available at the various places that I mentioned: I will take that under advisement and certainly check, because it would not be my intention not to have available agencies or accommodation to do the job in that particular area because I realize there are women to be served.

The hon. member mentioned morale. That had to do with a number of things. The anxiety about jobs: I think it's fair to say that the transition is about complete in the job area and very fortunate in that I believe we only had 40-some permanent positions that were actually affected. I realize that when there is a discussion about downsizing a department, one the size of ours, it is very hard to get out messages to staff right across the province, and there's whole host of rumours that occur. It's most unfortunate, because in a number of cases media were responsible. In adding up something that came from a leaked document that spoke about the "hundreds and hundreds" of jobs that we're going to be lost -- in adding this up and evolving some headlines, they did a great disservice to the staff of the department and the people those staff are serving. I find that very unfortunate and, I think, inexcusable in terms of the ramifications of something like that.

Indeed there was some anxiety also in the public. But what would the hon. member or indeed the opposition in general have said if out of a clear blue sky, without any discussion with the public, we had suddenly come down with the decreases that we have in some departments and the alteration of programs, without saying to the public: "This is what we must look at. What do you think? What is your input? How do we prioritize the services that are to be delivered?" Again I think that it's a responsible government that says to the public: these are the things that we must look at. And indeed the public responded. The response I was very grateful for, and I think that you can see the results of that response in the very significant budget that is in place in Social Services.

I'm not sure -- Mr. Chairman, it's not very often I am just puzzled by the look on somebody's face, but the hon. Member for Calgary Mountain View has had his mouth open for a full five minutes. I'm not sure what it's about, but ...

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Disbelief.

MRS. OSTERMAN: ... it started, Chairman, in reference to my comments about sharing information with the public, about

the scenarios that we must look at, and what the public thought. And indeed, if they're advocating that we don't consult the public about the information that we have and what we must look at and where their priorities are, then I would believe that the government would not be doing their job and acting responsibly. And while I realize that the discussion does promote a certain amount of anxiety, just as any family discussion around a table does when we look at having to share a lesser amount to go around, in planning how we're going to do that, it's still something that must occur.

The hon. member also raised the caseload. We have, in my view, a very moderate caseload across the province. The number of workers that have now been hired can attest to that, and particularly in the child welfare area. I am told the range is between 19 and 35, the lowest in the country, and I would be happy for the hon. member to give to me the information on the office that she is speaking about, where this caseload exists, because I certainly must check that out. So if I have reports that are not accurate coming from the district offices, certainly this is one way for us to conclude that discussion and make sure that those facts are turned around. I expect that the hon. member will provide me with that information.

The other important item that was raised was in the standards area. I know that the hon. Member for Edmonton Gold Bar also spoke about this. We talked about it in question period and near the end of the last session, and I had indicated that I thought that a standards paper for discussion would be available late in the fall. Chairman, it is apparently right now in the process of being vetted by the deputy minister and will be available to me. The organizations who have been a part of this development, of course, are numerous, and it is very important that they as a peer group share information and set the very highest standards possible. I have great confidence that as a result of the elongated discussions in this area it indeed will have a paper that will speak to all the concerns that we have, that will be able to be utilized by other organizations, and it is my expectation that once I am satisfied with the paper, there should be a responsible group visit the various institutions around the province and see that they're acquainted with the standards and that we have a full involvement of organizations, both public and private, right across the province.

The other area that the hon. member spoke to was the audit, and some organization in Calgary. I'd also be pleased to have that information. I'm aware of one organization that we had difficulty getting a complete audit on. I had to intervene to make that occur in order that I was satisfied that the kinds of costs that we must look at, so that we can have a fair understanding of what negotiation stance to take as we work with organizations around the province -- and have some sense of where the various costs are and if they're realistic. Obviously, when a very large organization doesn't want to be forthcoming with that information, it causes me a fair amount of distress. And the hon. member is absolutely right. Public dollars are being expended, and that information should be forthcoming.

Then leading into the discussion about the various privatization or 'communitization' initiatives -- I'd like to coin a new word -- there is a small amount of private-sector involvement which is spoken to as the "for profit" area. Chairman, I am more interested in not looking at whether somebody has made a few dollars on a service that they are providing if they can provide it more efficiently and more effectively than another organization can. As far as I'm concerned, one of the very fairest ways of judging that is to get into the tendering process.

We've had tremendous success in that process, and a number of organizations have said to me, "In fact, what you have done in requiring a tender is to have us look at what we were actually charging for; what about the structure of our organization; did we in fact have a bureaucracy being built into this so-called community organization?" And most of the tenders have shown that there has been a saving, that in fact community organizations are saying they could be a lot leaner and much more efficient because, after all, they must deliver as effectively as possible the services to the clients that they are serving, and they must be able to assure the public that every single dollar is well placed. So when I look at the measure of what is occurring, it will be in the product that is delivered, not in looking at what somebody's bottom line was.

Chairman, I think that also in that very same vein I would say that the contracts themselves again have proven useful, not only for ourselves but for those various organizations, both private and public. Because in speaking to the contract they know exactly what is expected of them and what it is that they should be delivering, and on that basis we have it in writing. It is not a gray area saying, "Well, we thought it would be this or we thought it would be that." It is a businesslike arrangement, and surely in the delivery of services to people one mustn't get away from business principles. The business principles allow us to measure the organizations in their administrative end and say to them, "Are you being as lean and trim as possible? Are you efficient? Because, after all, this is an expenditure of public dollars." And they appreciate that.

While there was some concern to begin with, I think it's fair to say that they have been appreciative of the process. Because, like all other things, when you're in a granting situation and you just every year say, "Well, there's been a cost of living index increase of this amount or there has been this or there has been that; just give me more money," and the money is provided, there really isn't any emphasis on once in a while looking at a review: let's take a look at what we're doing. And surely over the course of 10 or 15 years of delivering a service in a certain way, there must be some sense of being able to evolve, to be more effective, or into a different style of services.

After all, if we were to deliver services now like they were doing 25 years ago, you would have seen massive institutions in this province. Every single person with a handicap by now would have been institutionalized. Obviously, that isn't what we want. We want to see people in the community. So we are evolving to that end. If we make mistakes along the way, then obviously we will discover them, our clients will discover them, even the opposition will discover them, and hopefully bring them to our attention, and to the best of our ability, they will be corrected. But that's what the evolution is all about. We must try at every stage, at every step in the course, to direct our attention to doing a better job and doing it more effectively for the people that we serve.

Chairman, while I realize that there probably are some philosophical differences that could be addressed in a discussion of this nature, I think it's fair to say that all hon. members sitting in this House again have their ideas about how they would serve people, and everybody's intentions, in my view, are the very best. But some of us walk on different roads in terms of that delivery service. So when we, for instance, look at speaking to this year that speaks to shelter across the world and look at what's available in Alberta -- leaving aside a very small component of people who constantly cause us to anguish and say, "What to do?" -- we are the very best housed people in the

world. In the world, not just in Canada. And I think we should be very proud of that. On the other hand, we must not forget those who are in need.

But what to do with those people who want to live on the street, the people that I saw in Calgary that don't want to be identified? They don't want to be identified. They don't even want to come into a place of shelter. You literally would have to drag them in. You can coax and cajole and make these places available, but there are many people who don't march to our drummer. They march to a very different drummer, and in some cases we must respect that. We cannot trammel their rights, notwithstanding the fact that we believe that they shouldn't be left in those circumstances. I am told that there are some people you would have to drag into a shelter, because that is not what they want. And so it does present us with a problem that is, I suppose, basically a very large heartache, because we don't understand why people would have themselves in that condition.

The day care area. First of all, Chairman, I'm really tired of hearing people speak about poor standards or no standards in the province of Alberta. It really purveys such a misconception when you take a look at the child/staff ratio that we have, which is one of the best in the country. The hon. member and others may be speaking about education of staff. That I understand, and that I have under consideration. But I sincerely hope that they will be far more honest in their approach to the subject and not just speak in general terms about no standards, because we have standards. The Social Care Facilities Review Committee drops in on day cares all over this province and reports where they believe they see a weakness. We speak to that and we will continue to speak to it. It is my view that we may even have to get harsher in terms of the types of admonishments that are made to those day cares and how many times they have the opportunity to correct the circumstances in which they're functioning. But make no mistake, Mr. Chairman, we have very good standards in this province.

But when you want to talk about institutional day care, let us then talk about where the difference is, and that is in the academic education of the individuals who are the child care givers. Because there are many of us -- one of them is standing on her feet tonight -- who, notwithstanding her life experience, would not qualify in some people's estimation as a child care giver. And that I do not accept.

ANHON. MEMBER: A certified mother.

MRS. OSTERMAN: No, we won't certify motherhood.

Chairman, other than asking the hon. member again to make sure that I am provided with the information about the specifics that she raised, that ends my comments in response to her questions and comments. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Highwood, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton Gold Bar.

MR. ALGER: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm especially pleased to speak in support of the budget estimates for the Department of Social Services, particularly in one line of the department's endeavour, and that would be senior citizens.

The department, of course, is of vital importance to the older persons in our province. About half of all the senior citizens in the province, close to 90,000 persons, receive supplementary income from the department through the Alberta assured income

plan. The payments range from \$10 to \$95 a month, depending upon the amount of additional income they have and the amount they need. This most effectively supplements their old age security and guaranteed income supplement and brings the basic income level of Alberta senior citizens to the highest among the Canadian nation's provinces. As a result, no senior citizen in our province, if single or widowed, should have less than \$752 a month to live on, and a married couple, if both are 65 or over, will have at least \$1,160 a month combined income. The Department of Social Services, therefore, through the Alberta assured income plan, ensures that our older people do not live in poverty.

The department also helps widows and widowers between the ages of 55 and 64, low-income widows and widowers, through the Alberta widows' pension program. As of late 1986, 3,464 widows and widowers were receiving this financial assistance which brings them to the same guaranteed income level as senior citizens. As you would imagine, most of these persons who are being assisted are women, God bless them.

In addition to these income support programs the department also assists a very few older persons through the social allowance program and the Alberta assured income for the severely handicapped. These are the very few senior citizens who do not qualify for the income support programs for older people or who have large dependent families. They were about 1,300 in number in 1986, Mr. Chairman.

Now I'd like to say a few words about that part of the department's budget estimates for which I have a particular interest and responsibility. The budget estimates for the Provincial Senior Citizens' Advisory Council and the Senior Citizens Secretariat. The Provincial Senior Citizens' Advisory Council, as you know, is composed of senior citizens representing various regions of the province who assist us by providing advice about programs for older people. The council members are able to bring to the government a unique and fresh approach to the concerns of our *older* citizens. The council's 1986 report was tabled last week. I am proud of it, and feel that it has in it some good suggestions for us to consider for future emphasis. The budget of the council is included in the estimates for the budget of the department, and the members are of course appointed by the minister herself, Mrs. Connie Osterman. This report is a major contribution the department makes to seniors all over the province.

The budget estimates of the department also include the budget for the Senior Citizens Secretariat, a small but vital centre providing information, consultation, and resource assistance about seniors to citizens of Alberta who are interested in the concerns of older people. And I'm amazed, Mr. Chairman, at just how many citizens throughout the province are completely interested in the concerns of older people. This includes both the seniors themselves, their families, and those working with older people. The secretariat responds to many telephone and written requests for information and publishes quite a number of booklets and papers relating to the needs and concerns of older people. It also assists with the co-ordination of government programs for seniors. Many different government departments, including the Department of Community and Occupational Health, the Department of Hospitals and Medical Care, the Department of Recreation and Parks, the Department of Culture, and the department of public works, just to name a few, have programs relating to seniors, and the secretariat provides a focal point within the government for information and co-ordination. This is yet another contribution the Department of

Social Services makes to the lives of the elderly in Alberta.

The 1987-88 budget estimates for both the council and the secretariat are slightly reduced from the 1986-87 budget, in line with the general reductions in government expenditures. However, like all other government services we shall look for creative ways to increase our effectiveness and efficiency.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I strongly support the work the department is doing for seniors and also for people of all ages in our province, those in need of financial help and other special services. Through this department we in Alberta ensure a basic security for our citizens, thereby improving the well-being of all Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Edmonton Gold Bar followed by the Member for Edmonton Avonmore.

MRS. HEWES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the minister for her opening remarks and explanations. Some of my questions have in fact been answered.

Mr. Chairman, I must say at the outset that when I heard the throne speech, with its lofty statements about Alberta's leading programs in health care, education, and social policy, and then read the section on social policy, I frankly was not sure I was in Alberta. I'm not sure that it reflected the reality that I know is happening out there and that I'm sure many of us do. I had hoped that with the sort of predictions and the projections that were in the throne speech and the information that we had about special warrants being required last year to keep up with demand, that in fact the budget would reflect something different. But I'm sorry to say I don't feel that it really does.

There are some assumptions that have been made, it seems to me, that this budget is based on. One is that there are jobs out there, and I think the evidence is contrary. Another one, it appears to me, is that people won't work if we give them a reasonable living accommodation or amount to live on in food, clothing, and shelter. I would remind hon. members, Mr. Chairman, that most of the people who have come on to social assistance, the new people in this last year, are people who mere months or weeks before were good-living taxpayers contributing to the GNP and, God willing, they will be again shortly. But these are people who deserve our maximum support and concern in what must be a personal tragedy for many of them.

The assumption is that if we give these people enough maybe they'll get used to it and will get lazy and won't ever want to go back to work. Another assumption, Mr. Chairman, is that the community will rise to pick up the difference. Now, communities are already strapped -- we know that -- and that means the difference, whether we're talking about shelters or food banks or whatever. Another one is that we can economize on secondary prevention, that we don't have to worry too much about social support to individuals and families: we can reduce that; we don't have to keep that one up. Another is that the taxpayer doesn't want to support so-called welfare programs or doesn't seemingly want to support the unemployed. I don't believe that is the position of the taxpayer. How about the assumption that saving dollars in this budget is cost-effective down the road? We all know what's going to happen if these people are allowed to deteriorate in their family life, their work life, and their habits. Another and final one is that people are getting by, that there still is slack in those allowances.

Well, Mr. Chairman, I believe this budget is just giving us less of the same. It's not giving us any new approaches. It's

simply increasing the dollars. What does that mean? It means those dollars are absolutely essential to meet a greater demand. It's not increasing the support in services for individuals. It's not increasing the amount of social allowance. It's not increasing service or attention to prevention of deterioration in family life. We're talking about real, living human beings here. These are tragedies. These are personal tragedies.

I'd like to deal with the budget from a couple of different standpoints, Mr. Chairman; first of all, from the problems being experienced by those who need or use or try to use the services. And the other side of that coin is the person who must deliver the services. The economic times and the manifestation of those times are dictating to us new, creative, and enhanced means of dealing with the circumstances that we're meeting. More of the same, less of the same, is simply not enough.

Well, let me look for a minute at the indicators. The social indicators are unemployment. I need not tell you what that is. The government itself projects that it will still be at 11 percent at the end of the year, even with all of our wonderful new work projects. Many people we are meeting every day, if they have not used up all their benefits, their assets, their markers, their family, their friends, they are very close to it. We are experiencing the indicator of a very dramatically changed family life: increased family breakup; increased numbers of single-parent families, many families abandoned; increased crime; increased crime with violence; increased violence against children, women, and the elderly; increased stress-related illnesses; increased stress-related behaviour; a good and positive move, another social indicator of the disabled and their families towards more independent living away from institutions. Disabled children more often are staying at home, and disabled adults are making attempts to live independently in communities.

Mr. Chairman, whether we like it or not, these are the social indicators and the realities of today. We're in a rapidly changing social environment and yet our system of dealing with the tragedies that we're seeing has not moved either to meet the increased need or to develop any new methods of dealing with it or to provide greater incentives to communities to do so, in addition. It's costly now, but that's nothing like what it's going to be if we don't make some interventions.

Let me deal with the causes. Unemployment: I'm not content with what I've heard so far in this House about job-creation programs. We don't deal with unemployment as a result; we should be dealing with the root cause. And as yet I have to hear what kinds of targets we have, what we can reasonably hope to achieve at the end of the year with job-creation programs. They do not appear to me to be a major injection. The individual and family support programs: these have been reduced, and yet these are a cause of increased tragedies in our communities. We have to develop community mechanisms to keep people out of institutions.

Education: we are not getting at the need for parenting and family life education. We're not getting at the need to assist people newly in straitened circumstances with budgeting and how to manage on reduced allocations of money. We are not training women for re-entering or entering the labour force. In fact, we dropped some of the employment opportunities programs just recently. We are not assisting people with stress management. We are not paying sufficient attention, in my mind, to health in the workplace, to retirement planning, to assist people to bridge those problems. Increasing numbers of people are being given the golden handshake.

Let me talk then for a minute about the consumers. Income

security: I've raised the problem of information to applicants for income security a number of times in this House, and although I understand instructions have gone out that it be improved, we're still getting reports regarding what is occurring. Who knows exactly what their entitlements are? Hopefully, increasingly, people will have an understanding of what they have a right to, what items are discretionary, and will avail themselves of community resources for advocacy if they need to appeal their entitlements. The allocations have not been reviewed for some time. The reduction to singles I think has been a great blow to many in the community.

I don't know. You know, we think of single employables as all being young men, but there are many single employables in their 50s, and I'm not sure how gentlemen in their 50s are going to like being treated and understood as students, going out and finding a roomie -- put your name in a district office; write a little description, like putting an ad in the personals, about who you are and what kind of life-style: nonsmoker, nondrinker, looking for . . . Is this the kind of thing we're expecting people to do? Because that's exactly what they appear to be faced with. [interjection] Yes, that's what it sounds like, doesn't it? I believe. Mr. Chairman, that we're driving people, through this reduction both in housing allocation and in food allocation, into the work for welfare program, and that may in fact be the objective of that reduction in the amount. It's ghettoizing the employable single person.

I've already spoken about entitlements. Employment counseling. The reports that I've referred to in the House indicate that employment counseling is not available to a very large percentage of the persons who are employable who come in for social assistance. My statistics as of the November report say 17.2 percent. I hope the minister will inform us that that has improved considerably. Similarly with employment referrals, and I've already mentioned the employment opportunity programs, which I believe have been discontinued. The kind of service that the Kara society performed that backs up and provides a backup support to district offices, absolutely essential to work with people to keep them going and keep them independent in their communities, has also been discontinued. I don't know how the community's expected to pick up the slack on that one.

The number of workers I understand has been increased. As yet I have not heard comments about what the objective targets are, and perhaps the minister will tell us that. I am concerned, and I'll speak later about the capacity of the workers to serve not only an increased caseload but a different caseload than they have ever had to deal with before, where they are now expected to be able to take the time not only to work on the allocation for social allowance but to make, job referrals and employment referrals as well,

Mr. Chairman, the employables I gather are going to be expected to get into the work for welfare program. That would seem to be the move through the reduction in allocation to single employable people.

The labour market strategy that was unveiled this week I have some grave concerns about, as do many people in the community, who have expressed them to me. It appears to be a wage subsidy program, I am not convinced by the very little detail we've been given on it that it won't be the kind of wage subsidy going to the employer that will provide a job for the 16 weeks, perhaps suited, perhaps not suited to the client, who will then be terminated, will go on unemployment insurance and, after that has run out, will come back around and go through it

again. I'd like some sense of confidence from somewhere that that isn't what the intent of that program is.

[Mr. Hyland in the Chair]

In fact, Mr. Chairman, we know that the jobs are just no longer there. It seems that employables will be kept in work by this program, but there's no guarantee of new, lasting, permanent jobs being created by the strategy that I have learned so far. I am deeply concerned about the strategy working towards a wage subsidy and extending the notion of training someplace into the future, so that training and retraining of single employables presumably is going to have to wait until the economy picks up.

I look forward eagerly to the minister's report on job clubs because that, too, has been a matter of record in this House and is a concern that has been expressed to me on many occasions in the community.

Mr. Chairman, let me just speak briefly about the personnel who find themselves working very hard in income security across our province. I do want to stress at the outset that I have the utmost respect for workers in this field of practice. They are dedicated and devoted people. They've had an uphill battle for the recent number of years, working with increased and difficult stress and working with increased caseloads. Now, I hope that that size of caseload has been relieved at this point in time, particularly in the urban centres, where it has become unaccountably high.

Mr. Chairman, the kind of individuals they are seeing is very different from the individual that they had to deal with five or six years ago. I think the stress level in our regional offices must simply be soaring, and that is the kind of report that comes to me, that these people are considerably under increasing stress in their day-to-day work, with the caseload and with the type of client and with the kind of response time that they are trying to meet as increasing numbers of new clients appear at their doorstep. We have had some indications in the past that response time had grown too long and that this was not an acceptable situation, and I hope the minister will inform us that that has been reduced.

The turnover, the minister has not spoken to. I understand it still to be high, although it's extremely difficult to get any accounting out of offices, because people have been concerned about what happens to them within those settings when they do in fact talk with people, members of the opposition. But I would indicate to the minister that she is reported to have described employees as being very stressed, and I hope she will restore my confidence that that has been dealt with and dealt with properly.

My questions in regard to income security, Mr. Chairman, are: will the minister now include clothing in the allocation to short-term clients? Will the minister review immediately the shelter ceilings? It's my understanding that 30 percent of the clients who are on social allowance pay more for shelter than they are allocated and that that of course comes out of their food budget. And we know what happens with poor nutrition, particularly related to children. Will the minister look at the day care allocations allowed? I understand those, too, are higher than the allocations given to people.

The discretionary funds allowed for job-hunting employables: the telephone, transportation. I hope that she will reassure us that these are in fact being dealt with up front and that the workers are given permission and encouraged to insist that

people who are employable and who are job hunting do have access to funds for those purposes.

Access to training. Again, will the minister please tell me whether or not the report of November has been acted upon and what the present situation is regarding the capacity of the staff to access training programs for employables who are not able to go back to the same job?

I would like to know, further, what is the target caseload in the case of income security, and I'd also like to know what is the target caseload in the case of child welfare.

Under support to individuals and families, Mr. Chairman, in shelters, yes, the demands are up. The minister has over the last year increased her support and her commitment, and I'm pleased to hear that: two shelters for abused women and families. Like the Member for Edmonton Calder, I am concerned about Hilltop House closing. This particular resource has served the community for many years, and there's been a strong commitment from the government in the past to a particular group of women who don't seem to fit neatly into any category and yet who need, over a short period of time, the support of a residential setting. I do not find that there are others that can in fact fill the need that will be created when Hilltop closes.

Regarding the disabled, it appears to me that there is going to be a great deal more reliance on the community and on families to pick up the needs here. I agree; it's extremely important that we encourage disabled adults to stay independent as long as they can, but that means that we must inspire in them, through our support programs, the ability to do so.

In services to children, families need to know that that stable support for their family, where there is a disabled child at home, will continue and that we will look carefully at the notion of providing respite homes. If we believe that it's a better circumstance for the family and the community for the disabled child to be at home -- and of course it is considerably cheaper for the taxpayer by -- then we must help that family to do so by the provision of a number of other services that back them up. And I think respite homes is one that deserves our attention.

I've been concerned about the cuts in hospitals and health care -- another department, I recognize, Madam Minister -- and the effect that will have, particularly the Calgary hospital for children that has been doing an outstanding outreach service to these families that I've referred to where there is a disabled child.

MRS. MIROSH: A point of order, Mr. Chairman. It seems that we're here to discuss the Social Services budget, and I don't know why we're getting into hospitals and health care at this point.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton Gold Bar.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, may I continue? I thought it was pretty obvious why I referred to it: because it's the same child. The child doesn't divide up and half of it go into institutional care and half of it into care of the disabled child at home. I really didn't think we were dividing children along those lines. There is another point on that that I'll make a little later.

Mr. Chairman, the other point I'd like to raise there is that perhaps the minister will comment about an enhanced procedure of foster home evaluation and support to foster families. We haven't heard too many incidents recently, and I'm gratified with that, but I am concerned, as are organizations in the com-

munity, about the continuous monitoring process of the whole foster home arrangement for children and their safety there. It's my understanding that the Winnifred Stewart school -- I'm not sure if it's even in this same bailiwick, but we're talking about children, mentally handicapped children -- has been under some threat, and that then of course would reflect on this budget, if not immediately, certainly in no time at all.

If I can go to day care, the province has opted for a mixed arrangement with day care, some private nonprofit and some commercial. And we all look forward to the details of the upcoming meeting between the ministers and the federal minister on the subject and to reviewing the details of the recent report that came out federally. If the minister is tired of hearing about standards, well, think about the rest of us. I'm tired of hearing about it too, but I feel, again, I am compelled to raise it.

[Mr. Gogo in the Chair]

If the minister is commenting about suggesting that she herself is someone that would not qualify as a child care worker, then we're looking at another one right here; I would not qualify as a child care worker. And I am absolutely certain that I would not, and should not, qualify as a child care worker because I am not trained in that regard, and I would ask anyone here to stand up and volunteer to go and work in a day care centre and I'll find you a chance to try out.

I am not qualified to do it, and I believe we must provide some standards in the qualifications for people who are working in those day care centres. I think it is imperative. When a parent goes into a day care centre -- public, private, private nonprofit, commercial -- that parent sees a licence, and they expect that licence means something, that that guarantees a level of care. Now, yes, we have standards relative to the ratio of staff to children. Yes, we have standards relative to the number of square feet of indoor and outdoor play space. But we do not have standards relative to staff training, and we ought to. That's a big missing link in our whole process, and I plead with the minister to do something about it.

Mr. Chairman, accountability in day care for the tax dollars that are spent in commercial centres I think should be carefully looked at. That will help us in many ways to ensure that those commercial centres that are running good operations can continue to do so, but those who are taking perhaps -- and we don't even know if they're taking -- inordinately high profits out of the centre will be corrected and the quality of the care in the centre will be maintained. I believe we have to look carefully at accountability for tax dollars spent in subsidizing all forms of day care: private, nonprofit, and commercial.

Mr. Chairman, it was with regret that I saw the family support and backup to day cares discontinued because of cost factors, and particularly nowadays where families are experiencing increasing stress. I would like to see that reinstated and a consultant service available to private day cares to deal with parents who are exhibiting real difficulties with their home life.

Mr. Chairman, the personnel in the whole area of support to individuals and families is down and the dollars are down. That, to me, spells lack of commitment on the part of the government to the kind of thing that's happening to families out there and the kind of personal tragedies that we are all observing.

Well, what are the great issues of the day? Yes, standards. The generic standards should immediately be brought forward for public discussion. We need them. We need them when we talk about private nonprofit. We need them when we talk about

day care centres. We need them in many, many ways. I see no reason whatsoever to defer or delay any longer a public discussion of what those standards ought to be. I think that discussion should be joined, the sooner the better, and I hope the minister will assure us of that. The shift to community-based requires that we have those standards in place, that we have procedures for evaluation and for accounting in place.

The voluntary component I know keeps costs down, because we have a great access to volunteer input. It's an enormous resource in providing community services, but those services still need support from tax dollars as well. They need consultant support in addition, and that's another great issue of the day. The support, Mr. Chairman, through FCSS to those community support services, many of them serving the same families and communities that the minister must deal with, has dropped this year. It barely kept up or caught up last year, and this year it's dropped. I believe we're shifting an inordinate amount of burden onto community resources, and they may in fact fall by the way, which would be a compounded problem.

Housing, Mr. Chairman, is another of the great issues. I would like the minister to reflect for us whether or not she has discussed any means of making better use through the public housing authorities of housing for low-income people and their families, because it's my understanding that there could be some adjustments in scales of rent to income, and perhaps we could provide a better standard of housing for families and give them the dignity that they have a right to expect.

Innovative programs: the minister mentioned these when she first stood up, and I'm not sure what she was referring to because I really haven't seen them, and perhaps she'll go back to that subject again. Preventive programs: I really don't see any increase in thought or in budget for them either.

Research. Mr. Chairman, this has always been singularly missing. We never seem to put any energy or resources into finding out whether what we're doing works.

May I conclude one sentence? May I?

MR. CHAIRMAN: One would have to have the concurrence of the committee. Would the committee agree for a 10-second conclusion?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member.

MRS. HEWES: Mr. Chairman, it takes political will to put energy into the services that I've been talking about. The need has soared, and I submit to members of this House that either we do it now or we're all going to pay. It's pay now or pay later. The human costs are enormous in children, in families, in education costs, in court costs, and in health care. Either pay now or pay later.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. member. The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Edmonton Avonmore.

MS LAING: Thank you, I'd also like to thank the minister . . . [interjection] Pardon?

AN HON. MEMBER: We're all ears.

MS LAING: Good, Thank you for their ears too.

I'd like to thank the minister for bringing her estimates to the

Assembly tonight. I'd like to make a few preliminary comments before I get right into some of the things that she was addressing.

One of them is the notion of the deficit. We hear over and over again that if we don't deal with the deficit now, it will be passed on to the coming generations. Well, Mr. Chairman, I don't know when the coming generations are coming, but I know that I'll be paying taxes for the next 15 or 20 years, and I assume that most of the members of this Assembly will, because I'm one of the older members. And so I think to say that if we don't clear up the deficit in three years, the coming generation will deal with it is just a smoke screen for doing what they are doing and cutting funding and spending and increasing the unemployment and the pain in this society. Indeed, as the hon. Member for Edmonton Gold Bar has said, I believe what is happening is the short-term gain will surely cost in the long run.

Another thing that I am deeply concerned about is the work for welfare and the alluding to the unemployed employables. Certainly, what is going on is an example of blaming the victim mentality, where victims are held responsible for the position they're in instead of addressing the deficits and the deficiencies in the system, and this kind of victim-blaming further demoralizes those that are being harmed.

I believe the Social Services department is here to provide a safety net for all people and particularly to those who are vulnerable, who are handicapped, who are disabled, and those who have suffered abuse. In a caring society we would commit ourselves to providing service to these people and to protecting them from exploitation and the continuing of further victimization and abuse. We must also be committed to healing the wounds that they have suffered through their victimization and abuse.

A human need, I believe, must never be subject to the profit motive, and I have a great deal of concern about the trend towards privatization to the profit sector. I recently did a survey in my constituency in regard to privatization for profit of some social services. An overwhelming 98 percent of the people responding said they were totally opposed to the for-profit motive being applied to the needs of people requiring social services, particularly to children. I would hope and would ask if the minister will assure us that in fact the needs of children, of the vulnerable people in our society, will not be put up to the profit-making sector.

I'm also deeply concerned about the tendering process. As the executive director of a volunteer agency that did work with the department for a number of years, I can tell you we were lean. Every year we looked very carefully at our budget, and we did not add a cost of living and just turn it in with that. We were always trying to cut corners. We used a great deal of volunteer time, and I believe that the volunteer nonprofit sector is in effect a very cost-effective program that counts and builds on the expertise of professional people in the community.

So I am worried about the tendering process and wonder how the savings can be made. I would suggest that the savings may be achieved through either the reduction in the quality of staff, the elimination or termination of treatment early in the process before the difficulties that are being dealt with are truly treated. And in some cases, particularly in sexual abuse cases, the treatment has to be long-term or there will be recidivism and long-term effects of the abuse. Or the other way that private profit agencies may save money to be able to be profitable is to turn away the really difficult cases that require long-term care and treatment.

When one goes to the for-profit sector, one loses the volunteer hours and expertise of those people involved in the volunteer sector, and I think we have to know, particularly the expertise. The boards and the people that I worked with in the volunteer sector were the top of their field in terms of knowledge, and that developed over the years. And so over the years cost did just not increase but expertise and service increased.

This government has a stated commitment to the family and the maintenance of the family unit, but there is a 27 percent or \$1 million cut to the family relations budget. I'm very concerned about this in a time of unemployment because of increased family problems, dysfunctional families, dislocation, alcoholism, and violence, whether that be sexual abuse, physical abuse of children, spousal abuse as people take out their feelings of frustration and powerlessness against the people that are less powerful than they are. We need to have increased services to intervene, to counsel these families as to how to solve their problems and to deal with their frustration and anger, and many people need help in developing parenting skills and coping skills.

So I would ask the minister: what is her commitment to the family support program and the family aid program? Is the funding going to be increased to meet the increasing need and demand? I'm wondering if the minister has compared the cost of extended family support care and intervention to that of apprehending a child, just the apprehension alone. And I would ask the minister what the cost of apprehending a child is; never mind the cost of maintaining a child in a foster home. I would suggest that that would be a valuable comparison.

I have also looked at the review that was passed out today, Alberta social care facilities review, and would ask the minister the cost of doing the review, the cost of publishing the document, and I would also ask the value of the document. It is a very general statement, devoid of any specific information other than the names of institutions.

I'm wondering what the minister's commitment is to some of the recommendations of the document, such as that which appears on page 14 in which the committee notes

the increased emphasis on the development of counselling programs for children as victims of violence, which try to break the cycle of abuse that exists, and to assist children in dealing constructively with what has happened to them. We endorse the continuation of [that program].

I would ask the minister if she has a commitment to the continuation and extension of these programs. I would ask the minister: what indeed is her commitment to the counseling for children whose mothers have been battered? In many cases these children have also been abused; they have suffered physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and also alcoholism, which I see as a form of family abuse. We pay a very high price for these untreated children. Abused boys: I worked with them when they were incest offenders and when they were batterers; they had grown up and they were still little boys. And little girls that are abused grow up and do not know how to parent their children. I have talked to psychologists who say that 50 percent of their caseload of women are in fact women that were abused as children, so we have to address the issue of these children or we will address them later.

I would also ask the minister if she recognizes the needs of children who are sexually assaulted by non family members. They make up 40 percent of sexually abused children, and as far as I know, there are not treatment programs for them.

I believe that the minister's commitment to the family is laudable, but I have a concern about the policy of the department of least intrusion. I would ask: how many children who have been apprehended due to abuse and neglect or sexual abuse and then have been returned home have had to be reapprehended? And how many children that have been apprehended for reasons of abuse and have been returned home have then died at the hands of their parents?

A recent study by the standing Senate committee on child abuse shows a very high incidence of social assistance among parents whose children have died at their hands. Does the minister recognize that family assistance workers -- that is, the people in charge of money -- may be front line to picking up the indicators of potential child abuse? Would she reinstitute a policy and practice of hiring as income security workers trained social workers who have the time and ability to pick up on these indicators and act as a resource and advocate for these families to get into treatment before there are some tragic consequences?

Another thing that I would ask the minister about: is it true that after a child or family enters treatment in a treatment agency, the file in the Social Services office is closed as a way of reducing caseloads? And if this is true, how does the minister or the department monitor to be certain that the child is not revictimized or that in fact the child and its family has been receiving the kind of treatment that they need? How does the department monitor for repeat offenders? And again, my experience was that offenders, particularly sexual abuse offenders -- this is an offence of compulsiveness, and it is very possible that there will be reoffending unless there is long-term monitoring and access for the victim to let someone know what is happening.

I am also very concerned about how it is monitored if parents are abusing their children and taking the child from one doctor to another or one hospital to another. There used to be a child abuse registry so that if a doctor or a health care worker was uncertain of the cause of the injuries and was concerned about it, they could in fact check up to see if there was a history. It's very common in these families to move from one jurisdiction to another, to change doctors, so I think that although we don't want to have lists of people somewhere, if we're going to protect children, we have to be able to access that information somewhere.

Another question I would ask is: what is the turnover rate for social assistance workers? Because as I said earlier, they're frontlined to pick up deterioration in functioning of people that are coming to them. What is the turnover rate for child welfare workers? Is the minister committed to child welfare workers as establishing a supportive relationship with the child so that they are able to monitor and care for and advocate for the child? Because the child welfare worker, the social worker, for many children that move through foster homes and treatment care and in and out of the home, is the only constant that they have, the only constant person to whom they can talk. If they're dealing with many different child welfare workers, they don't have anyone they can tell about how it is for them. High caseloads, of course, make it impossible for child welfare workers to have time to have this kind of relationship with children, so I'm very concerned about caseloads as well as turnover rate.

The other thing I'm concerned about in this regard is part-time workers, again because they're in and out and there isn't an opportunity to establish relationships with the clients. In the area under the Child Welfare Act, I would ask the minister: who does the minister consider her client to be? Is it the child

or the family? And what steps have been taken to ensure that the Child Welfare Act is not used to the detriment of the well-being of children? I have heard concerns from many areas about how social workers feel their hands are tied by this Act, which emphasizes least intrusiveness. Again, we had a couple of really sad incidents last year where children died, and I wonder if in fact there had been suggestions to Child Welfare that there were problems but that investigation did not happen because of the desire not to intrude in families.

I would ask again: what prevention programs are in place for parents in distress or who see themselves as potential abusers? I think that we just must intervene before damage is really done and that some parents really know when they're at the edge and that they have to have a place to go. We have to provide that for them, and it has to be really accessible to them. I think crisis lines are really important and . . . Anyway, I think this is something that we really need to look at, because we are dealing with so much of it late in the process.

I'm wondering what mechanisms or policies the minister has in place to consult with other departments involved in the area of violence in family: Community and Occupational Health in terms of programs for counseling, Solicitor General and Attorney General in terms of charging, of sentencing, and of probation and treatment. Because we need to ensure that the trauma of disclosure in court is reduced for victims, and we need to ensure that victims receive adequate treatment and that offenders receive adequate treatment and monitoring. As I say, many of these crimes are -- there is a high recidivism rate if we really have an opportunity to talk to the victims.

I wonder what commitment the minister has to the shelters for women without children. Last week we saw a very sad incident in Calgary where a woman was in a violent relationship and then was killed. I think that says to us very clearly that a woman that is in a relationship with a violent man, when she tries to end that relationship, is at great risk. Where can these women go?

I have a really strong commitment to the volunteer nonprofit sector, but it requires trained staff to co-ordinate, train, supervise, and provide service to those with greater needs. And I think particularly of counseling for people that have had long-term problems. We have a need for the facilities. What commitment as well as the need for facilities? So we not only have a staff component but a facility component that is required. What commitment has the minister to adequate funding for this core of support?

I'm deeply concerned about the placing of responsibility for fund-raising on volunteer boards and on the community. For one thing, it burns out volunteer board members and volunteers and staff, and it takes time away from program development. It takes energy and time away from program delivery. It also sets groups of needy people against each other competing for scarce dollars. I would ask the minister to commit herself to recognizing the responsibility of this government for providing for the needy, the vulnerable, and the abused and not leaving it to the goodwill and fund-raising abilities of volunteers and the community.

Thank you.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Chairman, if I could respond in part to the last two speakers at least, to address some of the questions. Let me start first by speaking about, in general terms, the Child Welfare Act. The hon. Member for Edmonton Avonmore, because of her background, her life experience, and just in a gen-

eral sense of caring, obviously is in a position to speak about some of the things that she has seen, as well as a number of other members in the House, I'm sure, who could be in that position because of their various capacities and their own professional lives.

The Child Welfare Act provides for the protection of the child at risk, and I think that should be clear, that we do speak first of all to the child. And if the parents don't access the programs that the child needs, then that's the instance in which we would find we would have to intervene to ensure that the child is protected. Our services don't focus on the offender. I think it's important to say that in many instances we'd be talking about the Criminal Code of Canada and other types of provisions that would be either forced upon an individual or at least provided to the individual who would obviously be in need of some type of counseling, if in fact that were effective.

The hon. member has great concerns, as do we all, about children who have been victims of abuse. Last year very significant funding was placed in the hands of the Calgary region to speak to the community as a whole, to professionals and others who were involved in this area, and to ask the question about what kind of services should be provided: what do you suppose would work? Because obviously not all people are in agreement about the various kinds of services that may indeed try to speak to the problem after it has occurred.

I still do not have the kind of details on -- and I think it's probably a longer term assessment that would have to be done to say: now, in terms of the delivery of those services, what effect have they had on the children, and will we see a difference in their sense of themselves as they become adults from those people who, at this point in time, have been victims, have not had the benefit, if you will, of treatment or counseling in their younger years, and what position do they find themselves in? Will there be a difference? I think, Chairman, to some degree that's the rhetorical question: will there be a difference? Because of everything that can be read on the subject, I think the psychologists themselves are in agreement that there isn't a standard procedure. There isn't a guarantee that in fact they can in the long haul really affect the basic situation and the well-being of the individual. The individuals have reacted very differently to similar sets of circumstances, and I suppose that again speaks to the kind of person that they are and how deep they've been able to dig into their own pockets of self-reliance, if you will, to combat what happened to them in a very unfortunate way in their earlier years.

Chairman, the hon. Member for Edmonton Gold Bar raised a whole host of questions and a lot of concerns, and I wish that I could say that we had all sorts of guarantees. I think that all of us would like to say that if you do thus and so and make a commitment of X number of dollars, whatever it was, that in fact we could fix a problem. But I do not agree that we can make that sort of guarantee regardless of what dollars are available. I said earlier that dollars just don't always cure the situation that we're trying to address, dollars poured into programs. There's been program after program over the course of many years in the social services area, and I think that you will find that there again is not agreement within the professional or other community about the real effects of that programming. But still we must attempt. We must continually look to what we have delivered in the past, assess the capacity of that program to respond: has it indeed worked, and if it hasn't, what else do we do?

The employment area. What is government's role in the employment area? The minister responsible for career develop-

ment will certainly have an opportunity to address the programs that have evolved under his particular jurisdiction. I can only say that it will certainly be the continued task of those people working in our area with the single employables who come forward and who require in the very first instance an assessment and then direction to the various programs that are available, and that is the task of the frontline social service worker and to some degree with the assistance of those people in the employment opportunities program. But it is my belief that initially workers ought to be able to glean the first information that provides you with an opportunity to speak to that person and say, "This is where I believe you will access the information appropriate to your set of circumstances," particularly when it is obvious that a number of people, and maybe a much higher percentage than we'd like to see, don't have the skills to access employment programs that are indeed available. In that case, the upgrading must be provided, and I look to my colleague to respond to the questions that the House will have about the opportunities there for upgrading of skills that will allow for the access of employment opportunities.

The hon. member, like others, is concerned about the people who have -- as she has said, they've been good-living taxpayers, contributing to the gross national product, and then they find themselves in a position where they are without a job and come to the social allowance area. And certainly we have seen that with a number of people who have been in the business community as well, and where our programs try to show some flexibility, particularly for somebody who has been in business and can show some flexibility in the short term, certainly that is not there in the longer term.

But one thing I think, Mr. Chairman, that our situation where we've seen a dramatic decline in the opportunities in the short term, at least, that are available to people in this province as a result of the downturn in our two major sectors, and that is, that many of us have not planned for the future and maybe can be challenged in the same way that the opposition is challenging the government about planning for the future. Because on one hand, where we are accused of not planning, that in fact resources should have been utilized more wisely, we may have been into a lot of program areas that we shouldn't have been, and even in some cases where the heritage fund could have been better utilized, we see that fund contributing the amount to our general revenues that is equal to approximately an 8 percent sales tax. And if we had tried to salt away more for the rainy day that is upon us -- and some of us in agriculture will feel like it's been hailing rather continually -- we would have been accused of being tight fisted and obviously trying to put dollars away at the expense of programs that many of us would have liked to have seen in an ongoing way.

The programs, Chairman. I think it is obvious that when a province, and I think appropriately so, can provide very extensive programs for the citizens, much more than any other province in Canada because we feel that it can be afforded, equally we have to look at how we handle those programs when there is a downturn in the economy. Because those Canadians who look at us from various provinces say, "Why is it Alberta believes that they ought to have this and that type of assistance, when in fact Albertans are better off than any other Canadians?" So there is a response to that rhetorical question. I believe that we have planned reasonably well for the future, and we shouldn't be penalized based on that planning. But also, Mr. Chairman, as Albertans living in Canada, I think we have to be cognizant of what it is that we have a right to expect here vis-à-vis the rest of

Canada. I don't say that with a view to a desire to cut back in the program areas that are obvious to those of us who hear about the people who are in need every day, but certainly I am challenged by my own constituents and a great percentage of the public that I meet about our identification of need and what the real need is. And everyone sitting in this House this evening probably has a different definition of what need is.

We've looked at -- and I think probably I could have done a better job of my explanation of the budget in vote 3, because a number of members have alluded to the cutback in the areas of counseling and support for the family. In fact, Chairman, one of the major areas in family relations sees the evolution of what was formerly delivered by the Department of Social Services in speaking to getting support from particularly fathers and so on for the family now being handled under the Maintenance Enforcement Act. So there is a significant decrease in that particular area, because you will see the administration of that now under the Attorney General's department. And I might add that in the very first instance, as we see that program working, in fact we are able to help families. From the statistics that I have seen, and certainly some of them are available because of the impact they have on the social allowance area, many families through government intervention, which of course now goes right across the country, are able to be supported. In a number of cases, obviously the spouses who have the ability to do the supporting are now sought out and government is intervening on behalf of the family.

The Member for Edmonton Avonmore I think also raised the particular area, and I hadn't addressed that earlier.

In the area of social allowance and caseload, obviously the caseload varies as does the complexity of any particular child welfare case. So it is a matter not so much of the numbers but the availability of the worker to do the job in any particular instance. And in the social allowance area certainly it is my desire to deliver the program -- and that's where the concentration should be -- in a timely way for people who come forward that are in need, as opposed to be counting the number of cases and saying, "Well, this is my caseload, and therefore I shouldn't have any more or less." We should, I think, deliver to the people and use that as the basis of our measurement in that regard.

The guarantees of how the social workers will handle what are the additions to the basic social allowance area, also raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton Gold Bar. Clothing to standard is available if that is a need. I think it is one of those areas that's not always easy to speak to because a social worker should be ascertaining the need of the individual, asking the questions that really say to that individual, "What is your need?" And if the individual doesn't say they have a need in a number of areas that may be available, then is it the role of the worker to throw everything onto the table and say, "Regardless of what you have needed or not needed in the past, we now say these are your needs?" And I think there's probably some fine line there, because if somebody says, "Everybody has a right to a telephone," you would say to yourself, "Well, obviously a telephone is a very important thing if you're expecting calls back in employment and so on." But if the individual, say, is in a room and board situation or shared accommodation, you won't necessarily need two telephones in that residence.

So I think there are a number of gray areas, but I would agree with the hon. member that it is very important to make sure that in speaking to transportation, clothing to standard, and so on, where the person arrives and is in need and for whatever reason hasn't had any kind of a wardrobe built up, notwithstand-

ing the fact that they may have had a reasonable income for a certain period of time before, then that must be addressed. So as long as that is in relationship to their job search, then that is an area that is spoken to. I sincerely hope that social workers, as a result of the type of information that was gleaned in our review of the several thousand cases, that this information would now be available and done in a reasonable way to speak to what it is that person has to have to be accessing the job market. Surely that is one of our major criteria.

The family support area I think I've already spoken to, because the support area is delivered through a number of the programs. It could be attached to an institutional program that also has outreach associated with it. So in many instances where hon. members may have thought that it was only under a couple of headings, indeed it is scattered throughout a number of areas simply because the family, and children in particular, must be addressed in terms of where they have come to us and the various programs that are available to them.

The day care area was raised again, and I would assure the hon. member that I am not tired of hearing about the standards discussion. I was only tired of hearing it in terms that made it sound as if there were no standards in this province, when indeed most of the standards that are in place are far richer in the ratios, in the number of children in grouping and so on, than any other province in the country. So we will get back again to addressing what I understand is the concern, and that is the educational standards that are in place, not just standards in general, because obviously there are many standards.

Alberta has one of the highest ratios of spaces available, and certainly notwithstanding the philosophy that I know is in place, that is held by the hon. members of the Official Opposition, certainly the province that we would then look to as a guide for what it is that would show us what the marvelous programming and planning would be for child care in the province -- I think if you take a look at the number of spaces that are available in Manitoba, we have about close to 50 percent more per capita than that province. I think that there would be great concern there, too, about speaking to this wonderful term "standards" and having only a handful of people who are able to access the institution where a number of people may wish to place their children.

The hon. Member for Edmonton Avonmore, of course, spoke at length about children, children who have unfortunately died under certain circumstances. I recall last year feeling some sense of anguish at the fact that a child took their life while in foster care -- in the foster care of a professional, somebody who is very well qualified and the community would say was an ideal person to have been placed in that position. I guess what it tells us, Chairman, is that there are no guarantees. Again, while we seek to assure ourselves as much as possible in all of these areas, there are no guarantees.

In the same manner where public-sector care is raised as the model as opposed to private-sector care, in that private-sector care doesn't produce any volunteers and so on, certainly in the institutions or the care areas that I have seen, there have been many volunteers that have involved themselves as well because indeed they do care about their families regardless of who is the care giver. The families and individuals continue to be concerned, and whether you're looking at the services that may be delivered by the hon. Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care in private-sector nursing homes and see the community response in a very positive fashion, either in that type of private-sector nursing home or whether it's a public-sector one, I think you will see

the people who really care responding in all of those instances.

And I would say to the hon. member once again that the care givers are the key. The care givers are the key. And it doesn't change what is inside that person because they suddenly don a T-shirt that says "public sector," that they suddenly are a better person because they are no longer wearing their private-sector T-shirt. And certainly if you believe that because there may be someone making a dollar in the course of the delivery of human services, that that is a bad thing, I believe, again, we must measure the service that is being delivered, because it is equally true that many of the people who have worked for the public organizations will say to you, "We haven't always done the best job available, because we didn't feel the same sort of pressure on us because we were a community group." Certainly community groups will also say now, especially as they see the taxpayer sharing more and more of the burden of the delivery of services as opposed to the energy revenues and others that may have not bitten directly into the taxpayers' pocket, "We all become more cognizant of wanting to do the best job possible and not to waste."

And as I think about some of the organizations who have been a part of the tendering process over the course of the last year, in one particular organization, McMan, there was a lot of publicity about that organization, and basically that publicity came about as a result of the executive director of the organization. When the board of directors got involved in looking at how their services and the costs of them had evolved, they, too, believed there ought to be a change in the way their organization was structured and, in some cases, delivering the services. And make no mistake; they have a fine history in the delivery area.

But their costs were becoming much higher than other organizations who were delivering similar services, and so McMan now has a new executive director. The individual who came upon the scene had been there in some of the original organization of that particular entity, and there is a very strong commitment by that executive director, and particularly the board of directors, to continue the very strong and long history of community service, part of it delivered through the accessing of government funding and that now happening via the tendering process, because they have won many of the tenders that they have been involved in, and also some of it being done by their volunteer effort. You will see probably a lot of publicity in that regard in the future, because that very fine organization is rededicating themselves to the continued delivery of services in the very best tradition that they have done in the past.

Chairman, tonight I think I've heard some overriding concerns that need to be continually addressed, and that is where I as minister believe that services are in place and that there are spaces for people where I say there are spaces for people and so on, that indeed that must be there. I must dedicate myself to making sure that all information I have is correct and, indeed, that those services are available.

I also hear the request for guarantees and, obviously, the call for a lot of additional funding. I would just make this comment for hon. members. I think it's appropriate that in 1987, when we are required to look closely at what our expenditures are and carefully gauge the needs of our society, not only must we look at the present, but surely we must look back to some degree at the delivery of services over the last 25 years: how they have evolved, what we have been spending on them, and what the results of that delivery have been.

I've been speaking to a number of professionals in this regard. I have asked them that question: "Are you satisfied that

a continuing addition to budgets and programming really has evolved our society into a much better place?" We have people who are more well and happier than we had 25 years ago, because we are in a position where the billions of dollars that have been expended indeed have done a fantastic job. Our society is a much better place. I can't give you that guarantee nor can the professionals that I speak to. I believe it is an opportune time to look at where we have evolved from and ask ourselves if we shouldn't really thoroughly review all the programs in a very clear way and a very objective way so that we can assure ourselves and the public that we are doing the best job possible.

It is my view that oftentimes philosophy gets in the way of that objectivity, and I think we are going to have to try in this Legislature very hard to sit on our philosophy and look hard at the people we are serving and if that service has been dedicated in the very best possible fashion. Chairman, if there's one thing that I would hope to do in my term of office, that is try to get some objective measurement of how and where we have come from and whether it is satisfying -- really, truly satisfying -- the needs of people today.

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Chairman, I move the committee rise, report progress, and beg leave to sit again.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's been moved by the Acting Government House Leader that the committee rise, report progress, and beg leave to sit again. All in favour, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, if any?

MR. STRONG: A point of privilege, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I believe you mean, hon. Member for St. Albert, a point of order?

MR. STRONG: A point of privilege.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, I . . .

MR. STRONG: Privilege, order, whatever you want to take it as.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for St. Albert.

MR. STRONG: Mr. Chairman, there are many people left on your list who want an opportunity to speak to the budget estimates of Social Services. Now, I for one am quite willing to sit here till 1 o'clock in the morning to listen to what everybody's got to say, and I don't think debate on this important issue should be cut off at this time.

MR. M. MOORE: It's not a matter of cutting off debate. A motion for the committee to rise and report has been made, and it has been the general practice in the evenings to sit to about this hour. No one is trying to cut off debate. It's the practice the House has followed, generally speaking, and the question should be put and was.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MS BARRETT: In response to the motion by the Acting Government House Leader, it occurs to me that this House has stayed in Committee of Supply much later than this hour on very important issues, and I would say to the minister that 145,000 unemployed Albertans think that this is a very important department. Please let us stay.

MR. MITCHELL: I rise on the same point of order, Mr. Chairman, simply to emphasize the points that have already been made by other members in the opposition. This is an extremely important issue. This is perhaps the most important issue facing this government today. It's critical for the next number of years until this government and the people of Alberta are able to dig ourselves out of this hole, and it is not to be dispensed with frivolously and quickly. It only takes more time. We all came here with many resources committed to doing this job. We all have time. I'm prepared, and my colleagues on this side of the House I'm sure are prepared, to sit allnight to air all possible points of view on this issue. And we would simply ask that you would respect that position and provide us with the opportunity to speak more at length on this very, very critical issue, this issue of some urgency to the people of Alberta.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair appreciates the advice that has been received. However, the question has been put and carried. The committee will rise and report progress.

MR. McEACHERN: Did you call for the other votes?

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Chairman, I understood that the Member for St. Albert rose before you had called for those opposed to the motion, and I would ask that you put the question again, please.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the Chair doesn't have access to the Blues. Order please. The Chair would point out that motions to report are voted on without debate. The Chair is in the hands of the committee. If members of this committee are of the view that the vote was not taken correctly, the Chair is quite prepared to put the question again.

MR. MITCHELL: Not completely.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour that the committee rise and report progress and beg leave to sit again, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Those opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

[Several members rose]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. Order please. The Chair has not announced the vote. Motion carried. Now.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. members, the Oilers have won tonight in overtime 5-4.

[Eight minutes having elapsed, the House divided]

For the motion:

Adair	Drobot	Nelson
Ady	Elliott	Oldring
Alger	Elzinga	Osterman
Brassard	Jonson	Pengelly
Cassin	Koper	Reid
Cherry	Mirosh	Shrake
Clegg	Moore, M.	Stevens
Cripps	Moore, R.	Stewart
Day	Musgrove	Weiss
Downey		

Against the motion:

Barrett	Laing	Mjolsness
Gibeault	McEachern	Strong
Hawkesworth	Mitchell	Wright
Hewes		

Totals	Ayes - 28	Noes - 10
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[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has under consideration certain resolutions, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, tomorrow afternoon the Committee of Supply will meet again, and I understand the opposition has designated the Treasury Department. I now move the House adjourn until tomorrow afternoon at 2:30.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the motion . . .

MR. WRIGHT: Mr. Speaker, on the motion, with respect.

MR. SPEAKER: There is a motion to adjourn. Motion to adjourn does not allow debate.

MR. WRIGHT: With due respect, Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 18(1)(f):

... when made for the purpose of discussing a matter of urgent public importance.

MR. SPEAKER: The reference really is with respect to 18(2): All other motions, including adjournment motions, shall be decided without debate or amendment.

MR. WRIGHT: With respect, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Is this to be a point of order, or what?

MR. WRIGHT: Yes, it is, Mr. Speaker. Standing Order 18(1) says:

The following motions are debatable: every motion . . .
(f) for the adjournment of the Assembly when made for the purpose of discussing a matter of urgent public

importance;
that is to say, the debate. Now, all other motions are not
debatable other than, for example:

adjournment of the Assembly when made for the pur-
pose of discussing a matter of urgent public
importance;

MR. SPEAKER: With all respect, hon. member, the Chair
interprets that the motion that was made is not 18(f); it is indeed
18(2), which is just simply a motion to adjourn. And the Chair
therefore rules that it's under 18(2). There is no debate. The
Chair puts the question.

MR. MITCHELL: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair puts the question.

MR. MITCHELL: When do we debate it?

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair puts the question. All those in
favour of the motion to adjourn, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

[At 10:57 p.m. the House adjourned to Wednesday at 2:30 p.m.]

