

Legislative Assembly of AlbertaTitle: **Tuesday, May 7, 1991**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 91/05/07

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Schumacher in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. Order in the Committee of Supply.

head: **Main Estimates 1991-92****Solicitor General**

MR. CHAIRMAN: The main estimates are to be found on page 299 of the estimates book with the elements commencing on page 125 in that book.

The hon. Solicitor General.

MR. FOWLER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I welcome the opportunity to briefly review the Department of the Solicitor General's proposed initiatives for the fiscal year '91-92. Before entering into these comments, I would like to also acknowledge that while these are my third estimates presented, they will be the first that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona has had the opportunity to critique. I will, of course, expect to hear from him after these estimates have been presented, and I do look forward to his comments.

As a department we in the Solicitor General's area support the government's initiative to balance the budget. I am pleased to announce several new program thrusts achieved by re-ordering departmental priorities. It is important to note, Mr. Chairman, that this restructuring of priorities could not have been achieved without the dedicated support of the 2,700 men and women in the Department of the Solicitor General located throughout Alberta. Fiscal restraint is not easy. The challenge for the department will be to implement the changes in the most responsible manner and with minimum impact on the public we serve and on those staff who, for a variety of reasons, will see their positions disappear. These are the most difficult choices of all.

If I may be permitted, Mr. Chairman, I would like to comment briefly on each vote which constitutes the departmental estimates for '91-92. Vote 1, departmental support. This vote provides the necessary support to the operating divisions in each important area of personnel, finance, and computer services. In addition, this vote includes my office and the deputy minister's office. I am pleased that these support functions can maintain their level of service without any funding increase in total, which reflects my commitment to strong fiscal control in nonprogram delivery areas.

Vote 2, Correctional Services. The correctional services division provides remand and detention facilities for adult and young offenders plus probation and parole services for those individuals sentenced by the criminal justice system. The division is requesting \$120.5 million, which represents a 3.7 percent increase in funding from last year. This modest increase was achievable by partial closure of the Strathmore Youth Development Centre and a reduction in the Medicine Hat Remand Centre. Neither of these adjustments will impact the corrections program, as space is available in other centres. These changes have permitted the department to place more emphasis on native and female program initiatives and are the continuation of a process of program and facility review, which

commenced last year with the closure of Kikino and the conversion of the St. Paul Correctional Centre to a native youth, alcohol, and drug abuse centre operated by Poundmaker's Lodge.

As my colleagues are aware, the department is currently reviewing the recommendations of the task force on the Indian and Metis people of Alberta. The department is most concerned with the number of natives in the correctional system, and the criminal justice task force report will provide direction to address this serious social problem. Mr. Chairman, I want to stress that there will be full and ongoing consultation with native leaders and communities as the implementation strategy is developed. My department has, for the past year, advanced several new initiatives with native communities, including the delivery of correctional programs to the Blood tribe through the Kainai Community Corrections Society. This initiative included a minimum security correctional centre on the Blood reserve. In addition, my department has implemented a residential adolescent drug and alcohol treatment program at our St. Paul facility. This program is being developed by Poundmaker's Lodge, a native organization with considerable and successful experience in substance abuse treatment programs. As a result of these successful programs, it is my intention to continue to involve native communities in the delivery of community corrections programs. My department is currently involved in discussions with groups, such as the Yellowhead Tribal Community Corrections Society, the Tsuu T'ina/Stoney corrections society, Siksika Nation corrections society, and the zone 2 regional council of the Metis Association of Alberta.

The department will also implement a number of initiatives to meet the needs of the female offender group. They will specifically address the unique needs of native female offenders. The initiatives will address the range of a woman's experiences with the corrections system, from pre-incarceration to community reintegration. For example, the existing minimum security program for women at Belmont Correctional Centre will be relocated to cottages on the same site, and the program will be enhanced to have a strong native focus. Female elders will provide native programming at all major correctional centres for women, and all programs will be enhanced to address the needs of native and nonnative women. More specifically, culturally sensitive programs which address the needs of women, especially in the area of addictions and life skills, will be developed. A community home project for native women will also be piloted in Edmonton and Calgary. Staff will receive training to raise their awareness of the needs of this group. Finally, joint initiatives will commence with community agencies and other departments to address the complex social needs of the female offender group.

Vote 3, Law Enforcement. This vote provides for the Municipal Police Assistance Grant to local municipalities in the amount of \$32.7 million plus \$76.2 million for the provincial RCMP contract. The municipal police assistance grant is provided to all municipalities over 2,500 to assist in their policing costs. All municipalities below 2,500 receive policing at a cost to the General Revenue Fund. The RCMP contract expired March 31, 1991; however, negotiations are continuing with the aim of having a new agreement in place early in the '91-92 fiscal year.

I do wish to spend a little time on this topic. Both the process and the content are important, and I wish to highlight certain important elements with respect to RCMP policing. In September 1989 the federal government presented an offer for the renewal of this agreement. Their proposal called for a cost base

increase and increases in the cost-shared ratio from 70 to 75 percent. As well, the 61 municipalities who contract directly for policing services in Alberta with the Canadian government are expected to incur a 9 to 25 percent increase in their cost, depending upon the size of the municipality. Mr. Chairman, this, in our view, is entirely unacceptable. It would mean an increase of 11 and a half million dollars a year to the province and 4 and a half million dollars to the municipalities; in other words, Albertans would be paying an additional \$16 million new dollars to the federal government without an increase of even one officer.

The proposed cost increases cannot be supported. In 1981 the cost share was agreed to by the federal government. To date the federal government has not provided any reasons why this cost-share ratio should be changed. In fact, as the federal government is responsible for drug enforcement, Indians and Indian lands, and many federal Acts, the federal benefit should increase rather than decrease. I am committed to utilizing the RCMP as a provincial police force, and I truly believe most Albertans support me. I wish to assure Albertans that I will work hard to ensure that an acceptable agreement will be reached. The RCMP is a significant symbol of this great nation and a visible link to Confederation.

Mr. Chairman, during the fiscal year the department has implemented the new Victims' Programs Assistance Act, which was proclaimed this past January. This is a unique program in that the total costs now and in the future will be borne through a surcharge imposed on offenders sentenced for federal offences. Grants from the Victims' Programs Assistance Fund will be made on the recommendation of a committee appointed by the Solicitor General. These grants from the surcharge funds will assist those groups that provide assistance and support to victims.

8:10

In addition, my department is committed to improving the police response when dealing with calls of family violence. In October 1990 family violence policing initiatives were introduced in five key areas: enforcement, police education, victim support, public awareness, and research. These initiatives are designed to reduce the incidence of family violence through early police intervention and to raise public awareness of the criminal nature of family violence. During this fiscal year the initiatives will continue to be implemented and monitored. It seems strange, Mr. Chairman, that on this day of the Solicitor General's estimates there should be, in today's newspapers of a southern city, something where the police department did not respond with as much haste on a family violence call as it should have. Maybe as disconcerting is the reason given for why that wasn't responded to very quickly: the first phone operator to receive the call relayed the message that they thought it was a "family dispute." Surely this is not reason to delay a response but should be a reason to hasten a response, and we will certainly be looking into that in due course.

As I previously mentioned, the reports of the commission of inquiry, Policing in Relation to the Blood Tribe and the Task Force on the Criminal Justice System and Its Impact on the Indian and Metis People of Alberta, have been tabled in the Legislature. Some of the major recommendations in these reports call for extensive training on native culture for all police personnel, increased communication between the police and native leaders, education of the native people on the criminal justice system, stable funding for native communities who want to develop a police service, and community-based policing on

reserves and in urban areas where there is a high native population. Training workshops will be established for police commission members. Extensive work will be done in the area of native policing. Options will be examined for enhancing the level of policing to rural areas. Models of regional policing will be developed. The public complaint system will be reviewed. Prior to any plans being finalized, extensive consultation will take place with the police commissions, the police chiefs, and the public.

During the next year my department will also work towards a broader approach to crime prevention. Currently my department is working on developing a comprehensive policing strategy which addresses the policing issues of the '90s. The concepts of crime prevention through social development and problem-specific policing will be reviewed to determine the relevance of policing in Alberta today.

Vote 4, motor vehicles. This division of my department has contact with virtually every Albertan over the age of 16 each year through the issuance of 1.8 million drivers' licences and the registration of 2.2 million vehicles. Also included in this vote is funding for the Driver Control Board and the Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Fund. These services are provided through 11 government-run offices and 168 independent issuing offices throughout the province. The motor vehicles division, Mr. Chairman, has received the largest increase in funding in my department at 10 and a half percent. This increase is directed at concerns raised by the public and members of this Assembly about customer service problems resulting in long lineups at a number of our motor vehicle offices.

The MOVES computer system and equipment is now entering its seventh year and requires substantial upgrading. The current equipment is costly to maintain, with delays due to equipment failure adding to customer lineups. The expenditure of \$2 million per year over the next three years will be used to replace the computer equipment in all locations throughout the province and to upgrade customer service to ensure that the needs of the driving public are in fact being met. Enhancements to the system will also be made which will reduce the operating costs, particularly for telecommunication charges, as well as reduce the amount of time required to complete a transaction. It should be noted that the motor vehicles division collects in excess of \$130 million in revenue through this computer system.

I am committed to improving the level of service that the public receives from the motor vehicles division. A number of initiatives have been implemented or are in the planning process to help achieve this objective. Motor vehicles has completed its redistribution of the annual vehicle registration, spreading the workload more evenly throughout the year, which in turn eliminates seasonal peaks. My department will also examine extended office hours of operation at some locations plus the introduction of a telephone voice messaging system which will provide toll-free access to the public, providing them with information on driver or vehicle licence and registration requirements. Further emphasis will be placed on the use of the mail-in option for vehicle renewals. All business functions of the motor vehicles division will be examined to see where additional changes can be made to improve customer service.

In addition to the just mentioned initiatives, I wish to advise members that Albertans will soon require only a single licence plate on their vehicles. This change will result in a significant cost saving. It has been reviewed with the law enforcement agencies in order not to detract from the identification and enforcement processes being utilized.

I would now like to briefly move to an area of major concern to me personally and to most other Albertans, Mr. Chairman; that is, the impaired driver and people who drive with a suspended licence. The province has benefited from the substantially increased emphasis on the problem of impaired driving over the past two years with the result that charges have decreased each year. During this year my department will further increase efforts to detect and apprehend impaired drivers. First, my department is reviewing a plan which would provide the police with an enhanced ability to detect and apprehend impaired drivers at Check Stop locations. A passive alcohol testing device will be used to better detect potential impaired drivers. Second, it is my intention to have my department review programs which allow for the seizure of vehicles from those individuals who are apprehended while driving when their licences are suspended. My department is responding to the public demand to reduce the suffering inflicted on the motoring public by the impaired driver and by those driving while under suspension. The vehicle seizure program will greatly assist in ensuring that people with suspended licences do not continue driving. Sixty thousand-plus drivers in Alberta are under suspension; 20,000 of them are still driving.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I believe that impaired drivers and drivers under suspension are everyone's concern, and as a result, we all should take an active role in curbing these lawbreakers. Through a brochure campaign my department will call citizens to action to help the police in apprehending these individuals. The report on an impaired driver program, or RAID, and the suspended driver suspension program will be introduced in this fiscal year to help us put a stop to driving while impaired or with a suspended licence.

It is with pride, Mr. Chairman, that I report all of these initiatives, for in this period of restraint we anticipate being able to offer all Albertans an enhanced level of service and make our highways and byways safer. That concludes my remarks. I look forward to the observations of my colleagues and trust I can respond to those observations and questions at the end of the evening.

Thank you.

MR. CHIVERS: Mr. Chairman, I enjoyed listening to the hon. Solicitor General's comments. He speaks with a measure of pride with respect to the department which he supervises, and I might say that that measure of pride is well deserved. This is a well run department of the government of Alberta.

I'd like to begin by noting at the outset that the department is not one of the government's biggest spenders. Indeed, it weighs in at close to \$276 million in the appropriations requested for this fiscal year. At that level it's a rather modest spending department of the government. However, I also note from the annual report for the year ended March 31, 1990, that the department in that year had revenue of over \$151 million with actual expenditures of \$253 million.

8:20

Now, the Solicitor General has indicated this evening that he expects the motor vehicle registration revenue alone for this year to be approximately \$130 million. According to my calculations, and judging from the averages of the past, it would seem fair to anticipate that the revenue of this department totals approximately 60 percent or more of its total appropriations. That certainly is borne out by an examination of the history, where the revenue of the department has ranged between 50 and 60 percent of its total appropriations. I think we can assume at

least the same for this year. Given that kind of revenue generation, the services provided by this department are in a sense something of a bargain for Albertans. That's particularly so when you take into account that in a very real sense, as the hon. Solicitor General noted, this department does touch the lives of each and every Albertan almost every day of the year. This is the department that's responsible for law enforcement, for correctional services, and for motor vehicle registrations and driver licensing, and in one way or another nearly all Albertans are impacted in some fashion over the course of a year by the services provided by this department.

I'd like to deal with each of the votes in turn. Turning firstly to vote 1, the appropriation for Departmental Support Services, this vote shows an overall decrease of .2 percent in the amount of the appropriation requested for this year. I note that the Minister's Office shows a marginal increase of only 2.8 percent, but the deputy minister's office expenditures have increased by approximately \$50,000, an increase of 21.5 percent. Perhaps the minister could tell the Assembly what accounts for this rather dramatic increase in the deputy minister's office expenses.

Also under vote 1, reference 1.0.7, Corporate Services shows a decrease of approximately \$105,000, or 35 percent. I wonder if the minister could indicate where these savings come from.

With respect to vote 1 again, reference 1.0.8, I have a few comments with respect to the Liquor Licensing Review Council. I'm not clear from the reports. The most recent report for the department that I have is the 1989-90 annual report. I've looked at the estimates for 1990-91, and I see there was an appropriation for this council in that year. I see that in this year's estimates the department is apparently realizing a saving of nearly \$70,000 over the last estimates as there is nothing appropriated for the functions of the Liquor Licensing Review Council. I'm not sure what accounts for this, whether the licensing council is now inoperative, since this year's estimates don't include any allocation for that council. I'd like to comment a little bit further on the Liquor Licensing Review Council. It's a council that was created under section 53 of the Liquor Control Act, and as far as I can tell, that council still continues in operation. So I assume what's happening here is that the responsibility for this council has been transferred to another department. If I'm incorrect, perhaps the Solicitor General could explain that matter to me.

I have checked the past appropriations for the Liquor Licensing Review Council, and I note that over the years this has been quite an expensive council, totaling over the past five years some \$315,000 worth of appropriations. Since it seems to be modeled in the same fashion as the victims' assistance plan committee is modeled – it is a committee that apparently has no powers other than for recommendations – I'm wondering whether or not it's time to wind that program up, if it has not already been wound up. It's a curious arrangement: a council that has no power except to act on the direction of the Liquor Control Board or the minister and then power only to make recommendations. In reviewing the public accounts, as I've noted, there's an expenditure of \$315,000 over the past five years, and I wonder if the taxpayer is really getting his money's worth with respect to the review council and whether or not that is an anomaly that should be corrected.

I wanted to draw a parallel between the new initiative by the department, the Victims' Programs Assistance Act, and the committee established under that Act. This is, of course, another expensive committee. If I recollect correctly, the anticipation was that this committee was expected to cost approximately \$100,000 in its first year of operation. That's

about 20 percent of the \$500,000 that will be available for that committee to deal with by way of the recommendation. Once again, this committee is a large committee; it is not an autonomous committee; it has no independence from the Solicitor General's department; it can only make recommendations. As I've said before, it seems to me that the development of victims' programs and services might better and more economically have been left to an already existing body, such as the Crimes Compensation Board.

Turning to vote 2, the Correctional Services program, there's a modest increase of 3.7 percent in the appropriations requested; however, I'm concerned that the line seems to have been held on the Correctional Services budget by substantial decreases in manpower. The summary of manpower authorization indicates that there has been a reduction of 82.5 full-time equivalent employment positions and 81 permanent full-time positions for a total reduction of 163.5 positions. This is a manpower reduction of approximately 4 percent, and I'm wondering where the cuts in manpower are going to take place. I think the minister has indicated that some institutional service cutbacks are taking place. Are there also going to be manpower cuts in community correctional services, or are there some combinations of cuts? How is it anticipated that these cuts in manpower are going to impact the functioning of the department?

Also with respect to vote 2, I notice that there's been a 16.7 percent increase in Purchased Community Services. That's an additional \$2 million being spent in this area. Are some of the services that are being purchased services that would have been previously provided by departmental employees? To what extent are these sorts of services being contracted out to the private sector, and what is the rationale with respect to that contracting out? Also with respect to vote 2, what accounts for the 17.5 percent increase in Program Support? This is an increase of nearly \$1 million, and I'm wondering what accounts for the increase.

Turning to vote 3, Law Enforcement, I note that there's been a reduction of nearly \$500,000 in Program Support, and I'm wondering what accounts for this reduction. I also note a 3.4 percent increase in Financial Support for Policing, and I'm wondering what the increase here of nearly \$3 million is attributable to. I suspect that it may have something to do with the present negotiations that the minister was discussing earlier on in his comments. Perhaps this isn't an opportune time to be making inquiries in view of the negotiations that are under way, but perhaps also the minister could at least give us his reassurances that those negotiations are proceeding expeditiously and satisfactorily.

In this context there've been concerns about RCMP policing and that program. There've been concerns raised with respect to the RCMP status in terms of provincial law enforcement duties in the absence of a policing agreement. Indeed, I understand that the Solicitor General of Canada has himself expressed concern that the RCMP's legal status in a number of provinces may not be sufficient to permit the force to carry out its full range of provincial and municipal enforcement responsibilities. I understand that the Solicitor General of Canada offered to enter into an interim agreement. I'm wondering what the situation is in Alberta: has Alberta entered into such an interim arrangement? I would appreciate the minister's comments in that context.

8:30

Of course, the status of policing in the province is dependent on the authority under the Police Act, and there are differences

from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. I'm wondering what the Solicitor General's position is with respect to the necessity of an interim contract in Alberta or whether the provisions of the Police Act are clear enough on that point to put the question of status out of issue.

Turning to vote 4, the appropriation for Motor Vehicle Registration and Driver Licensing, I see that there's been a dramatic increase in licence issuing and driver testing costs of approximately \$3 million, or 12.4 percent, and I'm wondering what accounts for this increase. Once again I note that under the summary of manpower authorization, there will be a loss of the equivalent of 10 positions; that is, five full-time equivalent employment positions and five permanent full-time positions, for a total loss of 10 positions. In view of the reduction in manpower there presumably would have been some savings in this area. I'm wondering what accounts for the significant increases in cost at the same time that there are decreases in staffing?

In reviewing the 1989-90 annual report of the Solicitor General's department, I note that one of the goals of the department, which has been stated repeatedly, is to achieve a work force that is more representative of the native inmate population to whom services and programs are provided. I'm wondering what has transpired with respect to the development of a native employment strategy to increase the number of natives employed within the department. In the last annual report this was touted as being a major initiative of the department in that fiscal year, and I'm wondering what the status of that program is at the present time. Perhaps the minister could provide details as to what initiatives are presently under way in this area and what success is being achieved with respect to redressing the disparity in this area.

I noted also from the annual report that there seemed to be a high incidence of occupational accidents and injuries in the correctional services division, and I understand that in the last fiscal year the goal was established to reduce occupational accidents and injuries in the correctional services area by 10 percent in 1990-91. I'm wondering if the department was successful in its efforts to achieve this goal and did in fact reduce by 10 percent, or 843 days lost, the accident loss experienced in 1990-91. I'm wondering what steps are being taken in the current fiscal year to bring about further reductions because, after all, that is a fairly high figure.

In last year's estimates debate the Solicitor General had spoken, as he has this year, of the Kainai Community Corrections Society project, which was the agreement transferring community supervision and services to the native society of the Blood tribe. I understand that discussions were initiated with respect to similar projects with the Sarcee band, with the Metis zone 2 council, and with the Yellowhead Tribal Council. I appreciate that this evening the minister has indicated some discussions with some other bodies. I'm wondering what progress has been made with respect to arriving at agreements with these other groups to provide similar sorts of services. This seems to be a sensible initiative and one which should be expanded and pursued further.

In 1989-90 there were six correctional centre native program positions established for the purpose of developing and implementing native programming and addressing the special needs of native offenders. Perhaps the Solicitor General would be kind enough to give us an update with respect to what developments have taken place in this area and his assessment of the success of these initiatives.

The hon. minister has spoken at some length with respect to the Cawsey report and the Rolf report, and it's indeed clear as

a result of these reports that there is a need to improve policing services to meet the specific needs of aboriginal peoples. He speaks of some further initiatives in this area, and I certainly am supportive of the initiatives that he's discussed briefly here tonight. Perhaps it's a little early to ask the department to commit itself to a specific program in this area, but I'm wondering if there's any intention to expand the program developed with the Blood tribe whereby the fully empowered police service was established composed of native constables reporting to the band council through the police commission and if it's his intention to expand that sort of arrangement elsewhere in Alberta.

In the past the Solicitor General's Department has funded positions to assist native people in developing community and culturally specific crime prevention programs. I'm wondering again how many positions are planned for funding in the current year in this area and if so, how many? Where will native crime prevention co-ordinators be assigned if there is to be an increase of them?

A perennial problem with respect to policing in all jurisdictions – and Alberta is not unique in this regard – is the concern with respect to independent review of citizens' and public complaints concerning police conduct. I'm wondering if the minister sees a possibility of establishing, revising, or renewing the system in Alberta with respect to the Law Enforcement Review Board. I would draw to his attention – if I can locate it here in a moment – a study that was done in Calgary by Professor Patrick Knoll, who's a member of the Calgary Police Commission. This report was completed in October 1990 and was adopted and approved by the Calgary Police Commission I believe at the end of October 1990. I highly recommend the report to the Solicitor General. It makes some very sensible suggestions with respect to an area which is a problem, as I've noted, not only in this jurisdiction but in other jurisdictions, and indeed it recently surfaced again here in Edmonton this past week with new allegations respecting a situation of police brutality where private information has now been laid in the courts and presumably will be pursued in that fashion.

However, some of these complaints are best dealt with through an independent body, and Professor Knoll has suggested that what is necessary is a process that is "thorough, complete, open, sensitive, efficient, user-friendly and well-known to the public." He's also suggested that it should ensure "the complainant, the police officer and the Police Service have been dealt with fairly and seen to be dealt with fairly." Now he makes a number of specific suggestions, suggestions that I would urge the Solicitor General and his department to look at carefully.

In the legislative area he recommends a number of amendments to the Police Act and the regulations. Firstly, "that the Police Act or Regulations be amended to include provision for an informal resolution of complaints by mediation." That is, I suggest, a sensible approach to it because often these complaints, particularly the complaints of a less serious nature, can be dealt with on that basis. I would urge that the Solicitor General consider legislation to amend the process to permit mediation of complaints.

8:40

The second suggestion is "that the Police Act or Regulations be amended for the culling of frivolous and vexatious complaints with an appeal provision to the Police Commission" to review decisions to cull out allegedly frivolous and vexatious complaints. Again, that is, I submit, a sensible and an economic way of dealing with these matters because, indeed, there are from time

to time frivolous and vexatious complaints that the taxpayer should not necessarily be put to the expense of investigating on a more onerous basis.

The third recommendation of the learned professor is "that the Police Act be amended to provide for a provincial public complaints commissioner (ombudsman) with powers of investigation and reporting." Again, I urge the Solicitor General to look into and review this process. It makes a lot of sense to me, and I think it would make a lot of sense to other Albertans.

There are several other recommendations. "That the Police Act or regulations be amended to allow for complaints to be initiated only by those persons directly or indirectly affected" in order to avoid a situation that sometimes happens where the complaint is not initiated by anyone with an interest in it. He has also recommended "that the Police Act be amended to require that the Law Enforcement Review Board carry out its proceedings" in a less formal fashion. I know there's an attempt to do this with the Law Enforcement Review Board; however, the comments made here are enlightening and, I submit, bear some study and consideration.

He has also recommended that the Police Act be amended to provide for the appointment of more persons to the Law Enforcement Review Board. He has suggested a panel of 10 to 15 people who would sit in panels of three and that the appointments be limited to a three-year duration. Once again, I think these are sensible sorts of suggestions to deal with a very sensitive problem.

Finally, he has recommended "that the Regulations be amended to provide for a one year limitation period regarding the making and investigation of complaints." Again, I think that is a worthwhile suggestion, and I would urge the Solicitor General to look into the possibility of doing something with that report and perhaps bringing some amendments to the Police Act to the Legislature and taking some steps to review the regulations.

The Solicitor General's department in 1989-90 developed a new program to promote law enforcement and crime prevention initiatives in the area of family violence. I appreciated hearing the minister's comments in that area this evening. I won't belabour that matter any more. I believe my colleague from Edmonton-Avonmore may have some questions with respect to the details of those initiatives and an assessment of how successful the initiatives that are presently in place have been.

Another initiative from last year was the fines collection program, which took effect in November 1989, when the Provincial Offences Procedure Act came into force. The fines collection program was designed to remove the possibility of imprisonment for traffic offences carrying a fine of less than \$400. I wonder if the minister could give us an update as to the progress of this program and an assessment as to how successful the program has been in collecting outstanding fees.

Turning to the statistics in the annual report for 1989-1990, it seems clear that at any given time the majority of prisoners in our correctional institutions are actually spending less than a month in custody. I'm wondering if the Solicitor General's department has looked at this problem, because of course there is a serious issue with respect to the number of persons in custody in Alberta in terms of the cost to the taxpayer of those custodial sentences. I'm wondering if the department is looking towards alternatives in situations where short custodial sentences could perhaps be avoided in order to reduce the high proportion of persons in prisons for short periods of time.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to spend a moment or two discussing the situation at Hinton where there was a release of

toxic chemicals. Actually, it wasn't a release; it was in the Husky diesel fuel tanks in Hinton, which resulted in those tanks being dug up and transported to Edmonton, ostensibly to be dealt with in a disposal sense. I understand that these tanks were stolen; a trailer on which they were located was stolen while they were parked near Edmonton. I also understand from the newspaper reports that the RCMP investigation into this matter has not produced any results. It seems to me that in these circumstances this is a situation that involves many Albertans in a matter which was clearly a public hazard. There've been deleterious effects to the health of a good many Albertans, and I'm wondering, in view of the inability of the RCMP to track down the tanks, whether the Solicitor General has considered the possibility of a public inquiry into this matter. It seems to me that this is a matter that he may wish to take up with the Attorney General. It is a matter of some concern as it does involve issues of public health.

Mr. Speaker . . . Excuse me, Mr. Chairman. I'll get my terminology correct. At least I promoted you rather than demoting you, as I usually demote the Speaker to a chairman. Mr. Chairman, those are my comments at this point in time. I look forward to hearing the observations of the hon. Solicitor General.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. CHUMIR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to be able to get up and speak on these budget estimates once again. I'd like to extend my congratulations and support to the minister on a number of very progressive programs and initiatives of his department, particularly with respect to impaired driving and, to a limited extent, with respect to native Indians. I say to a limited extent because we're still in our infancy in dealing with those matters. I hope that we're going to see some continuation along the very progressive line that has been demonstrated so far in respect of the recommendations of the Cawsey report and the report in relation to the Blood tribe.

I must temper my congratulations with some disappointment and concern with respect to several issues. Firstly, the suggestions by the minister that immigrants who are engaged simply in membership in certain gangs deemed to be offensive will be deported. I find that quite shocking, so shocking as to be worthy of further comment here this evening. The second area in which I was somewhat disappointed and concerned is the lack of awareness of the minister with respect to the activities of the Aryan Nations and a lack of support of the RCMP for the citizens who were involved in protesting the Aryan Nations' activities in Provost late last year and the consequent, as I understand it, inappropriate criticism of the press by the minister rather than focusing his obloquy and contempt on the rightful recipient thereof, the neo-Nazi groups that are so active in this province at the present time. More about that later, if time permits.

8:50

To move into a bit about the deal with the numbers. It seems, Mr. Chairman, that the department is spending a lot of additional funding on administration. We find that the deputy minister's expenditures are up 21 and a half percent this year; that makes an increase of nearly 50 percent over the past two years. We find that Administration with respect to Correctional Services is up 17 and a half percent this year to \$5,439,000, even in the face of the closure of two institutions. We find that Law

Enforcement Administration, is up \$180,000 this year, a 22.3 percent increase. At a time of austerity these are spectacular increases, and it would be useful to hear some form of comment from the minister in that regard.

The question was raised earlier with respect to the source of the funding of the Liquor Licensing Review Council, which has now been eliminated from the budget estimates, although the council still carries on in action until its successor is in place. I note that Corporate Services are down 35.1 percent, and it's my understanding that this division co-ordinates the impaired driving initiatives of the minister's department. I'm wondering: since this department is now being downsized, how does this relate to support for the impaired driving initiatives of the minister?

In terms of Institutional Services under vote 2, Mr. Chairman, I note that two institutions have been closed: St. Paul's and Kikino. I'm wondering whether the minister might just describe a little bit more precisely what has happened at St. Paul's. I understand that has now been taken over by a native drug and liquor counseling program, and I'm wondering where this is funded and just how that works.

I note also that the funding for the Strathmore and Medicine Hat facilities are down. Particularly, Strathmore is down \$400,000, being 16 and a half percent after a drop of 11 percent last year. It seems to me that we're going to be having a lot of excess capacity in that that facility is underused. Are we seeing in these reductions, Mr. Chairman, a situation in which we are admitting that these facilities were in fact overbuilt in the past, just as many of our hospitals have been? At what capacity is that institution operating, and what is the plan for the future? Is it being wound down in light of the presence of the new Calgary facility for juveniles?

I note also in the numbers crunching that Purchased Community Services are up in a couple of areas. Community Residential Centres has received an extra \$1.4 million. Community Service Contracts are up by 400 grand. This hollers out a change in emphasis with respect to how we deal with our community facilities, and I'm wondering whether we might get some comment from the minister on that.

What has happened, I might inquire, with respect to the pilot programs that the minister announced last year with respect to finding suitable homes at the time of arrest for juveniles in order to avoid the need for incarceration, as we are remanding in custody as frequently as in the past? I've heard from lawyers dealing with youth court matters that they've had experiences in which from time to time youths have been held in custody from eight to nine months on occasion, in fact longer than the maximum sentence to which they might have been subject.

I raised last year in terms of our institutional services an issue with respect to female offenders and the absence of any halfway house facilities. A concern has been expressed about the need for a halfway house, and I know that the Elizabeth Fry Society has been lobbying the provincial government for 10 years for a female offenders' halfway house in Edmonton. There are significant facilities for male prisoners. I note that the minister discussed some initiatives in respect of female prisoners, with some emphasis on native offenders, but I'm wondering what progress is being made in this regard, if any. Is this a matter that will command the minister's attention? What impact, if any, will the plans for a new federal women's prison have in this regard? Indeed, perhaps the minister might have some information which is not confidential, and he might advise whether or not that prison is going to proceed here, and, if so, what impact this will have in respect of the whole philosophy of services in this province.

Also, in terms of the proposed new Calgary Remand Centre, I'd be very pleased if we could get an update from the minister with respect to where we are with that facility.

I note also that late last year, I believe it was, the minister himself was commenting publicly with respect to the overcrowding at the Edmonton Remand Centre. I think he made statements to the effect that he fears a potentially explosive situation if overcrowding continues and that double bunking and triple bunking were creating stress among the inmates and amongst the employees. I'm wondering whether that situation has continued and whether his concern continues and, if so, what is being anticipated in that regard.

Of course, this takes us full circle to the problems that have had such prominence in terms of studies and statistics that have been published so prominently in Alberta in recent times, and that's that we have too many people in our prisons. Well, we certainly have many more than other provinces. It may be that they're all doing it wrong and we're doing it right, but it's certainly expensive to have people in prison, particularly the numbers of people who are there for nonpayment of fines. Last year's statistics indicate that 1.8 percent of our population was there for nonpayment of fines, and as I've expressed in the past, this form of incarceration is, in effect, incarceration for poverty. As I recall, there was a Charter decision that dealt with that in the maritimes a few years ago which indicated that it was contrary to our Charter, that the minister has expressed such affection for from time to time. I'm wondering whether or not the minister has any comment in terms of what he might be planning to do in respect of alternative initiatives to eliminate people being in prison simply because they don't have the money to pay fines.

I've spoken in the past as well about concerns that have been expressed to me by psychologists and psychiatrists and penologists in relation to the shortage of psychological and psychiatric facilities and assistance for youth in our young offender centres. I'm sure the minister recalls vividly my comments from last year. I note that I've been talking to teachers recently who have been expressing increased concern about numbers of young people who are mentally disturbed: violent tendencies, uncontrollable, headed into our prisons almost inevitably, in their opinions, with a great shortage of psychological and psychiatric facilities available for them. I think that our problems are going to become worse rather than better from my reading of things, and I'm wondering just what direction the minister envisages in respect of that concern.

9:00

Now, in terms of natives, I just mentioned earlier in my comments the concern of our caucus to see that the government moves on to deal with the recommendations in the Cawsey report. I really would appreciate hearing from the minister some greater elucidation as to what is transpiring. One of the concerns I have is that I don't identify anywhere in the budget document budgeting for the minister's department to be dealing with that. Now, it may be tucked in there somewhere. It may be less than tucked; it may be overt and I couldn't see it for looking. We do want to see some action on that, and I know the minister does, because one can't help but note how he's been attending to some of these matters. He certainly has our support in that regard. I think we would all be comforted to be taken into the confidence of the government to a much greater degree as to what exactly is happening. How are we moving on this?

The terms of Law Enforcement, I'd appreciate if the minister would explain in a bit greater detail the concept of this Police Phase-in Subsidy which has been increased so substantially over the previous year from \$116,000 to \$323,000. I note that innovative policing is down by 7.7 percent after a cut of about a third in the past three years. I'm wondering, for example, since so many innovative policing initiatives relate to native Indians themselves – it's the epitome of sensible innovation these days – what that does mean for programs like that. Which gets us back to, you know: where is the funding coming from for these native initiatives? If the money isn't there, the work probably isn't being done. So that, I think, is very key: to be able to identify that yes, there is budgeting, money is being spent and enough to make sure the job is being done here.

High-speed chases have been of concern to myself. I've been very disappointed in the way this has been addressed by the government. I'm still disappointed. There was a task force established which came out with some rather minimal standards, and now there is some vague jurisdiction of the director of law enforcement over the RCMP. There was a fatal chase late last year. I've been attempting to get a copy of the RCMP report. They advise that it's gone to the director of law enforcement, and the director of law enforcement tells me that the report is confidential. It's all very, very circular, and I can't help but contrast that to the openness to a very significant degree of the Calgary police service, which issues a summary of every chase and speeds in a monthly report and whether or not some disciplinary action is being taken. They don't spill a whole bunch of private business of the police force that may impact negatively on policing. In fact, most of this stuff wouldn't impact negatively; it would simply enhance the confidence of citizens in the way in which police go about these high-speed chases. Lord knows there's no area in which confidence is more important, because it's the lives of each and every one of us and of our loved ones and friends and neighbours that are at stake and that have been the cost in the 20 or so deaths in terms of RCMP chases.

Let me say, Mr. Chairman, that I've been involved in high-speed pursuit policy for 10 years. I was involved in drafting the Calgary policy some 10 years ago, and the RCMP policies were defective. They've improved them somewhat, but the only way to save lives is in the event that the RCMP recognize that high-speed chases which are dangerous to the public either have to never take place or have to be stopped if the danger exceeds the need to apprehend. I was very shocked to hear that after their policy change took place last January, during the fatal chase later in the year there was not a supervisor monitoring that chase. Monitoring by a supervisor is the heart of every sensible high-speed chase policy on this continent, and there are many sensible high-speed chase policies.

I think that in the absence of a police commission, any civilian body in this province which has responsibility or jurisdiction over the RCMP, the minister is the trustee of the public interest in that regard. He has to play the role that police commissions do. In Calgary the police commission gets monthly reports with respect to the chases, they review them, there are questions, and those reports are made public. I don't see why the RCMP should be treated any differently than the city of Calgary police when it comes to a matter of public safety. There is a veil of secrecy; this is still being dealt with as if it's private police business. That task force was made up of insiders, of police-oriented people. They were dedicated people, honest people, I'm sure, but that was the wrong approach, and it's the wrong

signal, Mr. Chairman, for this minister to be giving in respect to that important issue.

In terms of the victim assistance program, we now have funding provided re a surtax from fines relating to certain federal offences. I'm wondering what the dollar amounts are that we have on issue. What are some of the program initiatives that the minister sees coming? I don't recall seeing any specific announcements yet in that regard. Is he kind of leaning a little bit to some additional help in respect of family violence issues? I would certainly lobby in that regard, particularly for programs in respect of assisting the victims of such violence and, indeed, going as far as programs for some of the perpetrators. I note that the minister's department funded temporarily, for one year, a program for 16 men who were perpetrators. Those programs are becoming as extinct as the dodo as a result of the funding, and I think that's shortsighted. I commend the minister's statement of concern with respect to the incident in Calgary yesterday relating to the failure of the operator of the Calgary police service to recognize that a family dispute was indeed a serious matter and not a cause for delay.

In terms of the complete police complaint process, I have been commenting for some period of time – it's getting to be ancient history – both in this House and many years prior thereto about the need for some greater independent public input in respect to the police complaint system. I note where the middle of last year, last summer, the minister was quoted publicly as saying that he was ruminating about the possibility of perhaps some change, looking at the civilian/RCMP/public complaints model, talking about a review and revamping of the Law Enforcement Review Board. Let me say, "Go to it." It's not that our system is rotten or horrible, but it could be better; it could be visibly better. Those who have been working with it know that there are defects and faults, and we have to constantly keep moving forward or there's a risk that we'll move backward. So I commend the minister, since he has an interest in these areas. It's not every minister that does have such an interest, and it's been long overdue. This is a matter that has not had the attention that it deserves and has needed for some 10 years. I note there is an international conference in respect of policing and civilian review being held in Calgary this next September. I'm sure the minister will be involved on that. So it's becoming much more accepted internationally to deal with these matters with some form of civilian input.

9:10

Federal gun control is an issue these days, and I'm wondering what the position of the government is with respect to those initiatives since gun control is under the minister's mandate. There's some discussion with respect to restrictions on automatic and semiautomatic weapons. I would appreciate hearing the minister's comments on that.

In terms of drivers' licensing, I'd like to congratulate the minister for beefing up some funding in recognizing the public concern about long lineups in respect of motor vehicle licences. In terms of drivers' licensing, there's still some concern about long waits for testing, on the one hand by individuals while on the other hand the private companies who teach driving are able to make block reservations and get their clientele through very quickly. This has led to some disgruntlement. The problem may have been overstated to myself, but I bring it to the minister's attention.

I've also had some concern raised, I think as a matter of principle rather than anything else, but that is that in many rural areas drivers licences can be picked up from privately-owned

facilities which are paid a fee by the government and that these facilities are charging a dollar extra. As a matter of principle I've heard some comment from rural residents saying: why should they be paying more, even though it's only a token amount, than those in cities who have the service provided by the government? It can raise, I guess, a great deal of philosophical debate.

In terms of impaired driving, I'm very pleased to see some steps being taken by the minister with respect to those who drive while their licence has been suspended. I don't know whether it's every year, but I think it's almost every year that I've spoken about my concern about that, because aside from the likelihood of apprehension through some Check Stop program, the element of the deterrent – the penalty – is most significant, and the suspension of the driver's licence is perhaps the most important. I think it's generally accepted that a significant percentage of those who have licences suspended continue to drive, with a very modest penalty to date in respect of being stopped for a first offence: maybe a \$150 to \$200 fine. Second offence there's jail. In British Columbia they've had a seven-day jail sentence, which really means a weekend in jail. I've been pushing for some teeth in that because it's very unlikely you're going to get apprehended there; it's a needle in the haystack type of thing, the likelihood of apprehension. So we need some muscle in there. I assume we'll see the details fairly soon, but I'd be interested to know whether the seizure of vehicles being proposed by the minister relates to a first offence in there or whether or not we're down to saving it to a later offence before we get some muscle.

There was also some discussion by the minister about a year or so ago about administrative suspension of licences pending trial. There was a lot of concern expressed about that in certain circles. However, I believe there may be a case for that providing that there is a fair hearing by the administrative agency prior to the suspension of the licence or provided that any suspension is put in abeyance until such a hearing can take place. It makes some sense if there are long delays and particularly when we see the delays in our court system, which may or may not be remedied by the Attorney General's recent initiatives. When we see those long delays prior to the cancellation of the licence, there may be some merit in looking at that, but I must say that I'm an advocate and a supporter of that only in the event that the right to a fair hearing is extended on there, the old Charter right that I think is so important to all of us.

I've also raised in the past the issue of designated drivers, the fact that the government is pushing designated driver programs but when I inquired some years ago, the government departments were not participating. I said, "If you're going to push it, let's set an example." I'd appreciate an update. I know I had raised that with the minister last year. I'd appreciate an update if he has got his own government marching in the regiment in regards to that.

I must say I have some concerns with respect to the suggestion that random stopping of drivers for being impaired has commenced in this province. I don't think that's necessary. I think there should be probable cause to stop the drivers. I think these Check Stop programs can be worked on a reasonable basis where it's not left to the arbitrary discretion of an individual officer as to whether they may or may not like the looks of an individual driver. There are schemes in terms of check stops and so on which are very workable, have worked in the States for a long, long period of time and comport with any Charter of Rights or Bill of Rights. I strongly suggest that the minister look into that.

[Mr. Jonson in the Chair]

In terms of liquor licensing, I'd be appreciative if the minister might comment about the nude dancing initiative and what is happening in respect of that. I note also that there has been an appointment as head of the Liquor Licensing Review Council of a Mr. Douglas Evans as of January 1. I wonder whether we might have a curriculum vitae with respect to the qualifications of Mr. Evans. I know he has a legal background. He also has a lot of friends in the government in the Lethbridge area. Might we also get some indication of what pay Mr. Evans is getting, or at least is he a full-time employee or is he simply working on a per diem depending on the number of days that he works?

Motor vehicle accident fund . . .

[Mr. Chumir's speaking time expired]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Red Deer-North.

MR. DAY: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. First, I'll open in the customary fashion by complimenting the minister for the effective way in which he's handling his duties. I know that's customary, but in this case it's also sincere. [some applause] I appreciate the thunderous applause for that comment.

The minister has shown that he's quite capable and able to handle what is a challenging department, so I commend him on that.

I take the opportunity also to commend some of the people under this department who work in Red Deer. The good folks at the Red Deer Remand Centre are very responsive to concerns that arise from time to time and, under the guidance of Mr. Gary Davies, who is the head administrator at the remand centre, are a very responsive, conscientious staff, and they do a very good job down there. I've had a good relationship with those folks and continue to look forward to an ongoing relationship.

Vote 4.2 under licence issuing and testing. Also, there are times when I contact the folks down at our licensing and driver testing facility in Red Deer and bring details to them that are brought to me by various constituents. The folks there also do a good job of responding as best they can with the resources they have to the concerns which I'm able to bring them from time to time. However, some of those concerns are ongoing and really beyond the ability of the people right in the facility to handle. Things like the ongoing problem of lineups for getting your licence are almost legendary, not just in Red Deer but around the province. I'm wondering if the minister can look at that vote, see if there's some kind of rationalization that can go on in terms of staffing or funding to somehow be able to assist the people who operate those licensing centres. When the customer, the taxpayer, comes to get a licence or renew something, whatever it might be that's already taking time out of their busy day – and many are businesspeople and can't afford a lot of time – they need to be attended to as quickly as possible. I'd like to know if the minister has looked at possibly reallocating some existing dollars to create more frontline capability on that particular front.

Also, there's a new process that's been in place now for a couple of years in terms of making appointments for driver testing, and I'd like to know if he's received reports back, had any evaluations, or heard from citizens in terms of whether that's been effective or not.

9:20

Vote 2.2, Institutional Services, and vote 2.3, community services, \$89 million and \$11 million respectively, and 2.4, Purchased Community Services at \$14 million: a lot of money that is going into satisfying the objective of that particular vote, which is clearly and plainly stated on page 302 of our estimates book, which says the objective of these programs is: "To provide for the correction, treatment and training of offenders and the protection of the community." I'd like to address that for a couple of minutes, because in our community in Red Deer, and as I talk with other colleagues in the Legislature, I hear similar concerns.

I'm sure the minister has heard the concerns over the Young Offenders Act and the method in which we are able to deal with young offenders. I realize this is a matter of federal jurisdiction in a large part, not totally. I know we have some area to move, especially under the highways Act and some other areas, but the minister needs to be aware that there's a growing frustration among the citizens of Alberta, certainly the citizens of Red Deer, with the increasing rates of delinquency and what the arresting officers and the counselors see as the inability to do anything effective, almost to be handcuffed, if I can use that term, in terms of dealing especially with the more serious repeat young offenders. It's gotten to the place where members of the force are frustrated. They share their frustration with complainants who have had their residences or businesses broken into. The whole process seems to be stymied, somewhat to do with the federal legislation, but I believe we've got room to move here, especially considering the dollars that we put into this program which is providing for "correction, treatment and training of offenders." So I would ask the minister to give some consideration.

You know, it was just a couple of weeks ago that there were some young people up here visiting the Legislature. They were young offenders who were brought here by a group that was working with them. As I had the opportunity to chat with them and talk with them after – we had a good, friendly talk – I was reminded again, as I have been in years past when working with street kids, of the reality that these are normal kids who have had some bad breaks, and that the answer for them is really the same as the answer for my own kids, whom I see as being relatively normal, and that is: a healthy balance of discipline, compassion, and instruction. Unless we're able to somehow control the amount of time where we have these young offenders under a training program and even sometimes in custody, then the process of this healthy balance of discipline, compassion, and instruction is going to be frustrated, as it is frustrated now.

Law officers and citizens in general see that nothing can be done because of the shackling effect of some of the legislation. So I'm asking the minister, in looking at these dollars, if he would give consideration to – these would be repeat offenders and the more serious offenders – where they are dealt with in more disciplined surroundings. Yes, with compassionate counseling available and applied, but we need to recognize the basic corollary that if any citizen, be they young or old, is showing irresponsible behaviour, they need to be in a more disciplined environment until they can gradually learn what it is to show more responsible behaviour. They need to develop a sense of dignity, and that isn't something you just bequeath on somebody; dignity is gained by accomplishing things and achieving things. So young offenders need to be in a type of program that has controls to it, even forced custody if that's what it's going to take, but through that process, through a

process of working, training, instruction, and goal-setting they're able to achieve some things and get some genuine dignity that they don't want to lose by getting involved in activity that would find them back in trouble again.

I'll refer to some interesting situations south of the border, and I don't think we always have to rush to things that are happening in the United States. Usually Canadians have a propensity to look at a program in the United States after it's failed, adopt it in a wholesale way here, spend millions of dollars on it, watch it fail, and express surprise that it failed. So when I say look at some of the things that are happening south of the border, I'm not saying that in a wholesale way, but we do see places where the philosophy seems to be shifting, and it's getting away from just, you know, trying to lather them with all kinds of counseling and not do anything other than that with them.

We see in different states – for instance, just over the last couple of years young offenders in South Carolina have been assigned to a more intense program of remedial education and actual work, but work that teaches them something. In this particular case they're working in the whole area of boat repairs. We're talking about large numbers here who are actually learning a trade. They're learning what it is to develop discipline, to get up a certain time every day, to work at a job, but they also earn money for that, and that helps to defray their costs of staying in the camp, I guess it would be, rather than an institution. It helps them to repay damages to the property owners they may have violated that resulted in their conviction, and it has resulted in a lower rate of repeat crimes. In South Carolina, as the analysis is being done already, 7 percent of the offenders in these special programs later return to an institution compared with a much higher percentage returning to the general prison population. One of the judges in Cincinnati made a comment, looking at that program, and said it's obvious that no-nonsense discipline programs work.

We see that also in the state of Georgia there's more of a tendency to move young offenders towards this type of treatment. Just the basic costs are a lot less. If we want to be strictly brutally mercenary about the thing, it's a lot cheaper to house people in a program like this rather than in a provincial institution where the rate of recidivism is extremely high. Other states coming out of Florida where it talks about these types of camps: the main one there was started in 1988, and only eight of the first 143 that have been released have since returned, have since repeated. Only eight of 143: that is miles below what the statewide recidivism rate is.

So I'm asking the minister if he would have his department direct more intently their focus on using these large numbers of funds that are going into correction and treatment and training, to apply these more disciplined plus learning, training environments that will be far more productive to young offenders than seems to presently be the case. I realize we may have to petition our federal counterparts to get some changes in the legislation there in terms of the custody in which we can hold these young offenders.

Relating back to the whole young offenders situation and the recidivism rates, having been involved in a volunteer capacity over the years both in youth centres and in adult institutions in terms of working with the different people who are incarcerated there, talking to the guards, talking to the social workers, the people that worked with them over the years, they also are discouraged about a high rate of recidivism. I think we have to ask ourselves: the programs that we're using don't seem to be working in terms of reducing the recidivism rate. As lofty as they may appear to be in their approaches, the bottom line is:

they're just not working, and we really have nothing to lose in looking to what I would call this more commonsense approach. So I'd ask the minister also to resist the shrieks that may come from some quarters who would think we're trying to implement boot camp, work camp type situations. If it's going to work and if the compassion is there, there's nothing wrong with the discipline and with the instructing and with the custody that's involved to take the time to show these folks how to learn internal discipline. If you really care for somebody, you do what's best for them.

9:30

On a different note, an article I came across recently had to do with a situation with a recently released female inmate from an institution in Lethbridge. Her comments were that male guards at this institution were "getting 'cheap thrills' by watching female inmates bathe" and also going through other compulsory functions that one needs to go through on one's day-to-day washroom activities. Also, we are aware that there's recently been a case where a female guard in a male institution where male prisoners were incarcerated has actually charged a male prisoner with indecent exposure. I have to question the, and I'll use the word "idiocy" of a philosophy that would say that it's fine to have male guards working in a female institution, and here we have the remarks from a female inmate herself. I'd ask the minister if he would direct his focus at this and see if there is something that we can do under our provincial capacity to cease this practice.

Back in 1981 the RCMP indicated that despite the mid-70s push to get women into nonstereotypical jobs, it was going to reactivate its long-standing policy that prisoners must be guarded by members of the same sex. That got them in trouble with the Human Rights Commission, and as the minister is probably aware, a tribunal took place. It lasted 17 days. There was a 118-page judgment which ruled in favour of the RCMP going back to their policy of same-sex guardianship in these institutions, yet we continue to follow this senseless path of having a mixed situation in the institutions. It's interesting to note that even the United Nations' standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners specifically protect female prisoners from having male guards. We all recall cases such as the 21-year-old female criminologist who was raped and murdered in the performance of her duties in a John Howard Society's halfway house. We've all heard of these, and yet here we have a situation where we've got the tribunal ruling against the Human Rights Commission here.

As Albertans we recognize the human need for personal privacy. The Supreme Court of Canada has affirmed it, Parliament enacted the Privacy Act in 1982, and yet we continue this policy of stripping from our imprisoned population the tiny shreds of personal dignity that they have left by causing them to be exposed at the most delicate times to members of the opposite sex. It's a terrible indignity. All bounds of common sense and humanity and decency – we seem to just throw it to the wind. I'm asking the minister: in light of these things, will he please look at doing what can be done to restore human dignity in our institutions and not see the last shreds of dignity sacrificed on the altar of ideology here? I'm asking if he could pursue that.

Under vote 1.0.8, and it's already been mentioned, some comments on the Liquor Licensing Review Council. Did the council make specific recommendations to the minister that we may not be aware of here? There are difficulties, I know, that they face, and they probably faced one that a constituent of mine

faced. It was maybe brought to them; I don't know. A couple of establishments in Red Deer are having a lot of difficulty in terms of the regulations where the fire inspector or the safety inspector making a decision on how many patrons can be in that establishment would differ from the Alberta Liquor Control Board ruling. It's creating some frustration. I'm wondering if this type of thing was brought to the Liquor Licensing Review Council and if we're going to be able to deal with that type of thing. Now that they've been, as I understand, going under the purview directly of the Liquor Control Board, are their decisions in future going to be communicated back to the minister and, therefore, back to us as legislators? We realize that last year there was broad research done on the department side in terms of liquor regulations. I'd like to know if the Liquor Licensing Review Council was involved at all in any of that research.

It's an interesting fact that over the last 10 years we've seen liquor consumption drop considerably among the population in just a voluntary sort of way. Whether it's health styles related or whatever the case may be, there's been a significant drop in per capita consumption. At the same time we seem to be moving towards sweeping liberalization in this particular area. I'd like to know if the Liquor Licensing Review Council had any recommendations there. It's interesting also that in the last five years I can't remember one constituent getting in touch with me saying that they don't have enough access to liquor. I do recall a caterer coming to me, and he may have taken this to the Liquor Licensing Review Council, but he was actually coming to me on the other end. He was saying, "Why are we shifting the hours so that the last call is not 1 a.m. but 2 a.m. and 3 a.m.?" Even though he's a dispenser of alcoholic beverages, he was concerned that it was going too far. So has the council had anything to say on that? I realize the predicament many hotels find themselves in in our province, and I support one hundred percent the value of tourism, but I just have to question whether an increase of liquor sales is the only way to remedy the situation. Maybe at a later date we can talk to the Treasurer about things like re-examining the pillow tax and looking at some kind of other rationalization there. I don't know if we'll get a reaction to that or not.

It's sometimes said that our licensing requirements are backward and from another era and don't compare with other jurisdictions, but you know, a businessman just recently back from West Germany I was talking to said the fact that he could not get an alcoholic beverage anywhere on a Sunday was not uncommon at all. That was commonplace: it was not available. In most of England other than maybe downtown London, the pubs close at 11 o'clock; they don't serve until 1 or 2 or 3 in the morning. So we really aren't that backward. It is curious that when we see this voluntary move towards self-restraint, it seems almost as if we're frantic to alter that course to try and get consumption up. I'd ask the minister if he has received any advice from the Liquor Licensing Review Council on that and also to ask him where the pent-up demand is coming from, because it's not coming from constituents in a wholesale way. If I asked constituents, "Would you like 24-hour availability?" one of them might say, "Oh, sure that'd be great," but also if I asked them, "Would you like us to remove the speed ban on Highway 2?" they'd probably say, "Yeah, sure that'd be great." I'd probably vote with them on that one. The point is that there's not a huge demand to lift the speed limits, so we're not doing it, and there's not a huge demand to be liberalizing in this particular area. So can we get some comments on that?

The member opposite has already mentioned the area of stripping legislation, an interesting topic for sure. I understand

you've got some group or some committee that's going to be looking at that. I would encourage the minister to deal with that with all expediency in terms of getting away from nudity and contact and this type of thing that is involved in so many of these particular situations. So I'd ask him if he could speed up that process; it's a very important one.

Well, here goes, just before I close here, a good old topic. The minister's going to think: you're really getting a lot off your chest tonight. Well, I'm just sharing the concerns of constituents with areas that fall under the jurisdiction of the minister, Mr. Chairman. It's one of our favourite friends. It would fall under Correctional Services and Institutional Services. It's Charles Ng that I'm referring to. The situation with Charles Ng we don't have to get into in detail, but I think it shows the need for us to have more sovereignty in the area of corrections, correctional services. We need more sovereignty than we presently have working with Ottawa on this, because the Ottawa view of what we should do in situations like Mr. Ng differs from the view of Albertans. So I'd encourage the minister to be looking at what can be done there to increase our umbrella of jurisdiction in that area. Can the minister tell us also, as this man is a customer of his now: is it true that Charles Ng is taking courses from Athabasca University? If that is true, how is he paying for those? Is that coming out of the minister's department? I know my own son is taking some courses from the Athabasca University and has to pay for them himself. I'm hoping that Mr. Ng is not being carried by the taxpayer as he renews this sudden interest in education. So can he answer that? When is his . . . What's that?

9:40

MR. JOHNSTON: He gets a scholarship.

MR. DAY: Yeah. I wonder what topic it would be under.

When is Mr. Ng's sentence up? I understand it's not that long until the charges which he has been charged with here in Alberta are going to be expended, and if that's true, is it also true that he's going to be able just to walk the streets of Alberta?

Also, I'd like to ask him if he cannot use the resources of his department - he's got, really, some of the brightest minds in Alberta serving in his department. Can he not designate some people to be dedicated to the task of searching through our own legislation vis-à-vis the federal legislation and find a loophole, find whatever it takes, whether it means we drop the charges, but do something; maybe arrange for a work detail for Mr. Ng to be walking along the U.S. border someday. Somehow, I believe, with all the resources that are available to us, we can find a way to get this man out of here and to send a message to similar individuals south of the border that you just can't come to Alberta or Canada and expect to hide. We already have another well-renowned case - it's in Ontario - of an individual, this Bambi individual, who actually is even worse because she is a convicted murderer, yet clearly here in safety. So I'm asking the minister: would he please use the resources at his disposal, designate somebody or people in his department to find the loophole, to find the means that are available. There has to be a way. If nothing else, ship the man to Ottawa. If they want him so badly, they should have to walk out of their House of Commons every day and look at the building that he's in there rather than Albertans bearing the indignity of carrying that man on their tax-paying shoulders.

The Member for Calgary-Buffalo made comments, some which were positive and some which were predictable in terms of the civil libertarian stance for which he is known and for which he

shares a tiny minority of support in this province. He expressed shock at statements the minister had made in relation to this Asian gang issue. I just would like to go on record as saying, to help the member opposite not just to direct his comments towards the minister, but there's at least one other individual on this side of the House who also is concerned about this particular activity.

I don't think it's shocking for the Solicitor General to say that somebody who is involved in, who is taking part in gang activity, who is involved in this type of activity, that that type of individual needs to know we are not necessarily going to wait for somebody to get murdered before we would take some action to have the person sent back to their country of origin. I don't think that's a staggeringly frightening fact or statement to make. The reality of gangs is here, and not just Asian gangs; this isn't a racial issue. There are gangs of all skin colours out there. I don't care what country is their country of origin. If they are actively involved in gang activity and if they are not citizens, they need to be aware that their position here in Canada is somewhat more tenuous than a regular citizen, and they may not wait for a crime to be perpetrated and then summarily charged. People are deported all the time without being charged with offences; unless it's really grievous, like Charles Ng, and then they're allowed to stay.

So I would like to indicate support to the minister for his statement, not as the member opposite or members opposite here or some members of the media would try and point out, that anybody who's in any kind of Asian social group is under suspect, but people who are involved in these types of activities. I can tell you, Albertans have no patience for it, and I would gladly meet the Member for Calgary-Buffalo on any podium in the province, before any collection of our citizens, and take him to task on that issue. He might get a somewhat rude awakening in terms of what commonsense people think of some of his statements.

I had one more comment here, but mercifully for my colleagues who have other things they want to deal with, I can't find it. So I'll leave those comments for now and ask the minister to direct his attention to these concerns.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to pick up on some comments that the minister was reported to have made recently in regards to his reaction to two recent reports tabled in this Assembly a few months ago regarding the state of Alberta's criminal justice system as it affects a relation to the native people of this province.

First, reference has been made – and I think he also repeated it this evening – in terms of the Rolf commission report investigating policing in relation to the Blood tribe, the public inquiry that was concluded and the recommendations that were tabled. I think the minister has given an undertaking – and I'm pleased, if I understand his undertaking correctly – that at the moment his department is working with the Blood tribe to establish objectives or achievable steps to implement the recommendations that were made in the Rolf report. However, I'd like to highlight the fact that not all of the recommendations dwell exclusively with matters as they affect the Blood tribe. In particular, one of the recommendations Mr. Justice Rolf made was:

Consideration should be given to establishing a Provincial Native Police Commission under an independent chairperson to assist in the resolution of policing issues and setting of minimum police force standards.

I think it's significant that Mr. Justice Rolf felt that he needed to depart to some degree from an exclusive concentration or focus on matters affecting the Blood tribe itself and to make these broader recommendations. I'd like to know what mechanisms the minister is putting in place to implement that particular provincewide recommendation.

In addition, he made references to some experiences in Ontario in regards to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and self-policing models. Again my question: what are the mechanisms that his department is putting in place to implement that particular recommendation from the Rolf public inquiry?

As well, recommendation 35 of the Rolf report talks about establishing

a Standing Commission involving representatives of the three levels of government, being the Federal, Provincial, and Indian Governments, under an independent chairperson whose mandate is dispute resolution in an open exchange of ideas where all parties are equal participants.

A very innovative and constructive recommendation, but no mention specifically has been made by the minister as to how he intends to address those larger concerns and those larger recommendations. I think it important for him not to simply dwell on matters as they affect the Blood tribe. As I repeat, I'm pleased to the extent that they're actually addressing those, but also the larger questions Rolf raises as well.

Now, I must also express some concerns with what I understand is sort of the overall tone of the minister's response to the Cawsey report, called *Justice on Trial: Report of the Task Force on the Criminal Justice System and Its Impact on the Indian and Metis People of Alberta*. The Solicitor General has made a number of comments reported recently, and in fact he's provided me from his office with the notes for an address that he gave recently in which he discussed the Cawsey report. I'm concerned about the tone of a number of his comments. Just to highlight them, Mr. Chairman, comments such as, "we in Alberta . . . do not put people in jail only because of their ethnic origin." As well, his comments that

Therefore to conclude at the beginning that there is something wrong or unjust when aboriginal people are in jail in numbers disproportionate to their proportion of population may be wrong.

And to base a study on that conclusion, may do little to ascertain the truth or lead us out of the wilderness.

In fact, the minister went on to indicate that "recommendations based on incorrect perceptions or faulty findings cannot assist us in reaching our true goal."

9:50

[Mr. Schumacher in the Chair]

Mr. Chairman, the point that has to be made and strenuously emphasized is Mr. Justice Cawsey's overall observation which, as a result of this task force examination, is that systematic discrimination exists in the criminal justice system. To quote from the report, Mr. Justice Cawsey has concluded that there is no doubt that aboriginal people "are over-represented in that system." At best, in his words, to put the best construction on the situation, he concludes:

The equal application of the law has unequal results. Unless evidence is found to support the notion that Indian and Metis people are inherently more criminally-inclined than non-Aboriginal people, this imbalance must be redressed to bring about equitable

results for Aboriginal people involved with the Criminal Justice system.

Those, Mr. Chairman, are remarkable words, and Mr. Justice Cawsey makes the point that Indian and Metis people are not inherently more criminally inclined than nonaboriginal people. But flying in the face of this conclusion is our Solicitor General, who, to my reading of his remarks, seems to be saying that in fact they are, which to my mind is entirely the wrong conclusion to be reaching. In fact, in order to reach that conclusion, the minister would basically have to ignore the entire thrust and focus and findings of the Cawsey report. I'd just like to ask the Solicitor General whether he is dismissing the Cawsey report when he starts by labeling the recommendations as being based on incorrect perceptions or faulty findings. Indeed, the minister seems to indicate in terms of the Cawsey report that most of the information on which the recommendations are based is anecdotal. Well, is that any reason to trash the report?

The minister is well aware of the concerns I had with the task force terms of reference initially. In fact, he knows that I wrote to him expressing my concern over the lack of research resources being provided to the task force to do their job. He knows the concerns I expressed at the time, and I believe that criticism was valid. But now that we're at the end of the process, I have to also indicate that I'm pleased by the findings of the report and the degree to which they took this issue seriously and the spectrum of recommendations that they made to the minister.

Now, for the minister to criticize the task force, indeed to dismiss the task force because their findings were anecdotal, to my mind is not fair to the task force. After all, it was he who set it up, and it was he who gave them their terms of reference and he who helped finance the task force as well. Now, if the academic research was not as extensive as he would have liked, fair enough. That was my concern initially too, which he dismissed when I raised it with him. But now that the report is in, let's not use the lack of resources of the task force to do academic research as a reason for dismissing their conclusions. After all, some of the best research can sometimes be that which is anecdotal.

I think we also have to ensure that the analysis of the Cawsey report is not a simplistic one that native people are disproportionately represented in our jails because for some reason they are inherently more prone to crime. If that's the conclusion that the Solicitor General is reaching, he's missed the point. The point which Mr. Justice Cawsey and the task force found is that the system and the people who are in the system even in spite of some of their best efforts are acting in a way that discriminates or creates an inherent disadvantage for native people who come into contact with that system. He makes numerous, indeed 338, recommendations in order to begin tackling some of those injustices and some of those inequalities and some of those discriminatory practices. I would hope that the minister is not beginning a process of setting out arguments that would invalidate the Cawsey report or give this government an excuse to delay or to fail to implement its findings.

Now, Mr. Justice Cawsey's task force also made some very telling recommendations regarding the implementation of the report's recommendations. I must say that I'm disappointed if the minister – and I say "if." If my interpretation of his remarks are off base, I'd welcome the opportunity for him to prove me wrong, but I must say that my interpretation, anyway, of what he's saying causes me a great deal of concern. If my concerns can be dismissed because of concrete steps the minister can outline for us tonight, then there would be no one more pleased than I. But as I read his responses, they're quite disappointing.

To say that simply consulting with unnamed individuals will be the means by which the government will have a monitor of whether they implement these recommendations or not is wholly inadequate. The minister should be identifying whom it is he's going to consult with, number one, and what role and mandate those people are going to have to direct or to be on top of his department in overseeing the implementation of this report.

But I must make the point that Mr. Justice Cawsey made quite strongly, that the monitoring of the implementation process is a very important element of this report. The task force talks about two types of monitoring, one regarding the implementation, but also, in a kind of echo of Mr. Justice Rolf, they talk about establishing an aboriginal justice commission which, within 18 months of the filing of the report of this task force, would assume all of the powers and duties of the task force monitoring committee plus a much larger mandate on top of that.

Now, the reason that Mr. Justice Cawsey has indicated the importance of establishing an independent monitoring committee is, as he says in his report: "These bodies must be free of the influence of the departments responsible for the implementation of specific recommendations." And the telling comment: "Conflict of interest must be avoided." The point being that an independent watchdog committee is the only group that would be capable of ensuring that the recommendations are carried out to redress the systematic discrimination that exists in Alberta's criminal justice system. I must say I'm most disappointed that the government has chosen not to implement this particular monitoring committee, because that's basically the insurance policy to ensure that the Cawsey report is not put on the shelf to gather dust. The minister, by indicating that all he's going to do is consult with unnamed persons or groups, doesn't give me any confidence that this government is going to be serious about the implementation and, taken in conjunction with the comments the minister has made which appear certainly on the face of it to be dismissing the Cawsey report, indicates to me that this government a year from now, two years from now, three years from now, will basically have tried to forget the Cawsey report and its wide-ranging recommendations. I hope the minister will prove me wrong, but the evidence so far, I think, is compelling that this government is starting the process of distancing itself from the Cawsey recommendations and the impact of implementing those in Alberta's criminal justice system, and I'm deeply concerned about that.

10:00

I would also like to raise a question that's been discussed earlier this evening about the Solicitor General's policy now, apparently, that people can be hauled off the streets and put on an airplane and sent out of the country. At least, that seems to be his policy when he talks about taking people who are members of gangs and sending them back to the country they came from. Now, no one's more concerned about crime and violence in the cities and towns of this province than the members of this Assembly, including those of us in the Official Opposition. But we must remember that this is a country, after all, in which law is supreme and in which due process is an absolutely fundamental characteristic of Canadian society.

I have no idea how this Solicitor General intends to implement a policy whereby people are not charged, don't have their day in court, don't have the opportunity to defend themselves before the state acts to deprive them of their freedoms in this country. I don't know how this minister would make the judgment call of whether a person is a member of a criminal group or not. The point is that if somebody has committed a

crime in our society, we treat that very seriously, and we haul a person into our justice system and we prove in a court of law that they have broken the laws of this country or this province. Now, if someone has done that and is found by a court of law to have done so, I have no problems with somebody putting them on a plane and deporting them, depriving them of their freedom. I have no problems with that. But the minute that this Solicitor General says that because someone is suspected to be a member of some group is sufficient evidence enough for him to haul them into the airport and put them on a plane tells me that we have moved away from following due process and being concerned about due process.

How do we know that someone isn't being falsely accused of being a member of a criminal group? Who's to say that someone can't pick up a phone anonymously to the police and say, you know, that so and so is a member of some criminal gang? How are we going to ensure that that's true and, if it is in fact true, that somebody has actually committed an offence before being hauled up and hauled out of the country? I mean, someone can easily be falsely accused. What are the checks and balances the Solicitor General intends to put in place to differentiate between people who might be falsely accused and those who have actually committed a crime?

That's why it's important to follow due process, and the Solicitor General should be the first one in this Assembly, given his responsibilities in this province, to be upholding due process before actions are taken by the state against any individual. I'm most disappointed that the minister would advocate a policy in which due process was not followed. Our system should operate for everyone, because once you cross that line, when do you stop? If you deny due process to some people in this country, where do you stop? People are very concerned, and rightly so. I know it plays great to the law and order people and law and order is important in our society, but the law should be supreme, and people, if they're going to be accused, should be brought before the courts and found guilty before the state punishes them.

What about people who work for employers? An employer could say, "If you don't accept these conditions of employment," which may violate who knows what – people are exploited and an employer could use this as a weapon over any immigrant person in our province. "If you don't behave, I'm going to report you as being a member of a gang." Once you've violated people's rights to due process, it can be used by others in society as a way of holding a hammer over people's heads and threatening them to be reported to the police or anybody else. "If you don't behave, I'll tell them you're a member of a gang." If this is a policy in place, that people who are known members of a gang are going to be deported, the threat is there that immigrants are going to be deported by an employer making a phone call to the police. It's a hammer that you're putting over their heads to make people live in fear. I don't think the Solicitor General has thought through the implications of what might happen in this province if due process and the law and the rights of people before the courts are not upheld. It's a very important matter. I don't think the Solicitor General really appreciates the degree to which that fundamental matter would have to be violated in order to adopt the policy he's proposing.

To change to one last topic, I want to raise with the minister tonight the matter of literacy programs in Alberta jails. I'm sure he knows the statistics as well as anyone, that people who are incarcerated have by and large not achieved the degree of education or literacy as the general population. Whatever that might say about their educational background, their social or

economic backgrounds, the fact of the matter is that there's a high correlation of people from families in poverty, a high correlation of people with low education and low literacy skills among those who are found in our prisons in this province. I'd like to know if there's any particular initiative by this government in order to address the question of literacy in particular and programs through the jails of this province in order to encourage people with very low functioning in terms of their educational skills. Examples and experience in other jurisdictions, particularly some I'm aware of in the United States, indicate that there's a very high success rate and that people who are enrolled in literacy programs in the jails get more than just skills; they gain a lot of self-confidence, and it helps them avoid recidivism and returning later on as a repeat offender. So I'd like to know if the minister has any particular initiatives in that area.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

10:10

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Solicitor General.

MR. FOWLER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A good number of questions have been raised by the hon. members on both sides of the House, and it was my intention to try to respond to a number of these. However, the matters that have been raised by the last speaker, the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, prevent me from taking any time at all in addressing any of those matters of a specific nature which have been brought up within the House, except for one or two incidents.

I want to say, though, that for those answers that I don't give to the questions which were raised, I will study personally the *Hansard* on it, because many of these suggestions are very valid. I do want to see the questions put to my own department and I want to see the answers to those, because I have never claimed and I don't believe anyone has ever claimed that all the good ideas of government necessarily begin and end on this side of the House. I think that some good things have been raised.

In respect to a fairly provincial matter, on the RCMP contract it is an opinion received by us that the RCMP of the province of Alberta have all of the authority they require to carry on with the contract that is in fact in place. Ottawa merely raised it as an issue that they thought we should be made aware of, but they never claimed at any time that the police could not enforce the laws of this province. I, too, was concerned up to the time that we were fully assured that the RCMP were perfectly within their jurisdiction to continue with the contract.

In respect to the matter of Aryan Nations, I think that it is well known what I thought and think of this group of madmen that belong to this particular organization. I referred to them as a group of crazies before, and the truth is that I can't think of terms strong enough to refer to this particular group. The fact that an inquiry has been called or recommended by our Human Rights Commission is indeed pleasing to me, and I hope that whatever they can find if that inquiry takes place will assist this province in ridding ourselves of this type of trash that does exist and continues to exist in this province.

In respect to immigrants, I am appalled not so much at the lack of knowledge from the Member for Calgary-Mountain View – he's not in all probability a great reader of the laws of our land in any case – but I'm somewhat appalled as well by the Member for Calgary-*Buffalo's* response in this matter. At no time, Mr. Chairman, have I recommended doing away with due process. At no time have I stated that. However, if both of these critics in tonight's debate will refer to the Canada

Immigration Act, sections 17 and 24, if they will take the trouble to do that, they will see that what I am advocating and have advocated is entirely within the laws of the land and in fact has been there for some time. Mere association with a gang which is a gang for criminal purposes is grounds enough for deportation and can be done and should be done, in my personal view. Again, that is in the Canada Immigration Act, sections 17 and 24. I am not making new law; I am not suggesting due process be done away with. All I'm saying is come to Canada; immigrate to Canada, the greatest land in the world. Come to be a Canadian and enjoy what we enjoy, but don't get into these areas of lawbreaking because that's not a proper appreciation of an open invitation to a beautiful land for immigration and citizenship. Be out of here if you don't want to do that.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, in respect to native rights, there is no way in the world that the Official Opposition will drive a wedge between the minister responsible for native affairs and the natives that I am responsible for. Twenty minutes was spent tonight trying to drive that wedge. We have a situation of a hundred years of creation of problems with natives and the law, and they think in their simplicity, in their simple minds, that this is going to be cured in 60 days, for heaven's sake. If we are responsible in this area, we will do what we're doing, and that's to take a report from Justice Cawsey and Chief Judge Rolf and study it. We are studying it, and it will take six months. It is being studied with part of that committee, the president of the Indian Association of Alberta, and also the Metis Association of Alberta, both of whom agree that we were doing the right thing, neither one of whom wants to see this become a political issue because we can deal with it better if it is not a political issue and truly try to get to the bottom of what the problem is.

Now, Mr. Chairman, in respect to my comments, we made available to the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View my speech given in Sitka, Alaska, where a group of socialists there undoubtedly advised a group of socialists here about the particular line that he referred to. It's a very fine network, and we did provide the speech to him. What he is referring to mostly is that I am going to disregard the Cawsey report for the simple reason that I have said that maybe, just maybe, the cause of so many natives in jail is not necessarily a systemic prejudicial system that's in place but may have something to do with the number of crimes committed.

Mr. Chairman, that is not being denied even by the writer of the report. In discussions with him there are indications that that may be the case, that the number of natives in jail was almost equal to the number of crimes being committed by this

group. However, I and all of my department are fully aware that the reasons that that crime rate exists may be part of the problem in this system as well, not only in the criminal justice system but the whole system generally. That's what I and my department and the people we want working on this will in fact be looking at. It is too simplistic to say that there's just this systemic prejudice out there and that's why they're in jail.

The natives of this country, of this province, have suffered discrimination for a hundred years. I'm aware of it. I'm fully aware of it, but I state again, Mr. Chairman: there are no circumstances under which a wedge will be driven between the minister responsible for native affairs and the natives that I am, in fact, responsible for. I can think of no greater commitment I have at this time than this particular portfolio or the part of it that has been given to me by our Premier. There is nothing which will take more time and devotion, but I will personally give it for the time that I have it.

Mr. Chairman, those are going to conclude my remarks tonight, and I will respond in written form to the other questions. Thank you.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Chairman, on that note I move the committee rise, report progress, and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

10:20

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

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

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Does the Assembly concur in the report and the request for leave to sit again?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? Carried.

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, it's the intent of the government tomorrow to have the ministers Mr. Oldring and Mr. Brassard defend the estimates of Family and Social Services.

[At 10:22 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 2:30 p.m.]

