



STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Mr. Greg Lawrence, Chair
Moose Jaw Wakamow

Mr. David Forbes, Deputy Chair
Saskatoon Centre

Mr. Russ Marchuk
Regina Douglas Park

Mr. Roger Parent
Saskatoon Meewasin

Mr. Corey Tochor
Saskatoon Eastview

Hon. Nadine Wilson
Saskatchewan Rivers

Ms. Colleen Young
Lloydminster

[The committee met at 14:58.]

The Chair: — Good afternoon, everyone. The time being 2:58, we're going to get started a couple of minutes early. I'm Greg Lawrence. I'm the Chair of the Human Services Committee. We have Mr. Forbes as Deputy Chair, Mr. Marchuk, Mr. Parent, Mr. Tochor, Ms. Wilson, and Ms. Young.

**General Revenue Fund
Social Services
Vote 36**

Subvote (SS01)

The Chair: — We will be considering the estimates for the Ministry of Social Services. We now begin our consideration of vote 36, subvote (SS01). Minister Harpauer is here with her officials. Minister, if you would please introduce your officials and make your opening comments.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome to all the committee members. Before I begin my opening remarks, I would like to introduce some of the officials that are here with me today. Beside me is the deputy minister, Ken Acton. And behind me, from child and family programs, is the assistant deputy minister, Tammy Kirkland; from income assistance and corporate planning, Assistant Deputy Minister Constance Hourie; and from disability programs, Executive Director Bob Martinook; and from housing programs and finance, the assistant deputy minister, Don Allen. There are other officials that are here with us today, and we will introduce them as they are called upon.

We are pleased to be here today to talk to you about Social Services' 2015-16 budget. Social Services' expense budget for 2015-16 is \$1.001 billion, an increase of 44.6 million, or 4.7 per cent over last year. This financial commitment clearly shows the priority our government places on this ministry's work. In fact, the areas of Health, Education, and Social Services and Assistance account for nearly 75 per cent of government's expense on a summary basis. I believe this budget shows that our government is committed to the work we are doing to keep Saskatchewan strong for some of our most vulnerable people.

[15:00]

I would like to start my comments in the area of the child and family programs. For 2015-16 the budget for child and family programs is \$226.1 million, accounting for 23 per cent of the ministry's budget. This is an increase of 7.5 million over last year. Our goal to keep children safely in their homes, wherever and whenever possible, is evidenced by the fact that 18 per cent of our program budget is dedicated to prevention.

For the past several years, the number of children coming into direct care of the ministry has decreased. We are now starting to see that number plateau, while the number of children placed permanently with extended family continues to increase.

On February 2015, there were 4,628 children in out-of-home care compared to 4,734 in February of 2011. During that same period, the number of foster homes with more than four foster

children decreased from 68 homes to 54 homes. Further, the number of foster children in those foster homes decreased from 414 to 310 despite a decrease in the number of foster homes. It is worth noting that between 2011 and 2014 the population of children and youth aged 19 and under in Saskatchewan increased by 4 per cent. However, the ministry saw a 2 per cent decrease over that same time frame in our ongoing cases.

I want to talk about what the ministry has done to influence these numbers and to continue transforming the child welfare system in our province. As you know, the ministry no longer operates residential facilities such as Red Willow and Dales House. The ministry began to reduce reliance on these facilities before they closed by assisting youth in private treatment to transition to independence, which would free up those private spaces. We call this approach youth transitions. This is a personal-centred, family-driven process with team-based planning that identifies strengths and develops strategies to help our clients meet and support their day-to-day needs in their communities.

In the first 12 months of the program, 32 youth have been successfully transitioned out of treatment group home which . . . group care, primarily from Ranch Ehrlo and Eagle's Nest, with only one youth moving back into private treatment. The program currently operates in Regina and Saskatoon with three staff in each location. They generally carry a smaller caseload of approximately eight cases to allow for more intense case planning and mentoring.

While I'm talking about staffing, I would like to note that since 2007, 93 new FTEs [full-time equivalent] have been added to the child and family programs to provide front-line services. This includes the 2014-15 addition of three front-line workers to address the increase in persons of sufficient interest or extended family caseloads. In addition, from February 2007 to February 2015 the ministry has seen the average caseload for front-line child protection worker decrease from 20.89 to 17.55, a 16 per cent reduction.

Supporting and working with our First Nations agencies is another vital piece of work for the ministry. We are continuing our partnership with Lac La Ronge, Athabasca, and Meadow Lake Tribal Council child and family service agencies to deliver off-reserve mandated services, including after-hour services for families residing off-reserve. The structured decision-making model has been implemented across the province and in 10 First Nations child and family agencies, with plans to continue implementation in the remaining agencies.

In October 2013 the ministry began a prototype for a flexible response program which provides alternative interventions to cases that would normally trigger the traditional child protection response and investigation. Mobile crisis, along with Métis Nation Saskatchewan, Sturgeon Lake child and family service agency, and Saskatoon Tribal Council have been engaged with the ministry in implementing this approach. This pilot was completed in October of 2014 with a total of 2,348 intake cases using the new approach. An evaluation of the pilot is currently under way and should be completed this spring. This pilot has shown very positive preliminary results. In a year-over-year comparison of the number of children entering

care at the ministry's Saskatoon office prior to the pilot and during the pilot, 49 fewer children entered into care, which is a 13 per cent decrease.

Also last year we expanded the positive parenting program or triple P. Triple P gives parents the skills and competence they need to parent well and address common child and adolescent social, emotional, and behavioural problems. Since 2012 two First Nations CFS [child and family services] agencies, Lac La Ronge and Peter Ballantyne, have been delivering triple P off-reserve. In 2013-14 we worked with community partners in Regina, Yorkton, and Sandy Bay to train CBO [community-based organization] staff in triple P. In 2014-15 we expanded even further and now also offer triple P in Humboldt, Meadow Lake, Fort Qu'Appelle, and Swift Current.

We recognize that foster families also continue to play an important role in the child welfare system and in the lives of children who are welcomed into their homes. To support the valuable contributions of foster parents, we will be increasing foster care, therapeutic foster care, and extended family care basic maintenance rates by 2 per cent, at a cost of \$800,000.

Additional services will also be provided for medically fragile children in the care of the ministry. Reports from third parties such as the Advocate for Children and Youth and the Provincial Auditor have indicated the need for better identification and services to children who are medically fragile and/or who have complex needs. Prior to the development of this resource, children with these needs were placed in foster homes that were not equipped to care for them. This led to multiple child moves, increased hospitalization, and burnout of foster parents. Agreements with four organizations — Thomas . . . [inaudible] . . . YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association] in Regina, JCL Care Homes, and Hope's Home — on a fee-for-service basis have been developed where up to 25 children can be served.

Our government is also breaking new ground through the Sweet Dreams project which began in May of 2014. Sweet Dreams is being funded through a social impact bond, known as a SIB, which is the first of its kind in Canada. We are pleased with the development of Sweet Dreams which sees community investment supporting social outcomes. The project is operated by Egadz Saskatoon downtown youth centre. It provides single moms with affordable housing and support while they complete their education, secure employment, or participate in employment activities such as life skills and parenting classes with the goal of transitioning back into the community. Through Sweet Dreams, the ministry and Egadz are working together to help single mothers reach their full potential and prevent their children from entering into the foster care system.

The desired outcome of Sweet Dreams is based on, at minimum, 22 children remaining with their mothers and not receiving any foster care services for a continuous period of at least six months after leaving the services provided through Sweet Dreams. As part of the SIB process, an independent evaluation will be done to determine the success of this initiative.

Another important step in renewing the child welfare system involves reviewing *The Child and Family Services Act* and *The*

Adoption Act and making necessary changes to the legislation. Since 2012, the child and family programs legislation renewal process has included research of Canadian best practices and child welfare legislation as well as significant engagement with key stakeholders and the public.

All of the initiatives I've just talked about are meant to strengthen the programs and services we provide with the goal of protecting and ensuring the well-being of the children in care.

While we focus on continuous improvement, we also reflect on the tragedies that have occurred involving children in care. We must do everything we can to try to understand what happened and what we can do to prevent such sad occurrences from happening again. We're adding four additional staff on a temporary basis to our quality assurance unit in child and family programs to aid in ensuring the timely completion of child death and critical injury reviews.

As you know, the office of the chief coroner is conducting a public inquest into the death of Lee Bonneau. My ministry is fully supportive of this coroner's inquest to review the circumstances surrounding this tragic death. It is our hope that inquests such as this, along with reviews undertaken by the ministry and the Advocate for Children and Youth, can help prevent such circumstances from being repeated. We look forward to reviewing the findings of the jury and any recommendations they may have.

Next month my ministry will submit our first quarterly status report to the Advocate for Children and Youth — and I'm sorry, that's not our first report; that's our final report — following the recommendation of his *Two Tragedies* report. We have made great strides through these recommendations, and we appreciate the opportunity that the advocate has given us to present the improvements that our ministry has undertaken.

Before I leave talking about the child and family programs, I'd like to talk about the Linkin case management system. Linkin is a critical component of the province's commitment to child welfare transformation. It has greatly improved the ability to make critical decisions about the lives of children in care and those who require protection from abuse and neglect. As I mentioned, the implementation of the structured decision-making tools in December 2012 was a success. Staff can now access comprehensive family information, including levels of risk, family needs, and services that were being provided to improve safety and overall well-being of children and their families.

The Linkin budget for 2015-16 is 5.8 million. In the coming year, we will continue work on the Linkin financial and payment project to replace an aging and risky system and ensure that timely and accurate payments are processed to support children in care.

Next, Mr. Chair, I want to provide an overview of the important work the ministry undertakes in the areas of income assistance and disability programs. For 2015-16, the budget for income assistance programs is 473.3 million, accounting for 47 per cent increase, or 47 per cent of the ministry's budget. This is an increase of 30.3 million from last year. This investment

reinforces our commitment to those individuals and families who need our help the most.

The Saskatchewan assured income for disability, or SAID, now comprises the largest investment in our provincial income assistance programs. SAID is available to individuals with significant and enduring disabilities. For many years, people with disabilities and their representatives asked for an income support program separate from social assistance. Our government acted on those concerns and introduced SAID. I'm proud to say that the enrolment in the program is anticipated to reach over 13,700 people in the upcoming year, demonstrating just how much this program was needed.

In June, with an investment of 5.7 million, benefits under the program will once again increase. SAID is a fine example of sound social policy development. We worked closely with our community partners on the program implementation advisory team, known as PIAT. Together we have built SAID, and together we will continue to enhance this program to ensure that people with disabilities enjoy an improved quality of life.

Next I would like to speak to our social assistance caseload. Our provincial dependency rate, the proportion of people receiving income assistance, continues to be at around 5 per cent. With our overall caseload, numbers have increased. This can be primarily attributed to the interest in SAID. In fact we continue to have historical low levels of employable people on the caseload. In February of this year the number of employable clients was about 50 per cent lower than in 2010, the year we introduced new measures to help people move more swiftly to jobs.

This year we will fulfill our four-year commitment under the seniors' affordability plan. In July improvements will be made to the seniors' income plan and the personal care home benefit. The seniors' income plan provides critical support to seniors who have little or no income other than their old age security and guaranteed income supplement. With an investment of 1.1 million, maximum benefits will be increased by \$10 per month in July to \$270 per month for a single senior. I am proud to say our government has tripled the amount of the SIP [seniors' income plan] benefit over a very brief period of time. Similarly the monthly income threshold under the personal care home benefit will increase in July. This program helps seniors with the cost of living in a personal care home.

I also want to comment on the change that we will be making to the Saskatchewan employment supplement, which provides financial support to families as they enter the workforce.

[15:15]

As of October 2015, the program will only consider children under the age of 13 in the calculation of the supplement. This was a difficult and necessary decision to focus our efforts to help families with younger children. We will be taking steps to preserve the benefits for those families with children over the age of 13 in receipt of the supplement at the time the new rules come into effect.

Our commitment to make Saskatchewan the best place in Canada to live for people with disabilities is clearly reflected in

our government's investments. Since 2007-08 our government funding for people with disabilities has increased by 271.2 million or 126.4 per cent. This year across government there's an increase of 39.5 million for new or enhanced programming in this area.

These investments are significant and our work continues. Currently the citizens' consultation team is working with government to complete their work on the disability strategy which will address priority areas identified in our plan for growth: housing, transportation, employment, education, support for community inclusion, and support for caregivers. The disability strategy, to be released this year, will provide a road map for future improvements.

Within Social Services, we continue to advance our work for people with disabilities. We will increase our investments to support people with intellectual disabilities by 7.1 million, bringing our budget to 172.9 million. These funds will support the transition of residents from the Valley View Centre. They will strengthen and expand our provincial safety net. They will develop new community-based residential and day program services, and they will increase funding to our CBO partners to assist with recruitment and retention.

There are currently 176 residents at the Valley View Centre. Guided by the recommendations of the Valley View transition steering committee, we will continue to plan with each resident and their family for successful transitions to community-based homes. We are planning in a thoughtful way, involving residents and their families and their advocates. To date, four residents have moved from the Valley View Centre. This year, we anticipate up to 30 more residents will move into their new homes.

In December of this past year, we opened a safety net transition home in Saskatoon. A second home will open in Moose Jaw this summer, and we will begin development of a third home in the southern part of the province.

We also continue to respond to the needs of people with intellectual disabilities across the province. From 2008-09 to 2014-15, the ministry served 1,065 individuals, including the 440 clients who had been identified as waiting for services in 2008. This year we will develop new services, helping us to keep up with the demand.

The next I want to speak about is poverty reduction. In Saskatchewan we are fortunate to live in a province that has prospered. And more importantly, it's been a province to live where we believe that everyone should benefit from that prosperity. Our record of progress on reducing poverty is well documented. We have among the lowest rates of poverty for both adults and children in the country.

Since 2007 we have invested over 106 million in our income support programs, but there is more work that needs to be done. That is why I've asked a select group of individuals to come together to form an advisory group on poverty reduction. This group is working alongside senior government officials to identify key areas, gaps, and opportunities to further reduce poverty. They're also considering the significant feedback that was gathered during public consultation for the housing

strategy, the disability strategy, and the mental health and addictions action plan. A round table will be convened in late April where further information about best practices and innovative ideas will be shared. I expect the work of the advisory group to conclude this summer when they advance the recommendations to inform the future development of a poverty reduction strategy.

And finally, Mr. Chair, I want to talk about our government's ongoing commitment to providing safe, affordable housing to Saskatchewan people. Housing was a major priority for our government when we took office, and I'm proud of the progress that we have made since that time. For example, the rental market has changed dramatically; today vacancy rates are up in every major community in the province. Regina has the lowest vacancy rate now of the cities at 3 per cent. To the end of 2014, 2,534 new rentals were built under the rental construction incentive program that we introduced and another 18 are under construction.

Another program we created, Headstart on a Home, has already seen 1,000 homes completed, with 878 of those homes occupied. The vast majority of Headstart buyers were renters, meaning that Headstart has had a significant impact on rental availability. We also contributed funding to the 400-bed University of Regina student residence which will soon be opening.

At one time people couldn't find a place to rent at any price in most of our communities. We have worked hard on supply, and we have seen results. We will continue to monitor supply, but we will be focusing more of our efforts and funding to making existing housing more affordable.

One of the most significant things that we have done in this area is transition 2,700 units from our affordable housing program to the social housing program. We are still in the early days of that transition, but some tenants already have made the choice to move to the social housing program and have their rents reduced. It's important to note that this change is not about making money and in fact it will actually cost us, when fully implemented, an estimated 3 million per year. It's about making sure those people who need it the most have access to safe, affordable housing.

In total, since 2007 our government has invested \$534 million to encourage the development of more than 8,800 housing units across the province; 7,271 are complete and more than 1,550 are currently under construction. In addition, there are almost 3,200 units in the planning stage, and there are still more to come.

Last year we signed a five-year Investment in Affordable Housing Agreement with the federal government. This agreement will result in a total of 91.9 million to develop and repair affordable housing for low-income households in our province. SHC [Saskatchewan Housing Corporation] recently completed requests for proposal for affordable housing, and we'll be working with groups to develop those projects. Over the next year, it is expected that commitments will be made to develop approximately 280 affordable housing units and to repair more than 400 existing housing units owned or occupied by low-income households.

Housing development will support priority areas that have been identified through the mental health and addictions action plan and the upcoming disability strategy and the upcoming poverty reduction strategy.

In conclusion I want to say how proud of I am of the work that my ministry has accomplished. Our staff worked with the Saskatchewan people in all parts of the province each and every day, often during some of the most dark and difficult times in those clients' lives. This is some of the most challenging and most rewarding work our government does. I am confident that our budget for 2015-16 will support our staff in their efforts and will keep Saskatchewan strong for most of the vulnerable citizens. Thank you, and we'll be pleased to take your questions.

The Chair: — Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Minister, for your comments. I found them very helpful, and I may go back to some parts. I started taking notes, but then I thought as I go through . . . And we've got some time here today, and I really appreciate though the comments you had made.

So right off the bat, we might as well start right at the end. For me the first question I have really is around housing, and there will probably be several questions about that. But right off the bat I do need to ask you, in the budget there was a significant cut in terms of the allocations for Sask Housing Corporation from 7 million to 1.5 million. Could you please explain?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — And actually if we think back to when I was minister in the past, there was a year where that reduction also took place. And so the explanation that I gave you then will be very similar to what I'm going to give you now because it is the same explanation.

Sask Housing Corporation is not like a ministry, and the Sask Housing Corporation is really not like a CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] Crown either. It's not even like most treasury board Crowns, mostly because of its financial structure is different than the other Crown structures.

In 2007 Sask Housing Corporation spent 27.7 million to update its portfolio. And from 2009 to 2012, as part of government's economic stimulus at the time, the Sask Housing Corporation increased its expenditures in this area. And so in 2014, Sask Housing Corporation spent 28.8 million. However, the budget for 2015 is 39.2 million, which is 41 per cent more than in 2007. And in 2015, Sask Housing Corporation is actually planning to spend more, much more, to improve the condition of the housing it owns and operates.

So since 2007, Sask Housing Corporation has funded the development of almost 2,500 units of affordable housing that are completed or under development at a cost of more than 204 million. In 2007 there were about 23,000 affordable and social housing units in Saskatchewan, and this addition of 2,500 represents almost an 11 per cent increase.

Sask Housing Corporation has also funded the repair of 3,700 homes, and that does not include the 1,000 student resident spaces that are completed at the U of S [University of

Saskatchewan] in Saskatoon or those that are under construction in Regina.

So I know that I'm saying that we're going to be spending a lot more, but yet the transfer from what used to be the General Revenue Fund, now the core budget, is less. But in fact Saskatchewan Housing Corporation generates money through its rental charges plus agreements signed with the federal government. So there is funds that flows from the federal government to the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, and there is funds that come into the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation that stay through rental agreements.

So with that, the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation actually has their own bank account. They make investments with their revenues. And pretty soon — I think it'll be in the next couple of weeks or week — the 2014 financial statement should be tabled, and that will show you Sask Housing Corporation's cash flow and their investments and their return on their investments.

So in essence the Sask Housing Corporation has enough cash on hand to fund almost all of its aggressive development that's under way and the repair plans for 2015, as well as to cover the increased costs related to program changes, and so right now there is no requirement from the Sask Housing Corporation to have additional money just parked in its bank account. And so treasury board chose not to flow money from one bank account to sit in a different bank account in a particularly tight year.

However all of our plans which are going to be . . . Actually more money being spent through the Sask Housing Corporation are going to go forward. There isn't going to be any programs, that weren't already, being discontinued because the funds allocated to that particular program will be depleted, but any ongoing programs will still be ongoing, including our agreement or the funds that we make available for Habitat for Humanity. So it's a very unique treasury board Crown that generates a lot of revenues.

Mr. Forbes: — Well that generated a couple of questions. One, who then administers and is responsible? The financial statements, is that the annual report that you're referring to that'll come out or is that a separate . . . That's the annual report that's coming out in the next couple of weeks?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Correct. Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — Right. And then who administers or who is responsible for that bank account, when you say they have their own bank account? It is, at the end of the day, the Ministry of Social Services who determines what happens with that bank account, right?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — The Sask Housing Corporation has a board. It has a board and it answers . . . It works with — now I may be corrected from Don Allen, but I'm going to try this on my own first — it works with the Ministry of Social Services, but it answers to the treasury board because it's a treasury board Crown.

[15:30]

Mr. Forbes: — Treasury board Crown, so Sask Housing

provides their budget directly to treasury board.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Correct. They do provide their budget directly to treasury board. However because of the joint work done, the Ministry of Social Services also, like I said, they work together, but they're answerable to the treasury board.

Mr. Forbes: — Right. And so in down years, you might give them more money. This is an up year so they're not needing as much money.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Correct. And part of it depends on the timeliness of the developments because it takes time to basically identify and sometimes gain the land. Then you have to go through the process of finding a developer, and then you start the cash flow. So there's always the timing on what's being developed and what cash flow needs to happen at that time. Because of the agreement with the federal government in future years, we're going to need more allocated to Sask Housing Corporation to meet the timeliness of that development. We just didn't this year.

Mr. Forbes: — So now I wanted to back up, and you had referred to, and correct my . . . I'm trying to get these numbers and they're big, so I may have them wrong. But you talked about a \$204 million investment, and it created 2,500 units. I don't know. I don't think I have that quite right.

What I'm curious about when I do look at the numbers, and I know that you've often cited 344 million investments and it's up to 500-and-some now, but that's not, that's not complete. These aren't units that are completely paid for by Sask Housing. They've been partnered with . . . Sask Housing has paid through some programs at various levels. Am I reading that right?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — You are. There's a number of programs. Some is of course direct, straight-up delivery, and where Sask Housing has started now to help with that is some of the projects for disabilities, housing for disabilities. But we also partner with some programs with municipal-level governments. We also partner with community-based organizations. So there's quite a number of programs actually, and they all vary in how much Sask Housing Corporation puts into those programs, and then of course some is direct, straight.

Mr. Forbes: — In varying percentages of the total cost per door, right?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Correct. Sometimes it's percentage or sometimes it's a lump, 10,000 per door or whatever, yes.

Mr. Forbes: — Exactly. Okay, because I wanted to clarify that. But to get back, you're saying this year's budget for Sask Housing is some 39 million. Is that correct?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — That's what we're anticipating spending this year.

Mr. Forbes: — That's what you're anticipating. Is that what the budget is for Sask Housing?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Oh I'm being informed that the 39 million is just for maintenance.

Mr. Forbes: — So what would be the total? So you're here. What is the total budget then for Sask Housing? How much is coming out of what would we call the old GRF [General Revenue Fund]?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — What's coming out of what we used to call the GRF, and we now call the core, is what's in the budget. I'm sorry, I don't have that line right in front. It's 1.55.

Mr. Forbes: — So it's \$1.555 million that is going into Sask Housing in their budget. What is their global, what share? What is the total budget of Sask Housing, or what kind of impact that's going to have on Sask Housing, I guess?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Correct. So what I think you're asking is, what is Sask Housing anticipating spending in the next 12 months?

Mr. Forbes: — Yes.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Okay. So in the next 12 months, Sask Housing Corporation is anticipating spending approximately \$200 million.

Mr. Forbes: — And so then the question . . . This is where whether or not the \$5 million is a cut or not. What was last year's Sask Housing budget?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — It was about \$200 million as well. Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — So in fact this is why there's not. Is that the highest amount? I guess I can look back in annual reports to find out what the budgets are.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — During the years of 2009, '10, '11, in those years when we had the economic stimulus?

Mr. Forbes: — Yes.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Sask Housing was spending more.

Mr. Forbes: — So how much more would have that been?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I believe the highest was around \$240 million.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. So let's just say 240. Where would that extra 40 million have come from, for the extra money?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Some came from the GRF because I remember we transferred and it was mid-year. It wasn't in the budget, but mid-year we injected some funds from the . . . At that time we still called it a GRF.

Mr. Forbes: — Right.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I can't remember the amount at that time, but we can get some numbers for you in a moment. We apologize for not having a lot of historic information with us since we are talking about this year's budget.

I'm being told, on maintenance, the peak years were 2011-12.

In those years, the province spent 25 million each year, but that was matched with the federal program at that time of 25 million each of those years with the federal government. So that also changes the availability of money, what money the federal government makes available those years as well, because that goes into Sask Housing Corporation's bank account and not the government's bank account.

Mr. Forbes: — If I remember correctly, and I don't have . . . You have different pools — or I forget what the terms are called; trust funds maybe I'm thinking of — where you store some of this money because they're long-term commitments and that kind of thing.

Okay. Fair enough. Then out of the budget this year, it sounds like about 39 million will be on maintenance. Well there's two things that I wanted to get at. First of all, where does the 200 million come from? How much of that would be from the tenants, the rent, the income from rental?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Again we don't have all the historical information with us, but I'm being told that the rent is in around the 105 million. Then as you noticed, there's also investments, so that generates interest. Then we have cash flow from the federal government and then the provincial government.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you for that. I may come back to that. And I would assume that different land sales, housing that's been sold, this is part of the ebb and flow of the corporation?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Correct. Because we want to commit whatever, if there's a sale, we want to commit that money into future housing in virtually every case. I'm not sure it has been that in every single case, but that's the intent of sales: keep it all within the corporation.

Mr. Forbes: — But you're saying at this point, in terms of what might look at first blush a cut, there are no programs that are being cut in Sask Housing. In fact there are some that may be enhanced.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — We're going to be looking at affordability, so I can't predict what those decisions will be made, but I think that is where we need to focus next.

But I do think you need to be aware that we have a couple of programs that were very successful, but they had a finite amount of money allocated to them. So basically when that money is utilized, the program ends. So it's not a cut per se; it was well known. And those programs are . . . The affordable home ownership program will be depleting its funds. And the rental construction incentive, those funds have been utilized or will . . . and they will be developing. And the other program that will be ending is the corporate income tax rebate. So these three programs had a finite time period or a finite amount of money, either-or.

Other than that, the other programs that we run through, like secondary suites come to mind, and the affordable housing program and other programs that we have just continue as always.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. At this point, Mr. Chair, I'd like to

introduce a guest that's in the House. In the back there we have many officials, but we have a good friend of, I know, the ministry and I think of us as well. And the work of . . . He's looking around. I'm talking about Merv Bender with DISC [Disability Income Support Coalition]. They're having a reception later on, so I think you're in . . . And it's good to see you come down early to see these proceedings.

And I know Merv and the group have been working so hard on SAID and have helped so much in that. And so I know he's been introduced in the House a few times, but I don't know if he's actually ever seen committee in progress . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Via that. I don't know if he's going to stay around for the whole five and a half hours either, but it's good to see you. And I'd ask all members to join in welcoming you to the committee. Thank you.

So then I wanted to ask about the federal housing, affordable housing grant. You alluded to in your earlier remarks, the 91 million that is for affordable housing programs. And you talked about, it's a five-year program?

[15:45]

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Correct.

Mr. Forbes: — And it's a matching program. And again will there be new initiatives? Have those been designed, or will they be a continuation of different programs?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — So the Investment in Affordable Housing, which IAH is — because of course we give acronyms to everything — it's a cost-shared agreement of 50/50 and a total investment of 91.9 over the next five years. There is some restrictions around what that money can be used for. However since I was a social minister before, Social Services minister to now, there has been some flexibility added to those rules, which is great.

So again, I stand corrected by Don Allen if I get this wrong, but there is a number of initiatives that we can use that money for, including some of the housing for individuals with disabilities, seniors, and affordable, I think. Those three main areas is where this money can be utilized.

Mr. Forbes: — So are there specific monies set aside for this year in this year's budget that people may be looking at Sask Housing and thinking there'll be more grants for this or that, or any new announcements that you'll be making over the next few months? Based on this . . . [inaudible].

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I don't anticipate any in the next couple of months, no. But the board, I know I'm meeting with the board tomorrow to talk about, you know, what's our vision going forward and what would we like them to start to look for innovative ideas on. And as I mentioned earlier, our vacancy rate has improved considerably across the entire province and in all our major centres.

So you know, we need to start to now look at affordability and what's our potential to help in that area, not forgetting that we have the mental health and addiction strategy, we have the disability strategy — both which we'll be unrolling; one has

already been introduced — and we're going to have the poverty reduction strategy. So let's take a look and let's just sit tight and look at how Sask Housing can help address some of the recommendations that's going to come forward from those various strategies.

Mr. Forbes: — If you don't spend the money this year, do you get to . . . When do you have to have that money spent by? It's a five-year program.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — One year. So we have the five years plus one year.

Mr. Forbes: — Does it all have to be spent in equal amounts in each of those five years?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — No.

Mr. Forbes: — So you can hold on to it a bit?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Correct.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. My concern would be that it would be spent to be used on regular, say, maintenance programs, not for the intent of the federal initiative around affordability. And while you do have some flexibility, it's a good thing to be using those for innovative and, as you say, the different strategies that are going to be coming up, the disability and anti-poverty strategies.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I think, and I could be wrong, but I really think that the housing corporation is going to play a very important role in how we respond to the strategies going forward. All three of them actually — the mental health and addictions plan, the poverty reduction strategy, and the disability strategy — I think the Sask Housing Corporation is going to have a major role to play in social programming.

Mr. Forbes: — Well thank you. And I have a couple of questions directly related to, well, one around mental health. And that is around the issue of hoarding and the issue of . . . you know, because it's a significant issue. I'm wondering if Sask Housing has done any kind of particular work around that because I do think that it's one that, particularly as I see, and I have, many Sask Housing units, but also just in the private marketplace, and I do think it's a bit of a mental health issue and a challenge when particularly how it impacts on housing, on your home. And it's a difficult, difficult situation, and I actually do feel, I mean this must be a tough situation for social workers and people to deal with, or public health inspectors, all of that.

So hoarding, has there have been any kind of work, any kind of things to share with us on that?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I am going to get Don Allen to answer these questions.

Mr. Allen: — Thank you. Don Allen, assistant deputy minister for housing programs and finance. So just to speak, just before I come to the question of hoarding, your previous question on what could be expected in 2015-16. The minister in her opening remarks reflected on 280 commitments. Those are 280

commitments under the new Investment in Affordable Housing Agreement that we should, we expect to make this year.

We've had requests for proposals the last fall, that closed in January. We're working with those proponents now. And we hope to make announcements this year with respect to 280 new units, some of them directed at mental health and addictions action plan or areas of high need, in addition to which we are making commitments every day to homeowners to repair their homes. We're expecting to do 400 more this year under the Investment in Affordable Housing Agreement. So there's a lot that people are seeing today that look like business as usual, but it's business as usual under the new Investment in Affordable Housing Agreement that was signed last fall.

So with respect to hoarding, we had tenant relations officers in most of our large housing authorities, all of our large housing authorities. And if we don't have them, we have tenant relation specialists who support the small housing authorities who work with the tenants on a case-by-case basis. They work with the families on a case-by-case basis to deal with the challenges associated with hoarding. And sometimes hoarding creates a challenge, and other times hoarding doesn't create a challenge

I think some of us have family members and friends who can't throw anything out. But it's just a part of who they are, though sometimes it does represent a challenge when it starts to inflict hardship on those around them — other tenants, for example. But we do have tenant relation specialists. They're very well trained. They work with Mental Health in order to effect change where change is required.

Mr. Forbes: — And as I said earlier, sometimes the minister or your officials will have to repeat numbers because I try to . . . It's not to downplay the 280 projects. It's just that I'm trying to keep up with my notes as fast as I can. But the question around hoarding and mental health then with the specialists — and I've worked with some of the great people — are they seeing emerging issues in mental health that you hadn't seen 10, 20, or 30 years ago? And this is the thing that I'm seeing with hoarding, that over the course of time that it's becoming more prevalent. Maybe not; I don't know. So that's my question: is it an emerging issue?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Personally I don't think it is. I think it's always been there. I think our acceptance of it is an emerging issue. We're now recognizing it, naming it, and saying maybe it shouldn't be happening. Boy, I'll tell you, in our childhood days, do you not remember those homes? There were hoarders and we didn't think anything of it, and now it's being talked about and addressed more. I'm not sure it's more prevalent.

Mr. Forbes: — Well, and then the other thing is there wasn't as much stuff to hoard really.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — That's true. Well they would call them frugal.

Mr. Forbes: — But I do remember the egg cartons on porches and things like that. That's true. But my point is that, you know, Sask Housing plays a significant role in mental health and that.

The other question I would have, and this one clearly is emerging because it's happening all over the world, and we're seeing, is around bedbugs. And there's two parts of this, is how Sask Housing's dealing with bedbugs and the impact it's having on its budget, and how Social Services is dealing with this and how big of an issue this is. Because I think clearly this is a challenge for everyone in the housing industry. And people who live the experience of bedbugs, it's a terrible situation. So I am curious to know if there's been any initiatives, anything done specifically around this because I know this is an issue that we often get calls in our office about what can be done about bedbugs. But as again, it's not just the individual. It's the landlord. It's everybody in the building. It then becomes their problem, not just somebody in one unit.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — You're right. It is an emergent issue, and it's a growing problem not just for government-owned properties, as you pointed out, but for all properties. And it's not unique to Saskatchewan either. This is happening in Canada and across the world. It's because bedbugs are small and they're easily transported from building to building, from country to country in luggage and clothing and furniture and on people. And we're seeing — I think there was a report; I forget what program it was — how high-end hotels are running into issues with bedbugs. So although they're not pleasant and, you know, it's kind of creepy to think about, they don't transmit any diseases. So that's, I guess if there is a positive side to bedbugs, you know, yay.

So it is our new reality, and I don't think it's going to improve because we are a more transient society. We are travelling more, and so we're going to see this across the world. It's not going to be possible to 100 per cent eradicate, I don't think, bedbugs any time soon in all of Saskatchewan, so we're just going to have to figure out better ways of controlling them as they come forward. So with that, I'll turn it again to Don Allen to give specifics on what Sask Housing Corporation, steps they're going to take.

Mr. Allen: — Thank you. So Saskatchewan Housing Corporation and our partner housing authorities have worked together to develop a bedbug protocol. It's a proactive protocol. We've developed it in collaboration with extermination companies on what best practice is.

So this starts with communication with tenants and with prospective tenants. Now that sometimes is uncomfortable for a tenant who moves into a building, and one of the first things we talk to them about is the possibility — not the reality, but the possibility — of bedbugs. Because we want them to let us know if they see something, the time to strike is the first time you see something, not to wait for an infestation to reach a critical point and to have spread to others. So at the first potential sign of bedbugs, we want them to let us know.

We need them to understand that bedbugs are not an issue of housekeeping. I mean there's a stigma that some people have, but bedbugs aren't necessarily a result of housekeeping. You could pick them up at a five-star hotel in New York and bring them back to your home and they're now there. And we don't want them to fear reporting bedbugs for how someone might perceive them.

We've got treatment protocols. Working with these trained professionals, we know what to do in every housing authority in every case with respect to bedbugs. Now that doesn't mean that the first treatment gets rid of them, but we do have treatment protocols. In order to do the right treatment at the right time for the right type of . . . for the wrong type of infestation — I guess there's no right type of bedbug infestation — we want tenants to know that they shouldn't treat them themselves. They can, best-case scenario, drive them into an adjoining apartment or, worst-case scenario, you can have a tragedy like what happened in Fort McMurray where lives are lost when a homeowner or tenant is trying to treat bedbugs themselves.

So we have a fairly elaborate treatment protocol that includes reporting to us in central office. Last year, out of 5,000 buildings we had 117 reported cases of bedbugs. So that's about a 2 per cent incidence of bedbugs in our 5,000 buildings across the province.

[16:00]

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you. That's interesting. So would that be the norm over the past few years? And how does that compare to the private marketplace?

Mr. Allen: — I don't know that there would be a norm. I mean it's going to depend on the type of client. As the minister said, transience of clients, the amount of people who are moving in and out, stability, matters. We're seeing more bedbugs, certainly more bedbug reports than we were a few years ago. A few years ago there would have been hardly any, if any. One hundred and seventeen is certainly up.

Mr. Forbes: — So you're saying 117 out of 5,000?

Mr. Allen: — Out of 5,000 buildings, 117 had reported bedbugs. That's correct.

Mr. Forbes: — That's not . . . Is that 2 per cent or is that point two per cent?

Mr. Allen: — That would be, 117 cases would be 2 per cent.

Mr. Forbes: — 2 per cent?

Mr. Allen: — 10 per cent would be 500 buildings.

Mr. Forbes: — We're arguing math. He's the accountant, so I'll live with that. You've got a bunch of people in the back. Maybe you can do the calculating. Anyways it's a pretty low number, low percentage. I'm glad to hear that because I think that's important that we have that well in hand. So I appreciate that.

There's been some issues that people have raised specifically with me in Saskatoon now. I'm not sure what the Regina policy is around recycling in apartment buildings, but in Saskatoon it is each unit will be charged \$21 for recycling by the city. I believe that's the case; you know, I don't live in an apartment in Saskatoon. So clearly they must have had some conversations with Sask Housing about what will happen with recycling in the apartments in Saskatoon.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I'm sure Don will fill us in if those conversations took place. But I believe you were wondering if . . . It is municipal, the decision, so it varies one municipality to another. I'm not sure what Regina's is either, but I will ask Don Allen to say if they've had conversations with the city of Saskatoon.

Mr. Allen: — Well as I understand it, the city of Saskatoon is not the only jurisdiction that may be considering this. There are certain others that are doing it. And right now it's a bit uneven. Some housing authorities are passing the cost along to tenants, some housing authorities are not. We're examining that from a policy perspective to come out with a single response, what the best policy response is.

I'm not sure how, just off the top of my head, how recycling collection differs from garbage collection in terms of levying an additional fee on the tenant. We don't do it for garbage, so why would we do it for recycling? But we are developing a policy position on that right now.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. And I don't know how they plan on doing it. It was just a message sent me today, please ask about this, whether it's considered a utility then. But people in Sask Housing units, they don't get direct . . . Or do they get, they get power bills I assume?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — It varies.

Mr. Forbes: — It varies?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — It varies. Yes, it does vary for our clients. Some, the utilities are paid for them, others they pay themselves.

Mr. Forbes: — Right. Okay. So some other questions I've had, one is, and this is really about smoking in the public areas and also wearing perfumes in the public areas of Sask Housing. So Sask Housing is smoke free in their own spaces, or not? There are some units are not smoke free.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — That's correct. There are some housing authorities that have a policy that all of their housing units are smoke free, others do not. And so we have had preliminary discussions. We haven't made a decision yet to date, but we have started discussions whether or not to make all of Sask Housing Corporation units smoke free. And basically we're still having those discussions without making any decision. The problem of course will be, just an example of the 90-year-old grandmother: is she going to go outside at 40 below? And you know, do we do provisions and what we need to do. So you know, we're kind of going . . . scoping every single scenario.

I'm not sure, I think you are aware there is a policy committee within our caucus that shadows the same as the standing committees. And so we've had that discussion in our policy committee, and I'm sure we're going to have more in the future. And that's the first level a minister will take, just to brainstorm ideas and what needs to be done and what we will do in the future, because I think that will be the future trend is to have that requirement.

Mr. Forbes: — And so is the situation now that each housing authority has the ability to make their own policy vis-à-vis smoking? North Battleford may be different than Saskatoon, different than Prince Albert. Is that what you're saying?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes that's correct.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. So if tenants have an issue, they really should raise it with their own local housing authority at this point and take it up through that way, take it up through their local housing authority.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Correct. And currently, I'm just being informed that there is currently there is no smoking in any common space.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — So we're just discussing what's allowable in your own personal unit.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Now then I guess where I was leading, this is one that was brought up by another tenant, is around perfumes. Because we're often seeing . . . She's allergic to perfumes. And we're seeing that throughout, you know, where it's more and more it's common that perfume-free areas, and whether that's also something that would be worthy of considering. It's a new and emerging issue, is they can have . . . they can set off, you know, allergic reactions as well as smoking.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I haven't, I have to admit, we haven't had that discussion at all. I haven't had that discussion either with the officials or with my caucus colleagues at all, but I'll take it under advisement.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes, and I'll write you a letter. I made a commitment to the tenant that I would write you. And so I still will write you and you can take it from there.

Now it was a practice or it is a practice that Sask Housing provides each building a council grant or grant for the tenant association to have, to do social activities, that type of thing. I know some have it; it seems to be not consistent though. What is happening with those?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Don Allen is going to answer this question.

Mr. Allen: — So we have two different programs, depending upon whether we're talking about a seniors' housing project or a family housing project. Tenant association grants are fairly common in seniors' projects, and they are, \$2 per unit is the tenant association grant. Not every project has a tenant association. It's up to the tenants whether they want to create a tenant association. Not every tenant association accesses the tenant association grant. So there's a certain amount of unevenness in that respect.

Family projects, we encourage the creation of tenant associations. We have a different program for them. It's a little more flexible, though it's based on an application process. So a tenant association can apply to us for what we call a step, which

I'm sure is an acronym for something, I just don't know what. A step grant allows them to have a certain amount of funding to do certain initiatives that they describe in their application process.

Mr. Forbes: — So then what I'm hearing you saying, if it's a seniors' building then with a tenant association, they're eligible for the program. But if it's a social housing program then they're not?

Mr. Allen: — Sorry. No it's the same. So it's across the board. A seniors' project, whether it's a seniors' social housing project or there are still some seniors' affordable units out in small-town Saskatchewan, but with the conversion of the 2,700 there's fewer of those. Most of our units are social housing, and they all fall under that same category of either tenant association grants for seniors or step grants for families.

Mr. Forbes: — Oh, okay. Okay, so what you're saying, there's two types of funding, a step or a tenant's association grant?

Mr. Allen: — That's correct.

Mr. Forbes: — That's right. And one is \$2 per tenant and that's the tenant's association one. And the step one is also . . . How much is that?

Mr. Allen: — That can vary depending upon what the tenant association wants to do with the money. And there they describe a plan, and they come forward with a plan and a financial ask, and we'll consider it.

Mr. Forbes: — So what kind of percentage, how many places would have community or tenant associations out of your number of buildings? I'm not sure how many there are.

Mr. Allen: — I don't know. I don't believe we have that data with us here today, but I'll just check. I've been advised that the vast majority of seniors' projects have a tenant association. And just to correct the record, the \$2 is per month. So it's \$2 per senior per month, \$24 per senior per year. And the vast majority of seniors' projects have tenant associations. Family projects, not as many. There's some turnover there, and families are busy, are raising their children.

Mr. Forbes: — That's fair enough. That's good. Okay. And I just wanted, you had talked just briefly around the maintenance, and that this year it's going to be about 39 million for maintenance. Is that an increase, or is it about status quo for the last few years?

Mr. Allen: — Thirty-nine million dollars is the budget for the plan for 2015. The forecast for 2014 is something in the range of \$32 million, which is about what it was in 2013. So we're intending to spend more to do more in 2015 than we have the last two years.

Mr. Forbes: — So are there specific projects that you've got in mind, redoing some . . . Is it a window initiative this year, or what's the extra money going to be going towards?

Mr. Allen: — We several years ago began a journey to do capital asset planning to look at the condition of all of our

buildings to understand where their greatest areas of need were and where the greatest areas of need weren't. We've loaded information into a computer model for all of the 18,000 units that we own, and it's telling us . . . It gives us advice based upon the inspections of the units, the cost of work to be done, and some work with some housing authorities, an indication of where the best place is to move and what we can leave for a little while yet. So the \$39 million is greatly informed by our capital asset plan, greatly informed by the people on the ground who can talk to us about the liveability of the units, and who can also, you know, talk to us about the reality of lumping windows contracts together, what's the right thing to do at the right time in a building.

So there is no special initiative. Capital asset planning though is helping us to make the decisions that can most effectively and efficiently improve the condition of the units that we own.

Mr. Forbes: — And I guess that speaks to . . . And I'm glad to hear the minister talk a little bit about, you know, now the vacancy rate seems to be in a good place. How about affordability? But also the other part of it is the core housing need, and that's sort of what you're really talking about in terms of Sask Housing. How is the actual infrastructure? How are the windows? How are the sinks, that type of thing?

So now will the individual housing authorities, will they see an increase or just the status quo in terms of their own maintenance budgets? How will the individual housing authorities . . . Who sets their maintenance budgets? Do they do it the year before and then come forward and say, this is what we need, and then it's based on that? Or how does it work?

[16:15]

Mr. Allen: — I'll answer the second question first. The planning process . . . Sorry, I should have reflected with the minister first.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — No, that's fine.

Mr. Allen: — The housing authorities prepare a budget. It's submitted centrally and it's all reviewed. They are given planning parameters. Very similar to a ministry, there are targets that they're asked to hit. Not every housing authority is able to hit those targets. Sometimes they have larger than normal expenditures. Sometimes they are able to defer some things by virtue of the condition.

So those plans are submitted along with a list of the projects that they want to do on a maintenance basis. All of those are examined as a collective and decisions made as to where the money, the \$39 million that we intend to spend this year, will be spent. Sometimes that means that a housing authority will see more, perhaps a lot more. Sometimes a housing authority will see less, perhaps a lot less. It may be less than last year but more than what they asked for, or may be less in both cases.

But some housing authorities, obviously a great number of housing authorities are going to see a larger allocation than in 2014 because there's approximately a 20 per cent increase in the budget.

Mr. Forbes: — Now do they have access as well to this inventory that you've been talking about, or is that more of a centrally run program?

Mr. Allen: — We gave them access to the reports, not online access. It's a fairly complex system to extract information from, and we can bring it to its knees by having a bunch of novices like myself, you know, running reports. So we have reporting experts who send the information to the housing authorities.

Mr. Forbes: — Now there's been a couple of big things have happened in Sask Housing in the last year, so I just wanted to take some time to talk to about those two. One was around the switch from affordable housing in urban centres to social housing. And just quickly right off the bat, the information sheet . . . And it was reported in the media around the 15 people who were making more than 100,000 and how it came about that they were there. I'm just curious because this was also reported a couple of years ago when we had some other changes made, and now we're back to that, and the decision was made to really . . . And you can choose the words that you would want in terms of how you're going to move them on, but the rents were going to be bumped up significantly to the point that they would feel it would be better for them to leave.

My question is, why not just say — and whether it has to be a change, and I don't know where this policy is that's allowing them to stay or whether it's a regulation that's allowing them to stay — but just say, you know, to these 15 folks, you're not part of the program, and therefore you should go. You were at one time apparently, but now you're no longer part of the program. And I think there were 90 overall. There's 105. My numbers may be wrong. But my question is, so what's happening with the 15, and what's happening with the 105? Why not just move them on so that these places are ready for others?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — The affordable housing program, which was put in place before either yourself or I was involved in the legislature, was put in place again for a lack of availability of housing. So the affordable housing program was introduced, and the criteria was basically non-existent. It was first-come, first-served. It could access this housing that was made available.

Shortly after we formed government, we put in an income testing, but it was a blunt instrument, quite frankly, of whether or not you could qualify. But we did nothing about who was already there, as you mentioned.

We feel — and we'll been monitoring this, and we may have to revisit this decision — right now, making the change, in essence the first thing we want to address is those that are paying too much. We could have two identical families in virtually identical houses. One's in the social housing program and one's in the affordable housing program, but the affordable housing family is paying more. So that needs to be corrected, first and foremost.

We think that we will transition smoothly without causing angst by just increasing the rents and having this transition naturally through the tenants' decision making. If we find that too many tenants are simply still . . . We may have to revisit that decision. But government evicting people always raises quite a thing, so

we're trying to do this in a kind, soft way of getting them moved on.

Mr. Forbes: — Well I've been on public record about how I feel about those 15 people, and so you won't hear me say keep them; keep them. I mean the only reason I would say keep them is if the building's going to be empty, and I know that may have been the time way back when.

But I feel like right now it's causing . . . You know, I've had people come into my office that clearly weren't even nearly that. But you know, what's happened is, especially with seniors who've become very good at living on very little who really feel like they're making a lot of money, and then you look at how much they're making, and they're not making hardly anything. They're just very good at living . . . They've got a very frugal lifestyle. And they go, you know, are they talking about us? And we say, no, they're not talking about you, and this will help you out. You know, so there's some good parts to it. I'm not saying that.

I think that in terms of making the rents understandable . . . I just feel though that for out of the 18,000 tenants you have, these 90 are causing a real problem. And then when they do move on, hopefully you'll have in place some regulation or policy to say, when you do find out that somebody is all of sudden making a lot of money . . . And it's on an annual average basis I think because you can make, whether it's an estate or an settlement, all of a sudden you find yourself with \$100,000 that, you know, it's got to last you 10 years though. So I'm hoping that that will be corrected.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Okay. So a number of comments on that. We have leases and lease agreements, and so those lease agreements of course have to be honoured. And I don't think we want to be the government that rips up these lease agreements, and there will be different expiry dates for those lease agreements. So that's one thing to take into consideration.

The second thing to take into consideration is, what is that threshold? And you know, what do we define as the threshold of where you're out, you're in? So that needs to be taken into consideration. For those, we won't have this in the social housing program, which we want to transition all our housing to. We won't have this reoccur because it's based on a third of your income, so that is adjusted to the point where finally you will be in a situation where you're better off to be in the private market because you're going to be paying more in social housing than you would in the private market. So the social housing program is designed in a manner that stops this from reoccurring. And you know, as I've said, we can revisit the exit out of the affordable housing program.

However right now we have leases, at any rate, that we need to honour anyways, so let's go down this road and hopefully it's effective. If it's not effective, we can always revisit.

Mr. Forbes: — Then the other thing that I think, I would really encourage Sask Housing, when they look at revisiting your policies — and you can't revisit every year but some — I find that there is some confusion with the seniors because they feel like they're in seniors' housing. They're not in social housing, and they're not affordable. They're over 65. They're just a

senior, and so that's straightforward. They don't have problems, so they're not social housing. And maybe that new rent formula fits them because it's a third of their income and that.

But I just feel like there needs to be more clarity around, what are the programs? And while this may seem a little easier to understand, I don't know if it is because you have seniors that make up the vast majority of Sask Housing, some 11,000 out of 18,000. And then you have social housing which is absolutely . . . And I agree with the minister, with you: we've got to be there for people who are fleeing abuse and all of that. That's horrible. That's the number one priority.

But I do think there's a role for affordable housing, you know, and I brought that case . . . We did have a discussion in question period around a perfect example of a household that did not have any work. They're working, not making a lot of money but had no real issues, where affordability was really the issue, and not social.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I think the perception that you have is affordable housing will no longer exist, and that's not true. It's just our program with our inventory won't be affordable housing. But we have other programs where we partner with developers, and by giving them that incentive of X number of dollars per door, then they guarantee to keep rates a certain percentage below the market for a number of years. So that is the affordable housing.

There are programs within Sask Housing where we partner with developers or municipalities. In those programs, in essence, new units are being built, and they have to, in order to access the funding, they have to guarantee reduced rents. And that is the affordable housing. So it's not a social housing program where they don't test their income or whatever, but it is lower, lower.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes. Well you may be, I think you're understanding how I'm thinking. But my thing is Sask Housing has been a great landlord and plays a very important role, and I'd sure hate to see them give up this area and leave it, even though it partnerships, as you're saying, with different community groups. And those community groups are great. You know, I support . . . You know, we can go through the whole list. They're all wonderful and have done great things.

But I think that I would just think that Sask Housing should be there more for people. And whether we need to do more in terms of . . . I mean it was really tough for this one woman, and there are others who are out there saying, well what can I do? How can I just get that help for a bit and move on? Because they've got kids, but they're not in dire straits. So I want to raise that with you because I do think — and again I think it's a big issue — but I do think that it's also causing some confusion with seniors around, are they now in social housing and they should be just straight in senior housing? And that's it. You know, I mean like senior housing is senior housing. That's how I think of it. I think that's an issue.

But this sort of leads me into my second question around the other thing that happened last fall, and that was the Deveraux contract. And I'm just wondering, what are the learnings and what's going to be happening? Because I know this

government's very much on the fixed-price contracts where it really does mean that the contractor does take the risk. That's the point of a fixed-price contract. They benefit when things go well and if sometimes it doesn't go well, there is a price for that. So I'm curious about what are the learnings from that circumstance and what can we expect in terms of further contracts with Sask Housing on fixed-price contracts.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — To address the beginning of your comments, and that is the family, a family with two or three children can make up to 48,500 and still qualify for social housing. So I think that is . . . I mean it's not over-the-top high income, but it is a substantive income. So at 48,500, that family still qualifies to apply for affordable housing or social housing, social housing. So they're not eliminated. If there's more than four children, they can actually make up to 57,000. So the family that you're speaking of, I don't know what her income was.

[16:30]

Mr. Forbes: — I think it would be below that, but my point . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — So she would qualify for social housing. And we'll have a number of units available. Hopefully we'll free up even more units with the change we made. There also is . . . Let's not forget we have the Saskatchewan rental housing supplement available in Saskatchewan which helps with those rentals.

So going back to the contract which we basically walked away from because of issues with the building — and I know you've asked for information on that and that's been supplied through a request for information — there was issues with this building and you're aware of that. So we could undergo the cost of legal action of fighting it with a company that we had other contracts with. And they delivered in Moose Jaw. And I know there's been comments made that we have a relationship. I've never met the partners in this company in my entire life. I've never talked to them on the phone. I've never exchanged emails with them. But I do know that there is a working relationship with Sask Housing Corporation and Deveraux on other buildings. And those projects, Moose Jaw is now complete I believe — successfully on time, on budget.

And so this particular project had issues. It's not common. However, we've definitely faced different moisture issues in southern Saskatchewan in the last few years that is exceptional, and there was issues with this building. Perhaps we weren't interested in the building any further. We didn't want . . . Legal action always takes a lot of time with no guarantee of the outcome. This way we were not out money, and the choice, the recommendation by the Sask Housing Corporation to myself was, just walk away.

Mr. Forbes: — So do you have other fixed-price contracts happening right now?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Don Allen is going to speak to you what we learned from this particular contract and the fixed-price contracts that we have right now.

Mr. Allen: — So we had learnings at a couple of stages with

respect to the Hawkstone project. One was to be clearer and therefore fairer to both the builder and to Sask Housing Corporation during the request for proposal stage, to be clear about what it was that we are expecting, you know, what the quality standards are, what the construction standards are, how much lighting we want in the parking lot, and then to carry forward in the contracting stage to again be clearer so that the contract is clear about our expectations and their expectations.

There were some gaps with respect to the Hawkstone project. They did not contribute to the cost overruns, but it did make for some challenging conversations prior to the cancellation of the agreement and the refund of the deposit. But we did learn some things. The new requests for proposals are clearer and tighter. Any contract will be clearer and tighter, and that's only fair to the builder as well so they know what standard they're being asked to achieve.

Mr. Forbes: — Now do you have other fixed-price contracts — maybe I missed that answer — out right now?

Mr. Allen: — We do. We have another project in Moose Jaw that's being constructed by a private builder that's under way. We have a request for proposal for a project in Regina that we haven't even done the evaluations of the projects yet, and you know, eventually that would lead to a fixed-price contract. But we do have one under way for a new build. As well all large maintenance jobs are fixed-price contracts, so whether it's the replacement of an elevator or a boiler system.

Mr. Forbes: — Now this was part of . . . Correct me if I'm wrong, but a few years ago there was two sales that Sask Housing had entered into. One was a parcel of land in the northwest of Regina. And has that now been completed? And has that . . . Are you able to speak about that? I think last year we weren't able to. It was just wrapping up.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — It was Dundee Developments that purchased the land. The sale of the landholdings generated net proceeds of 38.3 million. So the government has committed to support new housing developments with the proceeds going forward. Over 11 million of the proceeds has already been directed towards federal-provincial housing programs, including programs in Regina. And that goes to also what contributes to the bank account that we have spoken about earlier.

Mr. Forbes: — And then the other group of sales were the 300 units. And what is the process of that? That was the one that more Deveraux was I think involved in because they were going to be replacing some of those.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — So while my officials are looking for the numbers that have been sold in the various communities where we committed . . . When we discontinued the project with Deveraux in Hawkstone, in essence I asked the officials then to discontinue selling in Regina until we can get another project up and going so that we didn't all of a sudden have numbers that were unmanageable going down. However, we'll get the numbers of units that have been sold in each of the communities where we're going to do this. The intent, for those that are listening and I know there is all those watching closely, Sask Housing Corporation is going through the efforts of, in a

number of communities, selling their older units with the intent of taking the proceeds, and of course we're going to have to add to those proceeds, to build new units. Because we have . . . Our inventory of course is aging. And as that happens, the maintenance dollars become higher and higher, and so we need to renew and replenish some of our units. And that's the initiative that Mr. Forbes and I are discussing.

Mr. Allen: — So as the minister indicated, prior to the cancellation of the agreement with Deveraux on the Hawkstone project, we had made 44 sales in the city of Regina. Those sales have been discontinued. Though at the same time . . . We opened 71 units in Regina around the same time as we began the sales in the city of Regina, so we actually had a net increase in the social housing portfolio over that same period of time. So 44 in the city of Regina, 18 in the city of Moose Jaw, 12 in Prince Albert.

Mr. Forbes: — So what has been the transfer from the folks who were in the units that were sold? How many then decided to move into the other, the new places? Have you been able to track that? Because there was an option that they, you know, obviously if they didn't want to go into the new units or if they wanted to buy or if they at that point decided to do something else . . . How many actually went in to the other places?

Mr. Allen: — I'm not sure we have that level of detail. I know how many tenants purchased. Three purchased in Prince Albert and three purchased, three tenants purchased in Regina. Five in Moose Jaw have purchased their rental home.

Mr. Forbes: — So three out of 12 in Prince Albert, and five out of how many?

Mr. Allen: — Five out of 18 in Moose Jaw.

Mr. Forbes: — Moose Jaw. Okay, good. All right. Thank you. At this point I think I want to just shift gears before — we've got about 20 minutes left before 5 — and just talk a little bit about the poverty reduction strat. So thank you very much, Mr. Allen, and the housing folks. Again, we may have questions later on, but we sure appreciate your comments. Thanks.

And just about the poverty reduction strategy, and you've alluded to it in your opening remarks and I appreciated that. There were, you know, I mean when we were in the budget speeches, not a lot of mention about that. So I'm glad that you raised it today and you have some significant . . . sounds like some significant expectations of that. Of the group that was announced of 11, there were some concerns that there really weren't any people on it that had lived experience, and that's a big, big concern for many, that while many people may have lived experience, and we all think about our pasts, but now and today things are different. And it's different raising a family in poverty than it was say 40 or 50 years ago or something like that. So any concerns about that? Or how are you planning to address that?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — So the poverty reduction strategy first came about, our government agreeing to this was with the Poverty Costs presentation that was made to the child and family agenda committee. And it was pointed out — and I'm sure you know all of the different members on the Poverty

Costs coalition group — that many programs are in place and, you know, we need to identify some gaps and we need to look at what's there and how people can more easily access what's available. There's also recognition that our poverty numbers are declining, so let's keep that momentum going.

So the group we chose were chosen more for expertise and the clientele that they deal with. I think it's a very credible group, and it also was a group that's going to encourage cross-ministry working because it isn't a Social Services issue. It is a society issue. It is a local government issue. It's a provincial government issue, and it's a federal government issue although I don't think we're going to get them at the table on this.

But you know, it isn't just a ministry or a level of government, it's a society issue. So the group recognizes the living story or the, you know, the person that's living in . . . and I believe and I will get the official to address this further — Constance — that they will be reaching out to those individuals and that will inform some of their recommendations coming to government that will then inform the strategy. Constance.

Ms. Hourie: — Hi. Constance Hourie, ADM [assistant deputy minister] for income assistance and corporate planning. Exactly as the minister has said, we are having a couple of events, three actually, or three ways that folks can put forward their advice to the committee. So one is the one-on-one meetings that we're having with the committee, and we've had a number of those with the . . . let's see here, who . . . with the Human Rights Commission and the Provincial Ombudsman. And as well, we are also hosting the one-day round table with organizations and individuals from across the province actively involved in poverty reduction actions at the local level. And we are planning at that event to have a number of folks attend with lived experience, both folks that the regional intersectoral communities have identified and the members of the advisory committee have identified.

As well, the third way that folks can provide input to us or ideas is through an online survey that is on the sask.ca website and that we're currently developing.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay, good.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I also would like to just add, there is no one root cause to poverty, as you're well aware, Mr. Forbes. Like, I know you are interested in this particular issue and you're well aware that there's so many, so many things that could create a situation where someone is in poverty. And it may be a catastrophic event. It may be domestic violence. It may be a disability. It may be mental illness. It may be . . . and we can go on and on.

So the other thing that I've asked this group to be mindful of is the extensive, extensive consultation that happened to form the housing strategy and to form what will be the disability strategy, to form the mental health and addiction strategy.

[16:45]

All of that consultation was quite extensive and we're not duplicating that and flushing it. You know, go to those reports, find the recommendations that will help and see if there's

recommendations we're missing. So it's a little different type of group or mandate that I've given this particular group than what we've normally seen, where we're looking at an issue that is . . . housing is housing, and you know, disabilities has their . . . where it's to encompass all of that and so it's a little more difficult. You know, the group's got a large task ahead of them but a lot of the consultation has taken place quite extensively.

Mr. Forbes: — And one, I'll just throw this out and you may be familiar with it, is what the Senate did a few years ago. And when I say that, we talk about how effective the Senate is but this was one that I thought was great, and rural poverty, which often doesn't get a lot of research in Canada. And it was headed up by the former senator from Estevan — I can't remember his name — but Hugh Segal and Art Eggleton were part of it. But I would really encourage you to take a look at that because, you know, and it's not that old, but it's very important that we think about rural Saskatchewan too because, as a way, we often think of poverty as being an urban issue. And I mean even the definition of poverty can be a challenge because it's not just an income issue. But as I was saying earlier, we have seniors who can really make a dollar stretch.

Now I'm wondering though, is there a chance . . . and I know that in this day of social media that . . . and we've talked about the three ways of connecting. One is around online. But will there be any public consultations, any public meetings? I mean, because that is a challenge for folks to actually go online. And it is an opportunity and I know that . . . but with the right facilitators, public meetings can be pretty fruitful. It's when they get too open-ended they can be kind of interesting.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — And that was the concern that I had, and the other large consultation that took place that I missed before was the First Nations and Métis task force on education and engagement in the work force. That was another round of consultations that took place with a lot of public input.

So how do you bring all of that together and make it gel into something that's meaningful? We're going to have a round-table consultation in Saskatoon in the future, but I don't foresee where we're just going to have wide open to total public access in person. We'll make public access available online. A lot of the feed that you're going to get is going to be contained in these other strategies, because people are not necessarily aware of what's already in place.

And it's amazing, so it's . . . part of it is educating as well. So it's going to be a difficult task.

Mr. Forbes: — And I think one of the issues — and this is where I get back to public consultations — is the real challenge of poverty is isolation and people feel that they're isolated. They can't speak up. They're not welcome, or whatever, and it's a challenge for that.

Now you're thinking about the response. You'll get the first look this summer then?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Correct. And just to add, another engagement that the team will be looking at is engaging the RICs [regional intersectoral committees] who are right at that ground level. Engaging their input, but yes, it'll be later this

summer. June, hopefully, will be when they will come forward with some recommendations. Then, as government . . . Because as I said, this is not a Social Services per se issue. It is in Education. It is Health. It is all . . . We have Economy actually on this committee as well which is, you know, it's going to take a while then to come up with an actual strategy going forward from those recommendations.

Mr. Forbes: — So who do you have on the committee of six? You've Health, Education, Social Services, the Economy . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Justice and Corrections.

Mr. Forbes: — Justice and Corrections, good. So have you thought at all about any kind of legislation that might come out of this in terms of how we might have an ongoing process? This is something that . . . When I look at the federal report that's come out — now it's not by the government; it's by a group at that level called Dignity for All — but one of the things they've talked about is that the legislative response, so that it's in place whatever the decisions come out, that it's kind of locked in. And whether that be a council, an advocacy council, or whether that will be some sort of way that this has some life to it on its own, have you thought about that?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — No. And that's not what I'm envisioning at all, but I am envisioning and asked the group to look at setting targets.

Mr. Forbes: — Right.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Making those targets realistic and measurable.

Mr. Forbes: — Right.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — So no, I don't envision legislation just for the sake of legislation, but I do want to have targets. And if we don't meet them, have them measurable in such a manner that we can look back and reflect on why wasn't that met and what can we do different.

And I mean, not meeting a target of course becomes a political thing, but I think they're important to . . . even if you don't meet them, then it gives you something to reflect on why not. And it keeps the action going. Many of the, I think, the successful initiatives that government takes have immediate and long-term targets and then you focus on that. It gives you a focus and it gives you direction. So I'm looking for that more so than legislating something that perhaps is broad and not necessarily measurable.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. In terms of the targets, I'm wondering . . . Or whether it's called targets or information, I'm thinking about the children in foster care and how you, the ministry publishes that every six months or quarterly. That was as a result of the breaching the trust report, and that has worked out well. If people have concerns they can see the information there, so it's visible. So would that be part of, when you talk about targets, that they would also be highly transparent so that . . . You know, for example, you know today, or last Friday was jobs Friday, and we know once a month we get the news on that. Sometimes it's hard and it's harsh and, you know, I've

been on the side where it looks horrible and you just have to deal with it. Then it's also great when things are going well.

So I think it's important that when you have the targets, if you can have them transparent but also consistent, and it reflects back on a comment you made in terms of joint responsibility. It's not just the Ministry of Social Services or the government or whoever, but saying these are joint. But there has to be an accountability at some point, whether that's every six months or every three months.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes. I don't know. It wouldn't be as frequent as a month or whatever, but I know with the housing strategy there has been annual reports. You know, here's our update and here's where we're at, you know, with them, and as you mentioned, we give reports as to how we're doing with children in care and how they're being placed.

With that also, and you made a good point and I totally agree with what you said, is poverty is not just income. And so in meeting with the group, the other thing I stressed is wherever you set the bar, whoever is below that, someone will be below and that's poverty. But then if everyone's above, that becomes the new poverty. So yes, income needs to be measured but quality of life does as well. So how do we improve the quality of life? In Saskatoon you've got some really good models going on with community-based organizations that this group will take a look at, and can we replicate them, can we expand them. And not necessarily the income's been improved but the quality of life has been very much improved.

So again it's going to be a difficult task to come forward with something that's doable and practical. And it's not going to be an overnight solution for some of the recommendations coming forward. And it will be a living document because there's also broader issues that perhaps this particular document is not going to address that is societal. We will always . . . You know, we still do have racism issues. Society is getting better but there's more work that needs to be done. Can government solve that, you know, just on a recommendation? No. You know, things like that. So it will be a living document going forward, and we will have measurables. But I do want specifics.

Mr. Forbes: — I think it's important to have some things that can be achieved. And I'm not sure if you're talking about some of the good things that are happening in Saskatoon. One would be Housing First I think is a very, very important issue that I think can be taken as a model and rolled out across the province, and there's a role for the province in that. And I think that . . . And it's really interesting to see how that program has worked because it really has gone by individual by individual by individual, and what an impact it has had on those people but also on the other services that then become freed up, and I think that's a really strong one.

One that I would really also really encourage, however you lay this out, roll this out, is that it's done in plain . . . I don't know if it's plain English or plain language. What is it . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Plain language. But I think it's important because of course literacy is a challenge for people living in poverty, and so that they can have full access and understand what this means is really, really key.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — The one thing that we'll be doing, it may not be the recommendations per se but what this committee is to be mindful of, and it will be in the final document of our strategy. We're going to incorporate what targets we already have. Like education has some targets that we've publicly announced that is . . . [inaudible] . . . and that is the graduation rates of First Nations people comes to mind. That will be incorporated and folded into our final strategy going forward so we're not picking a whole bunch of new ones, although there will be different new targets in there.

The other challenge that I'm not sure this will totally address, and so that's why it needs to be living and ongoing work, what will work in Saskatoon is not necessarily helpful for the North. You know, we do have unique geographic issues, and so not every situation is going to be included yet. It would be nice if one initiative would help poverty across our entire province, but our province is vast — it's urban; it's rural; it's northern — and different solutions are going to be needed. So it's going to be work, and it's going to be a living document.

Mr. Forbes: — I appreciate that. I think that this is an important initiative. So we'll be looking forward to it and, you know, it will be our role to be critical so it's not anything to take personal, but it's just what we do. And so that's our role. But I think we're glad to see that it's happening and we are, you know, as we said, or I've said, that while I'm not sure about the makeup, I don't have . . . Actually it's great that there's, I mean it's always hard to make a committee because there is always lots of good people, so who do you not have on it? But hopefully you strive to have the lived experience there because sometimes that's an omission that can have unintended consequences. And not, you know, we have the best . . . We really want this to work.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I think that's where a lot of . . . And I hadn't met her before, but Ms. Episkew was the lived experience. And I think she's going to be vital in identifying, this is where maybe I could have had intervention sooner, you know, because we're looking for those gaps. When does the intervention fail? When do they . . . So not to say that we're not going to try to access more, but I think she'll be a great contributor to that lived experience because she did have a very unique experience.

Mr. Forbes: — So, Mr. Chair, at this point I'm finishing this, I finished this section, so it might be a good time to adjourn until 7.

The Chair: — We will recess until 7, not adjourn. How does that sound?

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Sounds good to me. Thank you.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Okay.

The Chair: — Okay. Excellent.

[The committee recessed from 17:00 until 19:00.]

The Chair: — So the time being 7 p.m., we'll bring the committee back to order. Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that. And I just have one quick question and then I know my colleague has some questions that she'd like to ask. But we were well treated at a reception with SAID and the DISC people over the supper hour, and they have a really good way of making their points drive home. And it's good.

But I do have a letter. And I know that you've received the letter I think, from somebody who is on SAID. But he asked me to ask the question . . . And we don't need to get into personal details. If you don't know the letter by when I refer to it, I'm sure you will be able to find it and if not, I can get it to you. But I think it's the concept that he raises. And the idea is, within the SAID program . . . And we think it's a pretty good program, lots of positives about it, and we like the idea that you can have a \$200 exemption for any work that you've done. So that really helps out because even with the increased amounts it still can be tight.

But this fellow here wants to bring our attention to a policy that he thinks should be changed. He's 60. He's on CPP [Canada Pension Plan]. He's got that happening. And he gets just a little bit over \$100 a month. And he's making . . . His thinking is CPP is money that he's earned by working when he was able to work and if he was still able to work, he'd be maybe making that much money, but he'd get that exemption. But he can't work. And so he's wondering why that CPP isn't part of the exemption. And in fact, it sounds like it's even clawed back. The money is clawed back from what he's allowed on SAID.

And so I don't know if you have any thoughts on that or is that something that you'd be willing to take a look at. I know that if you're getting more than the 200 on CPP, I think he's saying that yes, there's a limit. He has no problem with the limit of being 200 but he's well below that. And it's income that he's got from work many years before so . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — So there's a number of scenarios. And I don't necessarily recall that letter but that's not to question at all that I didn't get it. There's a lot of correspondence that I go through, as you can well imagine. Right now, and I mean we constantly review and revisit programs as we move forward, and in particular the SAID program because it's relatively new. But right now the policy is that the first payor is CPP disability and SAID is the last payor, so that it isn't a top-up to the CPP. CPP is the first payor to a certain level. Do you understand?

Mr. Forbes: — Yes. So what you're saying, if he was 45 and he was . . . Now if he was injured at work, he'd be on workers' comp.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — He might also be on CPP disability.

Mr. Forbes: — That's right.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — So CPP disability is the first payor.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. So now who has set that as the policy? Is that your policy? Is that CPP's policy? Is that a national policy?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — It's our policy because it's our program.

Mr. Forbes: — So would there be room . . . Now he wasn't required, I don't believe, to be on it before 60. I could be wrong though. I mean he would have to have been on it as soon as he could. When would he have to . . . So I'm just thinking, if he was on social assistance a few years ago, then he would have had to then have applied for CPP as well?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Now is he on CPP or CPP disability?

Mr. Forbes: — He just says CPP. He doesn't say disability.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Okay. So then — and again I can be corrected by officials — but you always have to look beyond the specific cases to what's the big picture. So then you have two individuals: one has a disability, one doesn't. They both qualify for CPP but one because they have a disability then gets it topped up, and the other one doesn't. And is that fair?

Mr. Forbes: — Right.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — As I said, we always visit our programs and see where there's gaps and problems, but that's kind of a caution I would have if we were to entertain this change. If I'm the individual just with CPP as my income and I don't have a disability and I have the CPP dollars, I think I'd be a little bitter. I don't know. Like it would be like if I . . . I'm not sure.

Mr. Forbes: — But you wouldn't be required to be on CPP. That would be a choice that you've made. Here's a fellow who's on SAID. Now he's using the word forced to go on, to apply for CPP early. So what you're saying though is that if his CPP was \$600 a month he would get to keep the \$600 but he'd be getting a lot less SAID.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — But any income . . . Like in our social assistance or SAID, we're the last payor if there's income from other sources, which isn't different than our other assistance programs.

Mr. Forbes: — Well we'll look forward . . . I don't know if your assistant . . . [inaudible] . . . looks like he's got something more.

Mr. Scott: — I think the minister has answered it.

Mr. Forbes: — Oh okay. Fair enough.

Mr. Scott: — I don't have much to add.

Mr. Forbes: — Well, we'll follow this up, but if you could take a look at it. I'm not sure if he was first, but I . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . first payor, last payor. That's a concept I wasn't familiar with, but makes sense that you exhaust all of your other . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — In an ideal world, if there's never-ending money, you know, it would be nice. In order to basically help as many as we can, we do tend to have if there's other income sources, that's your first payor.

And I think you would run into all sorts of problems if you gave the same amount to everyone no matter what their other sources

of income are. I think that unintentionally creates other problems so that you kind of lose the . . . You still end up with then a huge inequity in what the individuals have to live on and you have less resources to then help them all.

Mr. Forbes: — No, I . . . [inaudible].

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — There's a lot of complications to this suggestion and I think, you know, by all means I have no problem entertaining further discussion on, you know, possibilities and what would be good policy going forward.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes. Well he'll look forward to your response. If you don't have the letter, I could definitely leave it with one of your officials.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes. I'm sure we probably do and I just . . . We had the one week where I wasn't here getting my correspondence so it's probably in the . . .

Mr. Forbes: — It's dated February 25th so . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Oh then I would have.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I was just reminded too, and I should have remembered this because I was there when we put the PIAT committee together, and really it is very much designed over the suggestions of that committee, which are the stakeholders — Merv Bender who you introduced earlier — were very involved in what the policies around the SAID program should be. Recognizing that as we go forward, look at opportunities for enhancement, but that's where the initial policies would have come from.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Thank you. And then I'll turn it over to my colleague for some questions. Thank you.

The Chair: — Ms. Chartier.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thanks for your time here tonight. And speaking about possible policy changes, I know that in the last two years the minister's referenced the Legislative Secretary for foster care and child care, who happens to be our Chair tonight, and has referenced an upcoming report. So I'm just wondering, the minister in 2013 said I anticipate hearing back from him or . . . Sorry, in 2013, yes in 2013. She said she anticipated hearing back from him, and in 2014 she said, "I'm hoping I get the report from the Legislative Secretary this spring. I don't know the exact date. He hasn't told me yet, but I'm hoping it's this spring." So that was last spring. I'm wondering if that report has been complete and the outcomes of that report thus far.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes. We've changed ministers. And I don't require a report from the legislative secretaries, nor have I from any legislative secretaries that I've had in the past. He's reported to me verbally. He continues to do a lot of work and seems to be the contact person who's built a rapport with different child care and with foster families and foster-family-related associations. And so then we've had verbal discussions on what he's heard.

In the area of foster families, what you pointed out was our delays in payments of some of the expenses that they incur with their foster children, was one. I'm going from memory now from past discussions of things that we needed to improve upon in the foster situation.

We also mentioned earlier, but you weren't here earlier when the committee . . . He also chairs our internal caucus policy committee, and so that's where I find it very beneficial if you need a sounding board is where a minister will go within our caucus and be able to discuss issues or changes that the minister wants to make. And the Chair, who's also my Legislative Secretary, has been great in his knowledge and input in those discussions.

Going forward, I won't be requesting a formal report. I know there were two legislative secretaries that did do formal reports. One was Ms. Campeau on bullying and one was Mr. Reiter when he did the changes to the education property tax. Other than that, we haven't required our legislative secretaries to do formal reports and I am not making that requirement either. I think it's more beneficial if his work is ongoing and we have those sit-down discussions ourselves and he becomes more of an adviser to me as to what he is hearing, which is only one part of his duty. Another part of his duty of course is when the minister can't be in two places at once. He's awesome in being able to fill that role from time to time.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you for that. So you're not requiring a formal report, but was there a formal report as the former minister had said she was expecting? Was there a formal report submitted?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — No.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you for that. One of the conversations . . . I'm here mostly to talk about child care subsidies as the child care critic. In the last couple of years we talked about the number of spaces that are receiving subsidies. And I think in 2013 the comment was there were about 3,400 spaces with a subsidy, and 2014 it was 3,136 spaces. I'm wondering, seeing that that budget item has dropped again this year from 14.675 million to 14.085 million, how many spaces you're anticipating funding or providing a subsidy to?

[19:15]

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Correct. Because, as you identified, there's a slight decrease, and it is a decrease in anticipated usage of the program. We're forecasting for 2015-16, 3,010 is what we're forecasting.

Ms. Chartier: — So again a decrease in that. And I know in the previous two years, in the discussion that I've had with the minister, because that number has decreased, she said, oh that's a good thing because income has gone up. But we've talked about the turning point here, and I want to talk about it again because I know that you've heard from your Legislative Secretary, undoubtedly because many people in the community, in the child care community have talked about the turning point having not changed since 1983. So although it's good that incomes are going up, I don't think they've gone up to match the cost that families have with housing and child care. So I

would argue that it's 2015; maybe it's time for a change to the turning point.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — And thank you for that suggestion. And what that is suggesting is that we pick a program, and that's the program where we assist families. And our government has taken a different approach. That's not to say we'll never visit this number; I'm not saying we never will. But however, the approach that we chose was to help those families on a number of fronts.

So we introduced the children's drug program to help those very same families so that no parent pays more than \$20 per prescription for children under 14. And that didn't exist before. And we introduced the active families benefit which allowed them to access \$150 per child for certain activities, eligible activities. That didn't exist before. We eliminated the PST [provincial sales tax] on the children's clothes for children under the age of 17. That elimination of the PST didn't exist before.

We doubled the low-income tax credit from where it existed, from when you talk about the historical point of the child care subsidies. And we've made significant tax cuts, personal tax cuts, for those very same families so that now a family of four can earn up to \$49,155 before they pay any provincial tax. And we've significantly decreased the property tax for education. That is on top of the fact that yes, wages are stronger in Saskatchewan than they've been for some time. And so we chose a number of ways to help those families. And that all costs dollars, or if it doesn't directly cost dollars, it costs a reduction in the amount of revenues you can make.

And that was the choices our government made. If we eliminated all of those choices for those families or those programs for those families, perhaps we could put it all into child care, but we're choosing not to because not all families are accessing subsidized child care. Some families are accessing family members or some parents are sharing, which I know of a few families that are doing that, in time with their children and using a minimal amount of child care. So to put all the resources the government has into one program I think is perhaps narrow minded. And so when revenues are significantly strong, can we look at this? I'm never saying never. But I am more supportive of spreading it around so that a number of families can benefit from the different programs that government has to offer and it's not just child care.

Ms. Chartier: — I know, and I'm sure you've heard this from your Legislative Secretary then though, speaking with families with young children, their two biggest costs are housing and child care. The majority of income goes to those two particular items.

I'm just conveying speaking to many, many folks — directors of child care centres, people running day homes and child care group homes — some of the comments. I have one day home operator says one of her parent's gross is \$2,800 a month. A single mom, she gets \$64 in subsidies. Her take-home was \$2,000, and supporting her family on that.

There was many comments, I've just got different things highlighted here. One of the day home providers said one of her

mom said, I told my boss not to give me more hours because it will make us worse off. So it's like she gets more income, but it doesn't . . . The small amount of more income she might get in fact bumps her off what might be employment supplement, child care subsidies. And she, by working more, loses in the end. She has less time with her kids and has less money to support her family.

So these are things. Another child care worker said that she hears all the time from her families that after paying rent and child care, there's barely anything left. And this was another day home operator who said to me, I feel guilty. I feel guilty when I have to raise my rates, but I'm a single mom too, and I'm barely making it.

I'm sure you've heard this from your Legislative Secretary, but the reality is child care is eating up a whole chunk of people's income. And the reality is, you're right; not everybody uses licensed child care, but that's a whole discussion in another committee with another minister. And I would respectfully disagree with the approach that's been taken because I think that child care's a really great economic development strategy as well as a great way of supporting families. But I think it's an unfortunate thing that . . . I think that there's something that could certainly be done with child care, and I know that your Legislative Secretary has heard that from many folks.

But getting back to the report, one of the reasons I was asking is people have been asking me, where is this report? Where is this report? People who consulted and provided their feedback to the Legislative Secretary were hoping to see something I think in writing, much like the other two legislative secretaries who've provided a report. So that's, not a question in that.

But moving on to some comments or some questions out of last year's discussion in estimates, we talked about the online subsidy calculator. And I will just refer to *Hansard* from last year where, Mr. Acton, you said you were:

. . . reluctant to make any comments about timelines based on our thought that we would have it up and running already, and we haven't had that. So we'll continue to work on it. I can't give you a date.

So I'm wondering, the web calculator for calculating subsidy, I'm just wondering where that's at. I know you had done a trial or a pilot project.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I'm just going to respond to your first comments, and then Ken Acton will respond to the web calculator. I think what you need to give some thought to then is suggestions on where the money's going to come from in upping the subsidy, because you could up the subsidy by \$100 a month and then change the personal tax exemption so they pay \$100 a month more income tax and it goes into child care subsidy. You could do that, but their net is the same amount of money.

There could be cuts in order to address that somewhere, and you can't do the same cuts for a number of programs and have dollars. You can't keep re-spending. I don't know where in this particular budget you're going to find that kind of money that it's going to take. And perhaps maybe, you know, what you're

suggesting, I don't know. It's up for you to suggest that then we shouldn't have given them the income tax cut.

Ms. Chartier: — I have not said such a thing. I've conveyed to you what families are telling me, what daycare directors are telling me, what day home providers are telling me, that their families . . . I am conveying to you that having that turning point not changed since 1983 is a real problem and is, in the reality in today's dollars, less and less money for families to be able to provide the necessities, is what I am doing here.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — You and I both went through those years, and my two daughters are going through those years exactly right now. And there's no doubt, child care is a huge part. And they know there will be five years that they will not be getting ahead financially, where they will be basically making it meet and keeping them comfortable, and then getting ahead after.

As I said, never say never, when revenues are available, that this needs to be something that's looked at. But we have helped those very same families in a number of areas financially.

With that I'll get Ken Acton to answer your second question.

Mr. Acton: — Hi. Ken Acton, deputy minister. And somehow I knew you were going to ask me this. We have not, we have not loaded that up yet. I continue to have some concerns about how accurate it was and also to think about the scope of what the calculator should do: I mean, should it just be on the child care subsidy or should it be broader than that. And I'm frankly of the view that it should be broader than that because we've got a number of other programs that we should talk about.

So it's not loaded up yet. At this point I hope to hear what the poverty advisory group also have to say about how we should approach this. So I can't give you a date yet, but soon I guess.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you for that. Sticking with the subsidy here, in terms of the processing standard, the former minister and I had a lengthy conversation last year because that had been a concern that has been flagged for me repeatedly, that the subsidy processing time has a huge impact on what ends up being, often ends up being bad debt when families don't get their subsidies and the child cares don't get paid.

And in a conversation, both in October with a group of child care providers and in January, that's been flagged. I know the conversation last year said, oh that was all worked out and processing time was quick, but I'm hearing the opposite from families. So I'm wondering where the average is right now, what that's looking like. I understand there was a backlog last fall. I don't know what would have caused the backlog. Maybe you can address that. But I understand that as of the end of September, they were still processing that month. So I'm just curious how that is all shaping up.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Right now it's at about one week processing time, which is an improvement. And yes, I absolutely heard from my Legislative Secretary on this issue extensively. I know that the child care providers would like, there's some that would rather that went straight to them rather than to the family. I guess these families there is, like other . . .

Okay, my daughter is a child care provider, and there's families that she has to remind more than others. And our clients are no different. But I'll get Constance to address the turnaround time and what's been done to improve that.

Ms. Hourie: — Hi. Constance Hourie. So we've streamlined areas in a number of our programs, and that happens to be one of them, work prioritization streamlining. So child care subsidy staff now process applications and payments according to the date received. Previously we were processing based on expected eligibility date. So this approach gives the parents and child care facilities earlier notification of their program eligibility and estimated subsidy amount, reducing the financial risks for facilities and helping parents budget for child care. The streamlining has resulted in average processing times being reduced from several weeks to one to five days.

Ms. Chartier: — When we talk about the processing times, that's the processing times of when someone has all . . . when the ministry has every piece of information — all i's dotted and all t's crossed. Is that correct? Like, when the family has submitted the paperwork entirely properly it will take that many days to process.

But I think one of the challenges that comes in for child care is, like you said your daughter experiences, Madam Minister, is when families, for all kinds of reasons . . . Actually it's been flagged for me, English as an additional language. There's folks, many folks who don't speak English and sometimes don't understand the application and miss signing things or miss communication, and then there's some people who don't prioritize paperwork. There's all kinds of reasons why that happens. So the processing might happen when all those things are there. But the reality is child cares are still feeling left out of the loop because of privacy concerns.

[19:30]

I have one example here where one director was talking about sitting down and trying to help the family figure out why they didn't get the subsidy. So they called the worker and the subsidy worker won't tell the child care director but the parent doesn't really speak English and so there's a huge gap in getting child cares paid. So I'm wondering how that could be resolved.

This is many directors with whom I've spoken and many day home and group home providers who have flagged this very same concern that you might process quickly when you have every piece of information, but some child cares are left out of the loop in knowing whether or not families . . . If they haven't been paid, they don't know why they haven't been paid and don't know when they're ever going to be paid. So that is a problem.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — And I don't disagree it's a problem. I'm not sure. And I'm sure you run into this in other areas in your constituency office because I know I sure do in the privacy laws. Because you're right: there are privacy laws that restrict the information going to the child care providers. And I know you also understand that we can't be making these payments without the proper paperwork because we have to answer to a Provincial Auditor. So I'm not sure. I know I don't have the solution. I'm not sure if you have suggestions. I'm more than,

you know, willing to hear those suggestions but they are two barriers that I don't disagree with. Ken would like to . . .

Mr. Acton: — If I may, I mean I would be happy to hear about some of those challenges. We did bring some operators in and work with us to streamline the process. So that was over a year ago now, I believe. So we got them together, both with representatives from the Ministry of Education and our own staff, to try to identify some of those barriers that would cause a problem and then figure out how can we streamline it. One was in fact even just changing an address. So if the family moved, then we at that time had a system where you actually had to fill out a whole new application again as opposed to simply giving us a change of address. So we did a number of those things.

I wonder, listening to this, if we need to do more to communicate with the operators. Because maybe we fixed some things and they're not aware of it or they don't see it and maybe there's other things that we need to fix to make it easier for everybody. So I'm open to that kind of a discussion. I think we made a pretty big step forward when we got everybody in the room the last time, but maybe we need to do it again, and again try to get some of that paperwork out of the road so that we can actually make the payments and help families. So I'm all open to that.

Ms. Chartier: — Well in this case, it's very much helping the providers of care which support the families. But just to let you know a couple of the comments.

So this was a meeting in January. After our estimates or after our committee last year, I was thinking, hey, you've got this subsidy piece or that all ironed out. And so I was surprised by my meetings in October and January to hear that same complaint coming up. And I had one director say that on January 20th she gets a call saying that the subsidy office has lost her paperwork, and then another comment from a different group that I had met with, saying that the ministry loses the documentation all the time.

So I understand things are faxed in as well as emailed in. Is that correct?

Mr. Acton: — We're trying to move everyone to the email, to electronic as opposed to fax, but we still have some people that still continue to use the fax machine, which does create challenges for sure.

Ms. Chartier: — And I think that that sounded like that was a big part of the problem and some of the frustration, that paperwork goes missing. And I don't know . . . When we talked about the email system last year, again when you had mentioned that, I initially thought, oh in the start of our discussion that it was an electronic filing, but it's an email filing.

So when we think about how better to do that, when we think about online tools and your subsidy calculator, you think about all those pieces perhaps. I know the directors have said it would be a wonderful thing to be able to file electronically, like a simple form. That's what I'm hearing from folks.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — The Legislative Secretary brought

forward two things. One's been addressed and one hasn't been yet. And one was just the language. That has been improved so the language on the application forms are easier to understand.

The other thing that he suggested that we haven't completed yet, but are looking at how to do that, and that's developing a one-pager instead of . . . like a one-pager application to make it easier too for the parents. And then we're less likely to have those delays because the form isn't filled out or isn't completed. So that is something else the ministry is working at, is a one-pager. And I know, I'm pretty sure that's where he gave an example of another province that did have a pretty good one-pager.

Ms. Chartier: — I think another thing that in all of this it's ultimately the child care that is carrying the bad debt when someone finds out their subsidy . . . They're in the child care for four weeks, six weeks, whatever it may be, and then they don't get the subsidy and they leave because they can't afford it. So it ultimately is child cares who are paying for that debt.

But one way to resolve it, I know that . . . Or part of the problem too is when you need information from families and because the child cares can't follow up, it's got to be the family following up, I've been told that the hours in which you can call to speak to someone in the subsidy office is regular business hours, but if you're in school or in work, you might not be able to call in those hours. Or if you do call, if you call on your break or you call when you have a spare minute, often you'll be told that the subsidy office will call you back, but you're out of luck because your small window of time during the workday is closed. So I don't know if that's something that you've heard but that's part of the challenge as well, is being able to connect with the subsidy office so families can speed up the process a little bit.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — That wasn't a comment that I got from the feedback from the secretary, but perhaps the officials have. Yes, the officials haven't heard this complaint either. So my suggestion, if you have this complaint, is ask them if they've given their cellphone, if they have a cellphone and a lot of people do now, if they could give them the cellphone number as well to get back to them. It's obviously not a common complaint but it's happened because you've heard it. So I don't know whether we'll have an after-hours person. I'm not sure we're going to consider that right now.

Ms. Chartier: — It wasn't one person. It was, as I said, a big group of directors who said this is something that should be considered just in terms of smoothing out the whole process, that if you have the family who needs to connect with the subsidy worker, you have to make it as easy as possible.

Just in terms of the previous question, I had talked about the backlog in October. So I'm just curious what that was about, if you had heard about it. So the exact quote was . . . This day home provider said, "Subsidy workers told me they were backlogged in October. On September 24th they were still working on that month." So I'm just wondering what caused the backlog in processing at that point in time.

Ms. Hourie: — That would have been the piece — sorry, it's Constance — that I spoke to you earlier, about work

prioritization and streamlining, that we've changed that process. And we are now caught up on those applications.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay, thank you. Just one more concern that child care directors and day home providers provided for me, or offered. So in wrangling with, making sure that the subsidy process is happening . . . Sometimes it's not at the beginning of the month that it eventually gets worked out. Sometimes it's in the middle of the month or at any given time in the month. And this one director said to me, she'll inquire and everything is kosher. The subsidy has been approved; it's going ahead. And she's been told, well I'll submit it on your next month's payment. And so I'm wondering if that happens very often if it's confirmed that a subsidy is in place, if it has to wait until the next month. Because I'm talking to . . . Many of these folks are not high-income earners themselves and they need their income as well. Actually it wasn't a daycare director; it was a day home provider who had told me that. So her exact quote was, she was told that it would be on her next month's payment.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — A licensed day home provider?

Ms. Chartier: — Yes. Yes, these are all licensed centres and day homes that I'm speaking about. There's licensed day home spaces.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — So I'm being told that the payment that we make is at the end of the month after the attendance submission's made for any payment.

Ms. Chartier: — So what if though it took six weeks to process? So one person flagged for me that she took a family in August and didn't get paid until October. And that would have to do obviously with dotting your i's and crossing your t's and making sure everything was in place. But if she'd been caring for a family or for a child since August and didn't get paid till October, was there a time and like could it have been issued so it gets paid at the end of the month? But what if it could have been paid at the end of September rather than the end of October?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — So I'm still being told that they pay once they have the . . . at the end of month when they get the attendance submission.

Mr. Acton: — I think I've, I mean . . . So we don't have all the documentation for August. We don't get it until the end of the first or the second week of September. Instead of paying it then, we say, well we'll wait until the end of the next month and you'll get two months at once. And this is even worse if it happens to go into the third month and then all of a sudden she doesn't, the provider doesn't get any money until the end of October or something.

Ms. Chartier: — Yes, that's exactly what happened.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Why don't we make the commitment to you tonight that we do, the ministry does another meeting with providers so that they have a chance to meet and say, these have been issues and the occurrences of those issues, that it's not just one, and have that conversation?

Ms. Chartier: — I think that that would be a very good idea.

Both these groups again, this was about 40 people in both day homes and directors with whom I've sat down on different occasions. And they would all be very eager to sit down to talk about these issues. And I know you've got a working group, but I know folks are eager to talk about these kinds of things.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — So we'll make that commitment to you tonight that we will have the officials do another sort of . . . well not consultation, but let's have the discussions on issues that they're seeing. And some of them may not be fixable like, you know, you identified privacy and the barrier of that and we know that's a barrier on a number of fronts. But other things — maybe it was just a really simple, quick fix that is common sense once we understand the issue.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. I think folks would be very glad to hear that. Just one more question kind of on the child care front. Again this is coming out of day home providers who work with kids in foster care on occasion, so kids in foster care who end up being offered day home spots. I talked to one particular day home provider, said she took on a child, an emergency foster care situation, and it took her four months to be paid by Social Services. She ended up suspending services because she wasn't paid and was still out a few thousand dollars.

So I want to understand a little bit better about how these contracts . . . I understand that the contracts are month-long contracts? I want to understand a little bit more. I've never heard of this before this. This was the first. I hadn't even really thought about how this all works so I'm curious, if you could explain how that works. So a child comes into care and needs child care. How does that contract with a provider work?

[19:45]

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I'm going to for that, just because you want it in detail, I'm going to let the officials answer. But I believe — and I can be corrected here; I have already once on the daycare issue — that this is also one of the last things that we're finishing with Linkin is payments, so that it's not paper receipts and it'll make it go faster. But on this specific issue, I'm not sure who wants to answer it.

Mr. Acton: — I can talk about that. And just to build on what you were going to say or mention, Minister, this is part of our financial payments process and . . . Well I mean I'm disappointed to hear that it would take four months to pay anybody. We should be able to do better than that, even if it's a paper process.

I do know that there are times when we need the sign-off of the various workers, and we're using paper. If somebody goes away for a couple of weeks, we might miss that. And I know of a particular case where that in fact happened. So the paperwork then sits around for three weeks before it ever gets to head office, and then we put it into the process then and work through the payment.

So the Linkin process that we're building right now, the financials, we expect that to go live in the fall. Then those approval processes will be electronic, and I'm being assured that we won't have that kind of a problem again. People will be able to log on, make that approval once it's in the system. Then

we can generate the cheque. But that's part of the problem. We issue about 6,000 payments a month, and those invoices come in from around the province. And if one of them isn't approved by one of the staff, then it starts to circle around in the system.

Ms. Chartier: — Are they in fact month-long contracts? So if a child is in foster care and then is using day home or child care services, how do those contracts work with the providers?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — We're going to have Tammy Kirkland come forward and answer those questions for you.

Ms. Kirkland: — Tammy Kirkland, ADM [assistant deputy minister], child and family programs. So for children in care, daycare child care contracts are determined by the child care worker for the length of time. They're not necessarily only for one month, but we pay monthly. So they might determine that they need child care for three months and set the provider up that way.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. Okay, that answers that question. I just want to just put on the record here that this particular provider said, "We shouldn't have to beg for the money." So that's how this particular individual was feeling, so some frustration around that.

I have one last question not around child care subsidies but, since we have CLSD [community living service delivery] folks here, I've asked some of these questions in health around CLSD clients who are living in acute psychiatric facilities like the Dubé, not for six weeks at a time but literally years at a time. So I'm wondering, some of the things . . . So we've got, I know, long-term folks living in the Dubé, which is a hospital. You've got lights and noise and people in psychosis and suicidal ideation. Like it's not a residence by any stretch of the imagination, and they don't have the services to provide to people who should have residential services.

And I know I've toured the adult psychiatric facility in Prince Albert, and the youth one. The youth facility is new and lots of room and good programming and the space to do the programming. But touring the adult facility, one of the things that staff flagged for me is they've said CLSD says, well why aren't you . . . Help us get these people out of here. But if there's not programming to be able to stabilize and support people and move them into a suitable location, they're stuck.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I'm going to comment on your last comment, then that, and then the officials will add even more details, and that is I agree with you. It's not acceptable for the child care provider to wait four months, and we need to do better at that.

Secondly, part of the challenge with extreme high-needs CLD [community living division] clients is, yes, we can get a facility or whatever, a home. It's getting the trained personnel that can possibly look after their high needs.

And the other is, you know, ideally we want a home situation where there is two, three, four clients in a home. They become a family. Some will harm the others, and we have to be very, very mindful of that. So that's a challenge as well.

When there's high medical needs, I'm sure you can understand that we can't have numerous, numerous, almost high-intense health care homes with all the health supports for a family of four in a number of homes. We can work towards that, and we are starting to get a couple of homes that can accommodate this type, but obviously there needs to be more. But it's very costly, very, very costly. It's very intensive for staffing, and we have to always be mindful that the residents are safe from, in some cases, one another. And it is a challenge. But with that I'll get . . .

Ms. Chartier: — I'd just like to clarify that. From my understanding, it's not folks with physical medical needs. Mental health is a health need for sure, but there are people with cognitive disabilities combined or dual-diagnoses often, so it's not physical medical difficulties. It's people who are hard to house, so there're being housed in hospitals, which is not the place for anybody to spend years — like years, four years in North Battleford, more than two years for a few people at the Dubé. I haven't looked at the recent numbers, but these are people who need residential supports.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Bob Martinook will address those specifics, but we are working towards more intensive support homes. But it's a work in progress.

Mr. Martinook: — Good evening. Bob Martinook, executive director of community living service delivery. I'm happy to say that we've done a lot of work on this front, and we've seen a lot of improvements in a fairly short period of time since we've really started focusing on this.

Statistically from January of 2013 when there was 24 individuals who were in in-patient mental health settings, that was reduced to 12 in January of 2015. As of today, there's 15 individuals in in-patient care. Now that number fluctuates based on need, obviously. Our objective is to have individuals receive the kind of acute psychiatric care that they require to meet their needs, and our interest is of course to move the individuals out and back to the community as quickly as they can.

We've done a number of other things to improve our actions on this area. One of the things that we've initiated last year was monthly contact and meetings with all of the directors of the mental health facilities across the province. We have a monthly call that we meet with them and discuss each case on a case-by-case basis, and that has helped to gain a better understanding and help to improve the planning for the individuals both from the in-patient care side and the transition out. So that's a very important development.

The other thing that we've done is we've really improved our tracking and monitoring of these kinds of scenarios. The tracking system that we have in place monitors a number of dimensions including length of stay, but it also monitors readiness. And one of the things that we find is that just because an individual has been in a place or a facility for a long period of time, it doesn't necessarily equate to readiness to leave. And so we're tracking that and ensuring that we understand if a person is ready to leave, then we're working towards a placement.

Of course the thing that you've highlighted and continues to be

a challenge for us is always ensuring that there is a resource on the output side or on the exit side to meet the needs of the individuals because some of these individuals still present some very unique challenges that require specialized supports. And so we're continuing to work on them, but I think that with the work that we're doing with mental health directors, I think we're starting to see a lot of improvement in that area.

Another area that we've done some work on and I think we're really excited about is we've been working with Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region for the last eight or ten months on a protocol that'll improve the interactions between the two settings, between CLSD regional teams and RQHR's [Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region] mental health setting. And this is actually quite an innovation because it will allow our workers to go in and to actually document, on client files, actions. It'll allow the nurse supervisors and head nurses to contact our regional offices directly, so it's really opening up the dialogue. And in this protocol we will have identified who and what responsibilities each of the parties has, and so that'll help to improve the treatment plans and the exit strategies.

Immediately upon admission into a psychiatric unit here in RQHR, the worker is notified by the head nurse or the manager of that unit that a client of CLSD is there. If the person doesn't have a clear client, isn't clearly a client of CLSD, the worker or the manager of the unit can call our supervisor who will come and either meet the individual and find out if they are a client of ours or will initiate a process to establish that they can be a client of CLSD.

Those kinds of things are new, and I think that they will improve considerably. Health has also started tracking any stay over 30 days. But like I said earlier, the importance of tracking time and readiness is critical. It's not just the length of time in patient care. It's the readiness for transitions out.

Once this protocol is implemented — and we're going through final revisions now with RQHR task team and our staff from the ministry — once that's rolled out, our intent is to take that protocol and work with our partners in the Ministry of Health to go to other health regions and transition that protocol so it becomes a universal protocol for not only mental health. Our next area that we're going to be focusing on is like long-term care type scenarios where individuals are in medical units and require transitions out. So we think there's a lot of utility there, and we think that we've made a lot of inroads.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you for that. Actually that protocol sounds very good, and that actually is one of the things that's been highlighted for me is who has the responsibility for what. And that was a big thing that came out of my discussions in Prince Albert, saying that was a big part of the concern.

The discussion around readiness though, obviously not everybody is ready to leave a facility at six weeks or whatever it may be, but I'd argue that those long stays when you're approaching a couple years or more, that maybe they're not ready because they haven't received the services that they need to be ready because some of these facilities aren't equipped to provide everything that that individual might need.

So I think that that's one of the challenges as well is to make,

not only on the outside making sure that they have the services that they need. I know I've heard from folks saying, we don't have all the skills and tools that we need to support some of these folks. But I'm glad to hear . . . That was a huge concern, and I know I raised it in question period last year and have raised it in committee in Health and didn't think to come here and raise it here. So I'm really glad to hear that there's some work being done on it, and it sounds like some really positive work.

Can I just ask where you're at? You said there's 15 folks right now, and that number fluctuates. But what is your longest stay or the client with the longest stay?

Mr. Martinook: — I can dig up the data, but it's several years at Sask Hospital.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. It's probably the same individual. Okay. Well thank you for that. I appreciate your time.

Mr. Martinook: — If I could just add something to address your comment here and allay some fears. Over the last year, we've really initiated putting in resources to also support RQHR and Saskatoon Health Region, the Dubé Centre. So we often will put staff, either our crisis support staff or other staff in those facilities. So Saskatoon Health Region has benefited from that support. We've put a number of staff in there.

We also fund some staff positions at SHNB, Sask Hospital North Battleford. And we've also put staff in the last six months into the P.A. [Prince Albert] Parkland Health Region mental health. So we do recognize that they do need some support in meeting the needs of the individuals that we provide care for, and I think we've taken a number of steps to do that.

[20:00]

Ms. Chartier: — Sounds like a thank you that . . . I'm glad to hear that. So I'll pass it back off to my colleague.

Mr. Martinook: — Thank you very much.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — If I could before you pass it off, if you don't mind, you weren't here earlier. And I know you were busy with other obligations you have, but the other area of inappropriate placement in hospitals, I had mentioned briefly in my opening comments. So the other work we're doing in a different front is children being inappropriately placed in hospitals because they have high medical needs. Their needs are greater than foster families can usually provide, and then the foster families burn out, and they get passed from foster family to foster family.

And so in order to try to address those, we have started work with organizations which is Thomas' Circle of Care, the YWCA in Regina, JCL Care Homes and Hope's Home. And I'm sure you've met with one or more of those. And we're seeing really good results there as well where children aren't being housed in hospitals inappropriately. And so there's work on a couple of fronts.

Ms. Chartier: — Well that's good to hear. So thank you to the minister and to your officials for your time tonight. Thank you.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much. And just one really quick question that she was just reminding me of when we were talking about phones, and that was around the phones at the Social Services centre in Saskatoon on 21st and 1st or 2nd.

And there seems to be . . . They had a problem because there was only one phone that the clients could use, and people were getting kind of cranky about that. And I can understand it was all the way around; everybody was cranky in the building. And it just seemed to me that people are expected to call in to make their claims, and maybe they were getting a little long than they should have and the next person wanted to . . . And it didn't work well for anybody. And so I don't know if you heard about this incident. I think it was back in the fall, maybe even November, December of last year.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — And so I've got Jeff Redekop with me to try to address the frustration with phones.

Mr. Redekop: — Hi. Jeff Redekop, executive director with income assistance. Mr. Forbes, thanks for the question; the incident in particular is not coming to me right now. But I can say that we do have, we do have phones available in our service centre at the Woolworth Building for clients to come in and use to contact our own programs. And if people have, if individuals that we're working with have a need to make a phone call, we can have one of our staff or workers support them to make that phone call in one of our interview rooms as well. So there's lots of options so we can ensure that people have that, if they have a need, we can help them with it.

Mr. Forbes: — I don't want to go at length at this, but it was something that seemed to me to be, would just help to have more than one phone. And it would seem to be only one phone and that was causing a lineup. And so I appreciate that if there's multiple phones or if you just want to check and see how things are going out in the waiting room, that would be great. Because I know it can be pretty frustrating all the way around.

I want to turn right now to child and family services area. And of course that is a significant one obviously, as the minister referenced in her opening remarks with the Bonneau inquest and that tragedy. So I have several questions around that.

And you did talk just briefly, you talked about *The Child and Family Services Act* and the review that's going on with that. When do you think we might see the legislation?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — This fall. It should be, touch wood, introduced this fall, yes.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. In the fall of '15.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — 2015.

Mr. Forbes: — So still a few more months. How have the consultations gone on that? What's been the process for working that through?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — We hired two facilitators, one for First Nations and one for Métis. Consultations were held. It varied in some of the participation of the First Nations. There was great participation by some, not all. But I'll get Tammy to expand

further if she would like.

Ms. Kirkland: — Certainly. Tammy Kirkland. Public consultation or consultations were held with a number of stakeholders, the First Nations agencies being one of those, our staff, advocates, various other ministries. So we did a number of consultations based . . . And from that we had a discussion guide that we took out that had themes, and got good information back from people that we're using to develop our recommendations going forward.

Mr. Forbes: — I suppose you really can't say too much about it because it has to come forward. Maybe it's still obviously being written and rewritten and all the different processes. But it is quite an old Act. Is it in '91 was the last time that it was redone? And so it had been the late '80s. So I'm curious to know as well as internally, are you looking at practices right across Canada? Has there been some best practices that you've learned from other jurisdictions?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes. We are looking at other pieces of legislation across Canada.

Mr. Forbes: — Good. Now you also had referenced the quality assurance unit or the . . . Can you tell me a little bit more about that and how many FTEs are in the unit? Is it fully staffed up? And what is their mandate?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — So since the ministry's reorganization, which took place in October of 2009, child and family services quality assurance unit was significantly strengthened, and the audits are completed on a calendar year cycle to align with the current QAU, quality assurance unit, reporting on child death. An example of what they would review is child death and critical injuries.

So in 2014 the unit reviewed 779 ministry service area files over the 19 ministry offices. And in 2014 the unit moved to annual audits of the 17 First Nations and family service agencies. The reviews covered 1,388 files. This is a 123 per cent increase in the files reviewed compared to 2013. So 16 of the 17 agencies were reviewed, and in essence I'm going to get Tammy or Ken to address how many more FTEs have been assigned to this unit in order to realize this 123 per cent increase in reviews done.

Ms. Kirkland: — So we have seven analysts in the unit and one manager that are responsible on a permanent basis for those reviews.

Mr. Forbes: — Now what is the background of an analyst? What's their training? What do they bring as a skill set?

Ms. Kirkland: — So the majority of analysts would have been child welfare workers that have the background and understand the system and have shown an interest in evaluation and come to the unit and then received the training on how to go through the process and what a report looks like or what an evaluation looks like.

Mr. Forbes: — Can you tell me a little bit about the evaluation process? Do they go out into the field or is it just an examination of the file?

Ms. Kirkland: — It's both. So they examine files but they also meet with staff or the agency if it's an agency.

Mr. Forbes: — Do they meet with . . . Will they interview the child?

Ms. Kirkland: — So for audits, just on-file audits, they would meet with the agency, not with the child, with the family. But for critical incidents, critical injury or death, they would meet with whomever was associated with that incident.

Mr. Forbes: — So when you're talking about the agency, you're talking about the First Nations agency?

Ms. Kirkland: — Correct.

Mr. Forbes: — So there were 1,338 files with First Nations agencies last year. Is that right?

Ms. Kirkland: — That's how many reviews were done, how many files were reviewed.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. And then how many on the off-reserve?

Ms. Kirkland: — 779.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. So about 2,000 that they would have done all together, or 2,100. And so now these are all after the fact, after critical injury or incident, and after a death? Or are some done prior to, or as random?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — It's definitely done in child death or critical injury, but it's also random. They're not all, if I'm . . . Yes, they're not all. They are certainly critical death or child death and critical injury, but there are audits done not from critical death.

Mr. Forbes: — So what kind of percentage would there be, would you be doing? In last year's, just for example, how many deaths and how many critical . . . It's critical incidents or injuries? I'm using both.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Critical injury.

Mr. Forbes: — Injury. Okay. How many deaths and how many critical injuries last year?

Mr. Acton: — Just in terms of general context, and then I think Tammy will have some exact numbers for you, but there's really, I mean there's the files where there has been a critical injury or a death, and obviously we move on those right away to do the reviews. But then there's standard audits that we do of every office to make sure that they're following proper protocols and documenting on an ongoing basis. So that's just the general quality assurance.

The change that we made a year ago was that our First Nation agencies, we used to go there every three years and do an audit there, and the federal government would generally be doing a financial audit at least every year or every couple years. So we worked with them, and now we go together. And we increased the level of audits that we do as well so that we're there every year doing a standard audit, just like we would do with any one

of our own offices off-reserve, so just on a quality assurance side.

Ms. Kirkland: — Just to clarify on the numbers, so the numbers that the minister provided you, those were the random audits that we did. And we do those random audits to achieve a 95 per cent confidence rating on file work. So that's sort of where we work from.

The critical incident or critical injury and child deaths for last year, for 2014 there were 21 deaths that would spur a review, and four injuries.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Now these stats would also probably include suicides.

Ms. Kirkland: — That's correct.

Mr. Forbes: — How many were suicides?

Ms. Kirkland: — I have that for you. In 2014, three.

Mr. Forbes: — Thanks. So now when you say . . . I want to get a sense of what these audits look like. And when I think of an audit, you know, you have the accountants come and they storm your office for two days. Then they leave and you don't see them for another year. Is that what kind of happens with this? Or do you come and go, as opposed to, you know, I think about my education days where the superintendent would show up unannounced and sit in the back of the classroom, watch what happens?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — It's going to be more similar to your education days, but we have a different official here to describe the details of these audits.

Ms. Eberhardt: — Hi. I'm Tobie Eberhardt with child and family programs. So our file audit process would be, we would ask whoever we're reviewing, either one of the ministry's service areas or one of the First Nation agencies, to send us a list of all their active child care files, family service files, and foster home files. And then we would do a random selection based on what the number is to get a 95 per cent confidence level. Then we would send it back to them and then be on site within a week or two and pull those files and physically look at them and compile the results. Then we would develop a report that we provide them, and then we meet with them to work on action plans on any areas that have low levels of results.

[20:15]

Mr. Forbes: — So when you say 95 per cent confidence, what you're saying is that it's a 95 per cent feeling that this reflects what's going on in that office. It's not a 95 per cent approval or anything like that. You have a sense of what's going whether . . .

Ms. Eberhardt: — No.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. But then that does mean you only come once a year, what I'm hearing you say.

Ms. Eberhardt: — For the file audit, yes, we come once a

year.

Mr. Forbes: — For the file audit. And then for the critical injury and death, that just comes as it goes. So you're having seven people do this kind of work. Is that enough for, you know, I mean is this . . . I mean I know when this started a few years ago that there seemed to be . . . I don't know if there were seven in all. Is it seven and plus one supervisor? That's eight?

Ms. Eberhardt: — Yes. Originally we had one manager and five analysts. And then when the decision was to increase our agency file reviews to yearly, we added two additional analysts. So we found that last year, which was the first year that we did agencies once a year, we were able to do all our reviews, plus do enough child death reviews for what we would have received that year. So the seven is enough to address the status quo.

Mr. Forbes: — Now how do the agencies . . . Do they feel that this is an appropriate measure or have you worked them on a protocol or how does this work when you go?

Ms. Eberhardt: — You know, as a working relationship with the agencies, it's part of our policy that we do file reviews and all the agencies, you know, as part of their delegation agreement, is to follow the policies by the ministry. We have First Nations and Métis services consultants, which are ministry staff who are assigned to each agency, and they really work around the relationships. And so they're the ones that smooth the way when we're coming out to do these audits.

Mr. Forbes: — How is that, your Métis . . . What was the group called?

Ms. Eberhardt: — First Nations and Métis services.

Mr. Forbes: — The First Nations and Métis services. And how are they received? Can you tell me more about that group and their mandate and what they're made up of and how many and that type of thing?

Ms. Eberhardt: — Yes. So they've got strong working relationships with the agency. Each consultant manages two to three agencies so they are on site at the agency a significant amount of time, and part of their job I think is partly around the delegation agreements and the reporting back to the ministry of the various things set out in the delegation agreements.

Mr. Forbes: — So tell me more. I'm not really too familiar with the delegation agreements. How are they set up? What are they all about?

Mr. Acton: — I'll just go back to the question about the confidence or the relationship with those folks out of that unit, and I see that just getting stronger and stronger every day. Over the last year we've had a couple of agencies saying, for a period of time would you actually place somebody, would you have them work right out of our offices for a period of time? Because we're trying to make sure we've got all the right protocols in place. And so I see that as a real positive sign from the various First Nations agencies saying, come and work with us even more because you're helping us, you know, have a stronger agency. So in that sense it's been quite positive.

Ms. Kirkland: — Tammy Kirkland. The ministry presently has delegated agreements with 17 First Nations child and family service agencies, and part of that delegation comes about because Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada requires that First Nations agencies have delegated authority from the province in order to qualify for federal funding. So we are an avenue for the First Nations agencies for their federal funding as well.

The minister has the authority to delegate service delivery to First Nations agencies. They work under the same policies and procedures and legislation as our service delivery areas do. And that's the consultants that work with them to ensure that they're trained in those areas and have that understanding.

Mr. Forbes: — You work, for example, these quality assurance . . . And I assume that there's checklists or whatever. This is how, and you can probably tell me, this must be . . . Is it this structured decision-making model that's part of this? I mean there's so many acronyms here. I'm going to get all tangled up in this, I know. But to make sure they're culturally sensitive, that they're appropriate for the agency, do they have much input into the design of the delegated agreement? Or is this a federal-provincial agreement really, a delegated agreement?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — It's a provincial agreement.

Mr. Forbes: — It's a provincial-agency agreement?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Right.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — It's an agreement between the province and the agency, but it needs to be in place before the federal government will flow money to the agency. So it lays out an obligation by the agency of level of care and services they need to provide. It has reporting requirements within it from the agencies. We've actually just renewed a number in . . . Since we've been in government, we've renewed a number of these agreements but they're not, the concept of these agreements being in place is not new. We have renewed some but they were in place when we formed government in 2007 and I was minister first. These agreements existed then.

Mr. Forbes: — Good. So in terms of the quality assurance now, does that extend to foster homes? Do you . . . But it sounds like you do the files but does it, do the people here, do they take a look at foster homes? Is there any quality assurance on a foster home itself?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes. Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — Who does that?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — The quality assurance unit.

Mr. Forbes: — The reason I'm asking . . . There's two. I mean I also know the foster family association might do some work like this, and they're a very good organization. And I trust that, you know, that there may be some standards there as well involved in that.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — So when you would do a file review, it wouldn't be unusual for the children in that file to be in foster care.

Mr. Forbes: — Right.

Ms. Kirkland: — Yes. Just in addition to the quality assurance unit which do those sort of regular file reviews, we have resource workers who are attached to each foster home and they also would investigate any concerns or complaints or quality-of-care issues and ensure that foster homes are getting the training and the support that they need.

Mr. Forbes: — So now this is a different group's resource workers. So they're not the analysts though?

Ms. Kirkland: — Correct.

Mr. Forbes: — So who do they work for?

Ms. Kirkland: — The resource workers work with the ministry. They're part of our child and family program.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay, but then there are two quality assurance.

Ms. Kirkland: — No. They're in the service, different reporting line.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. And so they're assigned to different foster homes, I think? Are they? Right. They're the ones who, if there needs to be extra work done in the house or something . . . Is that right? It seems to me I'm recalling this in terms of the different types of workers that are involved in foster homes.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Depending on the number of children in the home or the complexity of the children's needs, the foster home may require additional support workers to come in. So it would either be recognized immediately or they could ask for that extra support. We've expanded the in-home support workers quite considerably.

Mr. Forbes: — So that obviously, that would be more off reserve. On-reserve may get funding for that type of thing if they require to have resource workers, I assume?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Correct, I believe.

Ms. Kirkland: — Sorry, could you repeat . . .

Mr. Forbes: — I'm saying the resource workers would be more off reserve and that you're talking about that report within the ministry, and then if there are resource workers on reserve, they would be part of the agency program, reporting to them.

Ms. Kirkland: — That's correct.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Yes. I'm curious. This had come up I think in Public Accounts and my colleague asked me to get some more verification on this in terms of some of the CBOs [community-based organization] that have a mandate to work largely with First Nations children who happen to be, who are off reserve and may be getting . . . I'm not sure. Are there CBOs that have a mandate to work, or maybe they don't have a

mandate to work only with First Nations, but their clientele is largely First Nations and therefore they may get funding federally? Are there such CBOs as that?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes, there are. Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — Because they are getting, because they're working with First Nations clientele?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I can't speak to the rules or the restrictions that a federal government would have around a program, but that would sound likely.

Mr. Forbes: — Would you know, what would be some of the organizations like that?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — The answer is, we can't you give a specific agency but there are federal programs that a CBO may apply for, for funding. And so in the case of CBOs in the North, the likelihood is most of the children would be First Nations, but that's just because of the demographics of our province.

Mr. Forbes: — And some urban communities I think in Regina or Saskatoon as well that may be providing . . . CUMFI [Central Urban Métis Federation Inc.] might come to mind, you know, that they don't receive any federal funding.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I don't believe they do. I believe they're fully provincially funded. I believe so.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Now CUMFI is an interesting one because they do get a lot of, obviously, mandate or direction from the Métis community, only it's, you know, straightforward.

So what we were trying to understand is if there are organizations, community-based organizations that are getting provincial funding for some program delivery and federal funding for some program delivery to First Nations. Are there such beasts? And there might be some in the North. There might be some in the urban communities. But you're not sure of that.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Provincially we don't have that restriction. I can't speak to the federal programs. I would say they probably are more likely to make them available to northern communities in which case, as I said earlier, the demographics would likely be more First Nations. But we don't have that restriction at all provincially.

Mr. Forbes: — So what I'm looking at . . . And clearly in your group of the CBO organizations, and you're anticipating spending some 87.5 million on them . . . What are some of those organizations? What are some of those large organizations that would be . . . I mean there would be the foster family.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Egadz actually has become quite large now in the number of programs that they offer. So it's not necessarily a huge organization, but they deliver quite a number of programming for us now. So that would be one. What's some other larger allocations of money?

Mr. Acton: — I'd just add that on the question about whether they get federal money or not, we would . . . On any of our contracts there's a requirement for the agency to file their financial statements. I mean we'd pick it up at that level to make sure that we weren't funding the same child twice.

Mr. Forbes: — Twice, right.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Just quickly looking at the list, Four Directions child and family services is a big provider for us. Eagle's Nest, Ranch Ehrlo come to mind. I'm looking for where CUMFI is on the list. I don't see it, but I'm sure looking up . . . Oh here they are. They are quite large. Like they are quite a large allocation of money and funding because of the programming they provide. I know from working with them and expanding them considerably when I was minister last, they run a number of the apartment-style homes now. So their services are quite essential. Foxvalley Counselling here in Regina is another one that does a lot of services for us. John Howard Society is another one that does a lot of services for us. So those are just a handful.

[20:30]

Mr. Forbes: — How much will Four Directions be getting? What's their allocation?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Their allocation for 2015-16 will be 2.067 million.

Mr. Forbes: — And so my question was, what I was trying to get at, and I think what was trying to happen in Public Accounts . . . But I wasn't there. I think the deputy may have been there. But were there . . . how do First Nations . . . If these folks are working with First Nations children, what kind of role do the agencies have in making sure that they're doing their programming or in a cultural appropriate way, that there's some input or some collaboration I guess is the word I'm looking for here?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I think it's again going back to your relationship building. And many of these organizations — and you'd identified CUMFI as a Métis organization — because they're community-based organizations that we work with so extensively, these are individuals in the community. And many of them are, their makeup is First Nations or Métis people and so therefore they're preferred by First Nations agencies because of the culturally sensitive issues. So that's not to say that there isn't feuds in the families. That can happen. But generally those organizations that we have increased either services and subsequently funding to is because they are widely accepted. The services they give is quite exceptional and we're seeing results, positive results, and the First Nations agencies want to see positive results as well.

Mr. Forbes: — Now you mentioned one I wasn't familiar with, Foxvalley. What is Foxvalley?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I'm sorry. I missed that.

Mr. Forbes: — Foxvalley, what is that?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Foxvalley is here in Regina. I have

actually just met with them not all that long ago, and they do counselling. They work with mental health issues. They do some Housing First type initiatives. And I'm going to let Tammy describe further what Foxvalley does, but I was also informed that the First Nations agencies do do cultural training for CBOs as well.

Ms. Kirkland: — Foxvalley provides intensive in-home supports is one of the main contracts we have with them, and that is additional supports and services delivered in families' homes directly with those families to help maintain their children in their care versus having to go to foster care or alternate care placements.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. And would they be largely doing First Nations and Métis families, or would they be right across the board?

Ms. Kirkland: — They would be across the board, but again it would depend on the demographics but status-blind as far as the contract.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes. Now do they bring anything special to the table? Is this something that when you're talking about CBOs, I don't know what they're . . . not having ever heard of . . . [inaudible] . . . Yes. Okay.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — It's a First Nations agency. They are seeing results and it's part of our . . . When I did my address on the flexible response, it is the ministry going into the flexible response where we're working more intensely with the families to try to keep them whole before they go into crisis and before children have to come into care, which is one of our initiatives that we put in place to bring the number of children coming into care down.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Interesting. Good. So one of the things as I was just doing my research, Jordan's Principle came up and some of the new initiatives. Actually it's February 10th. I didn't realize this until actually yesterday when I was just googling and we were talking about this, but there has been some deep concerns about how the implementation of Jordan's Principle has been since 2009. I think it was 2007 that the House of Commons passed the unanimous resolution, and things have not quite gone as people were hoping it would. And so there was this report done by folks from McGill. And actually our former children's advocate, Marv Bernstein, I think was part of this group.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Okay. So this takes me back to the days when I was minister in the past. And at that time we accepted Jordan's Principle as a province, even though we really didn't have cases that required the fundamentals of Jordan's Principle to come into play. For those who aren't aware, Jordan was a very sick child in Manitoba who wanted to have his final days at home, and there was kind of a crapping match between the province of Manitoba and the federal government as to who will pay. So the principle is that in that case, you know, someone needs to pay and then talk about who's responsible later. We haven't really had a challenge in that . . . of a medical issue with a First Nations child that I'm aware of where we've been in dispute with the federal government over who's going to pay for that child's expenses

or where that child is. So it hasn't been something that's been highlighted or brought to my attention.

Mr. Forbes: — Interesting. I mean part of the issue that they're saying is that it's a bigger picture than that and it's not just health or medical, even though that's where it stemmed out of. And that's been maybe the stumbling block from the federal perspective, is that the definition is much too narrow and they may be taking the medical definition. No, I think the lead department here in Saskatchewan is the Health department.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Possibly it's Health lead, but I know I did as the Social Services minister, and I distinctly did say that if it is a life-and-death or a quality of . . . distinctive, critical quality of life is what we would agree to the principle. We were not agreeing to all things, all services. In my mind, that just lets the federal government off the hook and allows them to download.

There are a number of incidents where we do fund things on reserve. It's a case-by-case decision. We have funded housing on reserve when it comes to Whitecap. We funded a school on reserve at Tumor Lake and we are funding or were going to or in discussion of funding some early learning programming. However the federal government's now said that they are going to continue the early learning programming on reserve for now. But I was very, very definitive that, in accepting Jordan's Principle, we were not accepting all programming on-reserve should the federal government pull out of their responsibility. So as I said, we haven't had an incident that's critical life or death but . . . and I know there are those that would like it to expand all services regardless, and that's a huge, costly decision that we've never made as a government.

Mr. Forbes: — So, and I understand that perspective, having been on the other side of that and it is a slippery slope for sure, but have you had any discussions or do you have any sense that the federal government is . . . First, were they anticipating that they might get off the hook by using Jordan's Principle? And is there, have you had any success in having them accept more of their responsibility? Because we see them not stepping up and providing equitable services to First Nations student . . . well, children.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — And I'm going to take off my Social Services hat and put on a memory hat of being Education. That's where you really see a gap and it does exist. It's not just talked about. It really, truly does exist in the funding for education on-reserve and off-reserve.

I think early learning years are extremely critical, especially in our northern communities where there's less exposure just because of, you know, isolated villages and whatnot. I think it's very concerning. If they do pull out of the early learning funding it's a huge concern to us as a province and the future of the First Nations. So is it a huge problem? Not yet, but it's one to watch and definitely continue. And I know the Premier has those one-on-one conversations with the Prime Minister that this is problematic to Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan's future because this is our future. We have a lot of First Nations children.

Mr. Forbes: — So in terms of the, you know . . . and I've seen

and appreciate your comments around education that it's so evident, but in terms of these delegated agreements where you're passing through the money from the federal government to the agencies . . . Is that right?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — No. If we show that the delegation agreement is in place, the money goes directly from the federal government to the agency. It doesn't pass through the province. Right.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. So are you aware of how much money the First Nations are getting?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I'm going to say it's public, but I'm going to look to the officials for that.

Okay. So apparently they don't have to tell us.

Mr. Forbes: — And so it's not public and so you . . . Okay.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I think there has to be some mechanism, I would think, in . . .

Mr. Forbes: — Through Public Accounts federally.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Through whatever the federal counterpart of Public Accounts is, but they don't send us an accounting. They don't send it to us.

Mr. Forbes: — And where I'm going at with this is a sense of the inequity, or is there an inequity . . . We've seen it in education. Now it was the First Nations who kind of blew the lid off when I think the FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] demonstrated how much off-reserve kids were getting and what on-reserve kids were getting. But do we know how much support off-reserve kids are getting through Child and Family Services versus what on-reserve kids are getting? Is there a big gap there?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Again I'm going to go back in corporate memory here. And when I asked for these numbers — and I cannot remember how I accessed them when I was minister last time — the gap wasn't as stark as it is in education. In child and family, however, that's something maybe we should try and do a little digging again and see where we're at now, because as you know, our government's increased our funding for our children considerably over the last few years. So where are we at now? And I don't know if we're aware, and Tammy might tell me I'm wrong.

I'm not totally wrong, but she has more information.

Ms. Kirkland: — Okay, two things. Just to the funding, the agency funding from the federal government, what we do know at this point is it's funded based on the number of children under age 18 and it's a formula funding. So it would vary based on the demographics again, okay.

To the other question about equity or inequity, there is currently a federal tribunal going on looking at on-reserve funding. And it's Cindy Blackstock out of the United States who has been working on that, and I don't believe there's been any results or that they're finished their work yet, but it was looking at that

question.

[20:45]

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Should they pull out of this early learning that I mentioned earlier, I think that gap will be quite noticeable.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. And this gets back to the Jordan's Principle, where I feel that in many ways kids who are at risk and really were in vulnerable circumstances because of whatever is happening in their family, whether they're on-reserve or off-reserve, it's a tragic circumstance and we need to do what we can. Now I'm not saying that we necessarily go provide top-up grants or whatever, but this is something that really we have to be aware of.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — One thing we do do, and I don't know whether you're aware of, if we have a child off-reserve that then goes on-reserve, we pay.

Mr. Forbes: — If they're off-reserve and then they go on-reserve?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — We find the resources for them on-reserve. We will pay for that child regardless.

Mr. Forbes: — And when a child comes off who is on-reserve and then comes off, you pay, right?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — We pay.

Mr. Forbes: — You pay. Right. Okay. And then is there any continuation of the . . . Even if they are clearly identified with a certain band, does the band have any input once they're off-reserve and they are living in the city?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Some. And relationships with some bands are better than others, but I look to — and again this is both social services and education — to the Saskatoon Tribal Council and the amount of work that we do with them. And actually there's a lot of work done with the Yorkton Tribal Council, now that I'm thinking of the different tribal councils. So we're not looking for them for providing the services necessarily, but I think . . .

Mr. Forbes: — La Ronge would be another one.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — La Ronge is another one that does work for us off-reserve. So yes, it's not every single band that we have a great working relationship with, but those relationship building is quite important and best for the kids.

Mr. Forbes: — Absolutely.

Mr. Acton: — If I might just go back, around the funding on-reserve and off, one of the areas that comes into dispute is the amount of funding that the federal government provides for prevention services as opposed to child protection services. And so if you talk to somebody with the federal government, they'll say, well yes, when you kind of line it all up, we provide equivalent dollars or something equivalent to what's spent off-reserve. When you talk to an agency, they'll say it's the

preventative side that they get into arguments with their funder about in terms of how much funding they get and how it can be allocated or where it's spent. And I'm sure that the answer is somewhere in the middle of that, but there's certainly different perspectives on how much funding is available on the preventative side.

Of course on off-reserve, we're moving more and more and more to the preventative side because that seems to be where we can get ahead of this. If we can avoid taking a child into care and provide that support in the home, it's better for that child. It's better for the family, and it's certainly better for us in terms of paying the bills.

Mr. Forbes: — Now I wanted just to ask, the recommendations from *Jake's Story*, there were seven of them, and if you could speak to where you're at with those seven recommendations.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — For the report I have, the answer is two. There's two tragedies.

Mr. Forbes: — Have I got the wrong report?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I'm sorry. I'll turn to the officials because I have the answer for a different Children's Advocate report, but I don't have the answer to that one.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — For *Jake's Story*, at this time five of the seven recommendations from the *Lost in the System* report have been completed by the ministry. The remaining two recommendations are in progress. So recommendation no. 1:

That the Ministry of Social Services complete a study that includes a review and analysis of the number of moves children and youth experience in out-of-home care and to provide a report to the Advocate.

The quality assurance unit began tracking the number of moves experienced by children in care as part of their annual file reviews in 2012, so we are seeing improvement in this. And recommendation no. 3:

That the Government of Saskatchewan amend *The Child and Family Services Act* (or any legislation replacing this Act) or its regulations for the licensing of foster homes.

And well that's a whole conversation I'm sure you want to entertain on the licensing of foster homes, and I'm sure we're going to agree to disagree, but let's see where this goes.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. So those are the two. And then the others are done, you're saying.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Are done.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. And we'll talk more later about the Linkin database. But just for the next few minutes, I guess this gets back to my earlier discussion around quality assurance and licensing of foster homes and one way of having some sort of annual review or something of a foster home. And it doesn't necessarily have to be a negative; it can be a positive. But it is

something that can almost be a source of pride if you've got your licence, you know.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Okay. Our foster families in Saskatchewan are approved by the ministry following a very rigorous process of screening and home safety assessment. So there is background checks, both criminal and child abuse record checks. There's reference checks where they have to provide five references, and we do our own checks with schools and other family members. And there's home safety checks to ensure fire and general safety requirements are met.

Foster families have to participate in 30 hours of required PRIDE training, which is the parent resources for information, development, and education is what PRIDE stands for. They have pre-service training sessions and complete first aid and CPR [cardiopulmonary resuscitation] level B training prior to placement of a child in their home. The families are observed during training to ensure that they understand their role as foster parents and to better assess their attitudes and parenting abilities. And the foster families' parents must be recertified in first aid and CPR level B every three years.

Each foster family is assigned a resource worker who is required to visit the foster family a minimum of every six months as well as complete a formal review with each foster family annually to assess their capacity, skills, and abilities to ensure that they continue to meet the ministry standards. Foster home agreements are also reviewed and signed annually to signify ongoing approval.

Now having said all that, there are a few provinces, and I used to know off the top of my head of which provinces have licencing — okay, Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario — and their requirements are not necessarily as vigorous as ours in order to qualify. So they have a licence, but what does that mean? You know, are they meeting the standards that we have? And we feel that we've set some pretty high standards.

My concern isn't that the licence would be a sense of pride. I think it would be a sense of . . . I don't want it to be perceived as a barrier where the perception is that it's something hanging over your head that we'll take away, even though if you don't meet all these other qualifications, we're going to anyways.

It's extremely hard to get foster homes right now, and that's not just the Saskatchewan experience. It is almost a global experience in any developed country, and there's a number of facts of why that is. We have more two-parent working families. We have families that the lifestyles, you know, change very much to two children. We don't want to have four or five in our home. There's just a number of reasons why getting foster families is harder.

I don't want to license just for licensing sake. I do want to have very rigorous regulations in place to ensure the quality of our foster homes. And as you mentioned, they need to be checked to ensure that they are in compliance. But licensing for licensing's sake does not make sense to me, and it becomes a bureaucratic . . . something.

Mr. Forbes: — Do they have to be approved annually? Do you do reviews? How often? So that is done annually.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — That's done annually, and they're checked biannually.

Mr. Forbes: — I'm not even sure what the difference is. We may be just arguing semantics here because it sounds like they are essentially licensed.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — There's qualifications that they must meet. We don't license per se, but we do have a very rigorous set of regulations and qualifications that they must comply with. And the training is . . . Well we were the first in Canada I believe to have this PRIDE training, and then we implemented a cultural component to it as well. I think it's being adopted now by some other provinces. But it's pretty intense training and a lot of hours of training.

Mr. Forbes: — Now when the Children's Advocate, he talks about, you know, accountability and improving public confidence, maybe is there . . . One of the areas you check is around the rights. Are the rights and interests and well-being of children being respected? I assume that there's some way to check that in the foster care home. Is there a way to, I mean whether it's . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — We do a children's rights impact assessment, and I'm going to get Tammy to explain what that means.

Mr. Forbes: — It just seems to me — and I know we're getting close to 9 o'clock — but that we're so darn close, whether it's just a language thing. It sounds like they are licensed really, and they could lose that licence. They get reviewed for that. What do you call it? Do they get a permit? Do they get a . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — They're regulated and they're . . .

Mr. Forbes: — But they must get a piece of paper. Do you refer to the paper . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I think they do for the PRIDE training. I do believe they get a certificate acknowledging their training. But as far as all the background checks and all these other things, no they don't.

Mr. Forbes: — But they must get a letter that they get in the mail to say you are approved.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — We just bring them a bunch of kids.

Mr. Forbes: — So I think I just want to say that because . . . I mean it sounds pretty close.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — In fact it's more rigorous than some provinces that are licensing. The other thing, I guess — and I'll be having this conversation obviously with the Children's Advocate — the provinces that have gone to licensing have not seen improvements. Like it doesn't improve . . . The qualification that you put in place is what's going to make or break the quality of these homes. So it is semantics. However we're going to get this explained.

Ms. Kirkland: — Just on the children's rights impact assessment, that's a tool that we use when we're developing

policies or programs to determine what is the impact to the rights of the child. So that list of rights, how would this policy impact? How would it affect? That would have been taken into consideration when we develop our policies around foster homes and everything else that we do.

Mr. Forbes: — Well if you call it a licence or a certificate, I think that would work because I mean . . . But I think there's got to be something. And I think it does have a public confidence. I understand that maybe I would not expect to see then an improvement necessarily, but there probably was an improvement when you did all these other things.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes, we believe there is, but I mean there still is some incidents and there's still more to learn as we go forward.

Mr. Forbes: — I have more questions about this but, if we want to take a quick break right now, this would be good time.

The Chair: — It's 8:58. The minister and everybody would like a quick break, so if we can be back here in 15 minutes, that would be awesome.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

The Chair: — We're ready to go again, so Mr. Forbes, I believe you have the floor.

Mr. Forbes: — One group that I would like to talk about licensing, and it's a little bit more, or registering, and I think it's critical, and it's around social workers. And I want to read a quote from you. This is in the Humboldt paper, I think. "Harpauer, provincial government recognize social workers." And in the quote it says:

"In our province, our government has increased the number of workers within the Ministry of Social Services alone by 90 more workers," Harpauer added. "We also have social workers in education, we have social workers in health, there is a number of roles they play within our society."

So my question would be, why, in that quote, when you talk about within Social Services that you've added 90 more workers, but you refer to them as workers and not social workers?

[21:15]

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — You have to be registered with the SASW [Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers] to be called a social worker, and it's not mandatory in the Ministry of Social Services.

Mr. Forbes: — So I think this is something that really . . . And you know, I've talked to some social workers and different folks, you know, and I come out of education where it's important to be a teacher. A teacher is the only one who can teach in schools, actually. Sometimes, you know, I won't say joke but I mean it's sort of the odd thing. Anybody can be an educator but only certain people can be teachers. You have to have a degree, you have to be registered, you know. And it's the

same with so many professions. And we're having this debate in the House right now around teachers and their whole professionalism. We're setting up a new system for how they be registered. And so why is it that Social Services does not have any requirement to have any social workers in the ministry?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — So it isn't wide open. In order to do child and family, child protection services, they have to have a social work degree, so there is a restriction.

I met with social workers in the past when I had this file and I've met with them since I've been reassigned and, you know, heard their argument of belonging to the professional association. I wish that, and I talked about that with them, that they had more support from those workers that have the degree. And I know and I understand because in the past I was also in a profession where there was an association and it was mandatory that I belong to that association in order to practise in a hospital. I need to work more on the other side too to find out their rationale of why they're not joining their association, like what do they see as not an asset. Because I felt, even though it was mandatory, I felt the association I belonged to was an asset. And I think if they would explore, the workers that are not interested in joining the association, I think if they would explore it, they should find it as an asset.

So I haven't taken the time, to be honest, yet to explore both sides of the story because it is a large percentage that are not joining the association. So why is that? So is it . . . Again never say never that we will make it mandatory, but I think we need to look at both sides of those that are in the association, those that are not, and why not.

Mr. Forbes: — Right. Now part of it is a requirement, you know. Public schools require teachers to have a certificate, and I'm not quite sure how that fits, you know — now it's many years ago — how it fits into that whole thing. But it was a requirement. It wasn't an option. But here within Health, when they have a . . . [inaudible] . . . and they are very clear that if you are doing the type of work or the scope of practice that a social worker would do, they have to belong to their professional organization, and the same, I think, within Education. They have social workers, and it's very clear who are the social workers, who are the EAs [educational assistants], who are the teachers. And I think sometimes we get some confusion happening around that.

And so I'm wondering. Are you going to be looking at this? I mean because part of it is a requirement of the employer to belong to the professional organization.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — It isn't on my top priority list because there is of course a number of very pressing issues, and you're aware of those. Is it something that I have already entertained discussions on to give consideration to the answers? Yes, I've had that meeting, and I'll probably have more.

With the social workers in Health, I'm almost positive they need to belong to the association. I'm not sure in Education. I think so, but I can't definitively say that is the case.

Mr. Forbes: — And with, you know, such a so much smaller number than in the other areas as well.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — And I know that you are . . . And there's a couple of other pieces here. You're working on a code of conduct, I understand?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes, we are.

Mr. Forbes: — And so this was a story that came out just in February, that the Ministry of Social Services is in early stages of drafting a professional code of conduct for its employees, and this is expected to be in place in about six months. So how is that playing out? And again this sort of plays back into the ethics of a social worker and I think that's an important area here that needs to be looked at. So how is the code of conduct happening?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — And I'll get my officials to answer that question.

Ms. Kirkland: — So sorry, how is it happening?

Mr. Forbes: — Yes. You're starting. You've been working at it. It's a six months review. When did that start? When can we expect to see something here?

Ms. Kirkland: — So we have a working group that's looking at other code of conducts from other jurisdictions, other ministries in our own province that have them, and comparing it against the work that we do across the whole ministry. So it's a ministry-wide policy. So the working group began in January to draft a proposed code of conduct that we can then consult on with our stakeholders, being senior management, our union employees, our employees, and bring it forward for completion.

Mr. Forbes: — And have you looked across Canada for other examples of this kind of code of conduct?

Ms. Kirkland: — We have.

Mr. Forbes: — And now do other ministries require their people who do social work be social workers?

Ms. Kirkland: — I'm sorry. I don't know which other Canadian jurisdictions have mandatory social work registration, but our code of conduct won't just be for those in the child protection area that have a social work degree. It will be for all in the ministry, so income assistance workers, disability, all. Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Are there any employees that you have within the ministry that must belong to a professional organization?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Accountants and nurses, and I think that might be all. The officials are just discussing this. But we have, in CLD we have nurses.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes. Okay, I was anticipating the accountants would be as well. And is that a requirement? That is a requirement. And so . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Correct.

Mr. Forbes: — I mean when I meant to ask that, sometimes the employer doesn't get a choice either because the accountants will say, I'm not going to work for you unless I can belong to my organization, you know, and that's fair enough, and so it's a mutual thing. So I really would be interested in hearing if you are taking this up, the discussions around this, because I think this is a real area, not only in child and family services, but also with poverty reductions, disabilities, any area where social workers feel like they want to make an impact professionally, that this is their profession. This is what they do. This is what they went to school for. And it seemed to me that it's a real calling.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes, and it will continue to be considered. Again there's quite a number that are not belonging to their profession, so the discussion needs to be as to why. But they are, as professional they have their degree; they have their education in the same level. So I know in my own organization, when I used to belong to a professional organization, there was a lot of education and professional improvement and development material that would come forward, and I found that very constructive. So we need to continue the discussion with the social workers and gain an understanding of what the majority would desire.

Mr. Forbes: — Now part of this I have heard, and particularly from at the national level, that there's certain, I'm not sure if requirements is the right word, but for example the number of caseloads that a social worker or somebody who's trained, who has a social work degree . . . Now at what level, what do you call somebody who is required to have a social work degree but is not called a social worker? Because actually technically nobody in the department can be called a social worker. Am I right on that?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — So just to give you an idea or some more information, we pay for the registration for those that want to belong to the organization. Sixty-two of the workers do, and there's 468 workers. So it's pretty significant of those that are choosing not to, even though there's no financial hardship to them to belong to the organization. Having said that, so we call them child protection workers.

Mr. Forbes: — And they're the only ones in the ministry who are required to have a social work degree.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — In the child protection.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. I'm not talking about the whole ministry.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Correct. You are not. We have people that work in income assistance that do not have their social work degrees. Yes. Community living has . . . well there is some with their degrees in the other areas, but it's not all of the workers in the other areas.

Mr. Forbes: — And these are positions that they're required to have a social work degree.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — In child and family protection, they are all required. And then in CLD, there's some requirement, some that are required. And I think in income assistance there are some as well. No, just in . . .

Mr. Forbes: — Child protection. Okay.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — And CLD.

Mr. Forbes: — And so some of the 62, are they front line? They are child protection workers or are some of those who belong to the association in other positions?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Right. So for the specifics on where the HR [human resources] positions are, I'm going to turn it over to the officials.

Ms. Kirkland: — So the 62 that are registered out of the 468 child and family program positions, I don't have the breakdown of the actual position, but that 468 refers to our front-line workers, our assistant supervisors, and our supervisors.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay, and the 62 . . .

Ms. Kirkland: — Are in there.

Mr. Forbes: — Are in that mix somewhere.

Ms. Kirkland: — Correct.

Mr. Forbes: — And so I would . . . Because sometimes what we hear — and where I'm going with this is around caseloads — that it's impossible to do this because, you know, the caseloads are too high and the national standards of what a social worker's expected to do would be difficult to manage. But I'm hearing that really that may not be a barrier.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — What we are going to be working on is . . . Because yes. No. Yes and no to your question; how's that for a definitive non-answer? We have reduced the on average because we've added social workers. So on average, we have reduced caseloads. What we probably need to do better is assessing the caseloads. So if there are caseloads where you only need to do a visit every two weeks or once a month because it's stable, it's been there for a while, and you have a number of those, you could maybe handle 20, you know, because you're just making one visit a month.

The complex caseloads, we need to ensure that there isn't an overload with one specific worker on complex caseloads.

[21:30]

So I think there's work we can do there. And it's not going to be a standard number; it's going to deal with the cases themselves and how intense and complex they are, especially as we move more and more down the path, and we're going to, on prevention and supports before the crisis. That's going to, in some families, take pretty intense intervention. So on average we've decreased the caseload.

Is there still workers that because of the complexity of their case, even though its decreased, is still hard? I would say yes. There are still those cases.

Mr. Forbes: — Well I just think that . . . and I was encouraged to see when you were talking about earlier, and I'm not sure what the youth transition program, where you're talking about

caseloads of eight or something like that, but that would be, they're only going to be there for not a long period of time, not many years. I don't know how long the transition occurs. But then people are really actually I think practising their profession as social workers. So this I think I would really, I would really hope and encourage you.

And there's a piece that Marvin Bernstein wrote a few years ago called *The Challenge of Professionalizing Child Protection Workers and Retaining the Title of Social Worker*. And I think it just, you know, it's something that could be I think really, I think could make a real difference. But I'd be curious, if you're going to do that checking in with, why aren't people registering? And because I just feel like the workers who have do a phenomenal job and, to me, I as a teacher belonged to a professional organization. I don't see . . . I just see a disconnect and I don't know why that is.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes, and there does seem to be a disconnect between . . . obviously those numbers are pretty significant of the numbers that are not registering, and yet we will pay for their registration. So it's a conversation that needs to be had.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes, I think that the good work that Social Services does, they should have social workers and, you know, there should be a sense of pride. And even though there will always be challenges, I mean that's just the challenge of the kind of work that they do. But anyway, so I think that's hugely important.

I wanted to just also connect on the Linkin system because you did talk about that, the \$5.8 million. Now that is an operating process or is there . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — So the Linkin process. The Linkin, again for listeners coming in, the Linkin is our IT [information technology] system, and that existed prior to track children in the province. And so when I was minister last, I introduced or made the announcement that we were going to implement a system.

And God bless IT because it seems like every time as you start to delve into it, it costs more and more as you start to get components and programming and everything in place. So it's been a work in progress over a number of years now. I'm being told that this will be the last year, that we actually will have the system completed and everything online that we were hoping to have online, which is why there is a reduction of why we don't need as much to complete the system this year as we have in the past where basically we're building the system.

However I am very IT challenged, so I'm going to give any details further from those comments to the officials to address because I probably will not give you a very technical answer.

Mr. Acton: — So the funding you see in the budget this year is in fact to finish up the financial project. And that, you know, is on target, and we expect that this fall that'll be completed and we'll be live. We're already doing a bit of testing to make sure that it works. Those accountants we have in our ministry are pretty strict when you're working with a financial system to make sure that it performs perfectly, and we will make sure that

that happens. But that's the piece we're on now.

We've built all of this with the idea that we'll have the capacity to actually run all our cases on this. So we started with child and family; originally that's what the thought was. And then we realized actually we could have one system that would manage all our cases, whether it's child and family or income assistance and whatever range that is. So some of the foundation work was to build a pretty solid foundation, then get our child and family cases working. So we've had that going now for a couple of years. And Tammy can talk a little bit about the benefits we're starting to see with that system. And it is starting to become really pretty impressive in terms of what we're now starting to get back in terms of our care for children.

So we've got that piece going. The next piece was to build the financials. And again we're building it in a way that can handle all our financial payments. At this point all that we'll have on it is on the child and the family side. So we issue about 5 to 6,000 payments every month to a range of providers, whether it's an individual foster home or a day program that your colleague mentioned earlier that had some delays. So all of that will be done electronically, and we will be able to shut off a very old payment system that we're currently using.

So that's the work this year, and then we will take a pause and make sure that everything is humming along the way it should be. And we can have further discussions about how we might simplify the income assistance programs, what those look like. There's lots of work I think that needs to be done there before you'd ever want to try to automate it. We just want to make sure that we know what we're building. We've got lots of programs there, and I think those need some review before we go forward on that side.

So this year we expect the bulk of that work to be done, as I say, in the fall, probably the end of October. November we should be done on the financial side and it should be going live. And that will be the bulk of our spend.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — The positive thing, of course, it'll cost more than the original announcement of what we were going to invest in this system, but by expanding it into all of our programs is often we're dealing with the same family, you know, so that's helpful.

Mr. Acton: — So, Tammy, do you want to just talk a little bit about the child . . .

Ms. Kirkland: — Sure I can. So I'll give you some sort of high-level statements about how it's improved in child and family programs, but then I have a few examples of how Linkin has actually made a difference in the life of specific children. So I'd like to share a few of those as well.

So at the sort of high level, it provides greater access to extended family members. We can identify them, who's out there that could be a support. It's meant more informed case planning because the information is there. It's at easy reach. If we're transitioning between regions or workers, that information is there versus having to wait for a paper flow to happen. It's improved post-care planning, supports, and development of lasting relationships.

So again, what resources are out there that would make sense for those children? Better medical and educational needs are managed. We're able to take in and store information that is important to the education system when we have children in care. Less disruptive services to family. Improved communication flow with caregivers, with foster parents, making sure that we're giving them the information they need on children that are coming into care.

So some specific examples of how Linkin has impacted children. We had a three-year-old who was brought into emergency, receiving care in March of last year, where her mother had a very long history of drug abuse and was a long-term victim of domestic violence. Reunification of this young child with her mother was limited despite extensive work with the mother to support her. The challenge was to find an emergency placement that could also provide long-term stable care for this child.

Through Linkin we were able to identify that there were a number of siblings that had previously come into, had previously become permanent wards and the location of their foster parent. Quick action could then be taken to assess this young girl's needs with the strengths of the foster parents caring for some of her siblings, and she was placed in that same home. So we were able to re-unite a sibling group. All the siblings were now developing healthy relationships and are in that home today currently. One more, if I may?

Mr. Forbes: — Sure.

Ms. Kirkland: — So recently we had an interprovincial transfer from Alberta with no information on the child's situation. It often takes weeks to receive this information, if it comes at all. Meanwhile services are compromised due to the lack of information about the family history and relationship.

However with the implementation of Linkin it was discovered that this family had previously been involved with Saskatchewan child protection services two years earlier. And Linkin had the background information on the family that assisted with conducting an assessment and ensuring the most beneficial services were in place to help address the issues of domestic violence, which we wouldn't have been aware of. The family was connected to counselling services and the children were provided their own counselling. In addition with the information on Linkin, the ministry was able to more effectively determine which services would be of greatest benefit since they had the results of past involvement and could evaluate what was successful and build on the strengths of that family.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay, good. Thanks. So now when we talked last year there was a discussion about the licence. There was a licensing fee for Linkin, I think. Is that right?

Mr. Acton: — Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — And who owns the licence, or who do you license from?

Mr. Acton: — We license from IBM [International Business Machines Corporation].

Mr. Forbes: — IBM.

Mr. Acton: — It was originally Cúram was the name of the company, and IBM bought them.

Mr. Forbes: — So what is the licence, how much is the annual fee?

Mr. Acton: — So our licence, we have a thousand licences that we purchased in 2009 and in 2011 for \$4.5 million. And then we have an annual maintenance fee that we pay, and the annual maintenance fee is \$710,000. And then there's a second fee, as it relates to the SDM, the structured decision making, which is also a licensed product. There the annual maintenance is 400, just over 400,000, \$403,000. The actual licence itself was just over \$2 million.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. And is Linkin accessible on reserve? Can the agencies access this?

Mr. Acton: — No. We have it available in La Ronge and La Ronge uses the system for off reserve but I don't believe they're using it for their on-reserve children yet. We're certainly interested in moving down that path. Some of it is a willingness on the particular agency and of course invariably we run into discussions with the federal government about who should fund the costs and the licences as it relates to on reserve. So we still have some of those challenges.

Mr. Forbes: — Right. And how many staff are in the Linkin unit?

Mr. Acton: — Pardon me?

Mr. Forbes: — How many staff are in the Linkin unit?

Mr. Acton: — Well on the build side, just in terms of finishing up the work we're doing, there's about 32 full-time equivalents working on finishing off all of those, that financial work. About 14 or 15 are staff within the Ministry of Social Services or with Central Services, with the IT division there. And there's the equivalent of about 18 consultants that are working, just depending on the particular project they're on or a particular piece of time, but that's the equivalent. So some days on the IT side they may have more people working on coding or doing whatever it is that those consultants do to make the system work, but it works out to about 18 full-time staff there. So it's 32 and of course that will drop significantly once the financials are completed.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes. So you're anticipating down to 14? Is that right?

Mr. Acton: — Well and a number of those 14 will go back to their home positions as well. So we've brought them from other parts of the ministry to work specifically on this project so many of those will revert back to their home positions. Your other question is probably how many on an ongoing basis we have just to keep this running and I just need to check on that.

Mr. Forbes: — Right.

[21:45]

Mr. Acton: — We have six folks in the child and family service division that supports ongoing operation and works with staff. And we have I believe four on the corporate side, just handling calls that a worker might place if they're struggling with the system or they can't get it to do what it should do.

Mr. Forbes: — So now what has been the total cost? What do you anticipate at the end of the day the total cost of Linkin will be?

Mr. Acton: — As of March 31st, 2015, \$57.2 million. And of course we've allocated \$5.8 million this year.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you. Now I want to move now to, and I know our time is getting close so there's a couple of really quick questions. And then I want to ask a question about community living and just a really . . . Valley View, sorry, community living. Thanks. Thank you. So earlier you had talked about the three homes or units the minister had talked about in terms of, that were being built. And I think we actually had the supplementary estimates discussion in December about them. And at that point I asked about the union and about the transition, what was happening there. And the comment was made that in fact the people could apply for those positions, that that would be relatively straightforward. But I understand it may not be quite as straightforward as that. What CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees] union, what is the local for the CUPE in Valley View right now?

Mr. Martinook: — Yes, it's 600-3, six hundred and then dash three.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. And these homes that are being created, they are also CUPE. Are they also 600-3?

Mr. Martinook: — Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — They are. Okay, just to verify that. Okay, so it's a pretty much internal posting or bidding for these three. And how many positions are there amongst the three homes? One's open?

Mr. Martinook: — Well one and a half.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Well let's start with that, the ones that are open. The positions that are available right now, how many are there?

Mr. Martinook: — Okay. Saskatoon has 20 FTEs or 20 positions. Right now we're running a home on Marfield crescent in Moose Jaw that has approximately 10. It will have half, and that will move to Brigham Road this summer when Brigham Road opens. So we'll close Marfield, open Brigham, so there'll be 20 positions there as well.

Mr. Forbes: — And then when the third one comes open?

Mr. Martinook: — Well the third one, we're just proposing it. We haven't initiated it. We have another group home in Moose Jaw called Athabasca, and there's 11 positions there as well, but that's . . . [inaudible].

Mr. Forbes: — How many of those positions are being filled

by people who formerly worked at Valley View? Do you know?

Mr. Martinook: — All of the positions at Athabasca are former Valley View employees, so they're all. All the employees at Marfield right now, so that's 11, are all from Valley View. And I believe the home in Saskatoon, if I remember correctly, I believe there's two out of the 20 in Saskatoon.

Mr. Forbes: — Is it a relocation issue and stuff like that?

Mr. Martinook: — Yes. We did have a couple leave from Moose Jaw and go to Saskatoon.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Is there any support in relocating to Saskatoon for this? Because I mean it is work, and there would be benefit for obviously some continuity. I don't know if that ever came up, or that discussion.

Mr. Martinook: — No, we didn't provide any compensation for that.

Mr. Forbes: — Now you talked earlier about Valley View and the transition that's happening. At the end of this year, how many residents will be in . . . In March of 2016, one year from now, what is the anticipated number?

Mr. Martinook: — We're working on transitions for a number of individuals. We're anticipating that we're going to be able to transition 30 individuals between now and the end of the fiscal year. And we would anticipate, unfortunately, that approximately six individuals will pass away, so the number would be down by 36. So we're at 176 right now, so it would be around 140 by next March.

Mr. Forbes: — And this is one of the areas that I've actually raised, is around palliative care for the folks at Valley View because I mean clearly it's a unique situation, and it's one that has specialized needs as we all age. And we feel that, and so that's a big deal. So how are you planning to deal with that?

Mr. Martinook: — You asked this question last year, I recall, and my answer is the same, I hope.

Mr. Forbes: — Good. Good. I thought maybe better. I don't know.

Mr. Martinook: — Yes. CLSD supports approximately 4,500 individuals. There's over 1,000 individuals who live in group homes and group living across the province, so we are already well experienced in living in place and aging in place, and so providing palliative care in the group home sector is not an unusual kind of activity. We're already engaging in those kinds of things, and that's what would be expected in our service delivery system that will be the replacement homes for the persons from Valley View. So I would expect . . . And they do deliver the same kinds of supports as it relates to palliative care that they would get in Valley View, utilizing either home care or other supports for those kinds of things.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Well thank you for that, and a pretty good answer this year too. So thank you. So what I just want to

quickly, if I could move on just quickly to the disability strategy and just talk briefly about that for a minute. And my question is, so it's gone through the public consultation stage, that you're anticipating a report in the end of May. Is that correct?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes, it should be close to that. They're working on a draft, or they've done their first draft and the group is working on now the actual report. I've seen some of the work and I've met with the group and we've discussed the work.

It's definitely all levels of government and community. It isn't just provincial government that they're looking at in this strategy. There will be some recommendations that will pertain to the federal government. There will be some recommendations that's going to pertain to municipal governments as well as the provincial government and society as a whole. So it's fairly broad and comprehensive. But I'm not sure. That's tentatively when we hope to see a final copy.

Mr. Forbes: — And then what will happen after that? You will get the copy. Now because you've mentioned that they'll be naming other groups — municipal governments, society as a whole type of thing — how will the response then . . . I assume then you'll plan a response to it, what the government intends to do with that.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — In the discussion, my understanding is they want to draft something that, you know, here's something that is sort of what they call a quick win.

There's other recommendations that they're going to look for, you know: can you respond to this in the next several years. So it's going to be again a work-in-progress. I think the response will be what . . . Obviously I can respond only on behalf of the provincial government and what we can maybe do quickly, realistically. I mean you know this process. There'll be things perhaps that we can dedicate and hopefully commit to in our next budget, although there's going to be an election that's going to happen before the next budget.

So you know, there'll be all of those sort of working pieces but I don't think, I'm not under the impression that the advisory committee is going to come forward with a document that's going to have, here's several recommendations; we want them completed by tomorrow. I think there's going to be recognition that some things will take a number of years to actually implement.

The municipal governments and the federal government, I mean they will hopefully . . . We'll be encouraging them to review the strategy and give it consideration as they make decisions going forward.

Mr. Forbes: — So the question I had, there was no money that was set aside in the budget, which I was disappointed because, you know, there may be some quick things that can happen, some quick wins that could happen in the fall or whatever. But there is no money set aside. That's a definite.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Correct. We did not. It was proposed and then, as you know . . . You yourself have served as minister and you know the budget process. So it is a tight year and the

treasury board decision was that we couldn't in a tight year set aside money for the what-ifs.

Now it is also a very large ministry with a significant budget, so there may be wins that we can have that are doable within our budget allocation that we have. And we'll have to wait for that report because considering if we did implement some of the recommendations, it's not for a full year allocation that we'd be looking at before we're into another budget. And that helps with the financial pressures as well, and hopefully we'll see some positive relief on the financial pressures that we're presently facing with the oil prices where they are.

Mr. Forbes: — Now do you anticipate any kind of legislation, any kind of other things that maybe we might see in the fall from this disability strat?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I don't believe so but I could be corrected. I'm being advised it wouldn't be in the fall because legislation, if we were going to have something in the fall, we would have to be working on it now and of course we don't have the report yet.

Mr. Forbes: — Fair enough. Good. All right then. Thank you, and we'll stay tuned and watch for that, but it is on time and it should be . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I believe so.

Mr. Forbes: — Late May? Is that what we're thinking?

Ms. Clark: — I believe we were looking a little later than that but . . .

Mr. Forbes: — Can you give a sense? Is it then early June?

Ms. Clark: — I think the date we were suggested was June.

Mr. Forbes: — June. Okay, there we go. Okay. Thank you so much for that then. Okay. Good.

So the other area I wanted to talk a little bit about was something that kind of caught us off guard, and I don't know if there are other things, and I could just ask you: are there going to be things that are going to catch us off guard at the end of the session, where we didn't have a sense it was coming?

And that was the social impact bonds last year when they were announced right at the last week of session, and estimates were all done and things like that, so we really didn't have a chance to talk about social impact bonds in estimates. And so I'm looking forward to hearing your thoughts on it. Clearly it was . . . You've got, you have a Legislative Secretary on this, and so what will her role be in terms of the social impact bonds?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — So her role, and she will be answerable to the Premier and not to myself as the minister, because it may not just be in the area of . . . although they're going to be for social issues, it may not be social issues within my ministry. It could be in Corrections. It could be in Economy, such as labour engagement. So and I'm actually thinking, because very much the social impact bond that we have put in place, the first in Canada, crosses a number of ministries,

although it's being overseen by the Ministry of Social Services.

So she will be answering to the Premier and she'll be exploring the possibility of another . . . another social impact bond is there, a possibility of having another type of social impact bond within our province.

The present, the social impact bond that you referenced is with what we deem Sweet Dreams and it is . . . we've entered into an agreement with two private investors to provide funding to the Saskatoon Downtown Youth Centre, or Egadz, which will be the operator of Sweet Dreams supported living project in Saskatoon. And the Sweet Dreams project seeks to reduce the number of children taken into care by the ministry by providing programming and residential services to identified high-risk mothers and who have children obviously.

And so I see this as a very positive initiative and it succeeds. We only have to pay back the social impact bond or the investment by the other investors if the results are positive, and they will be measured by a third party after sort of ongoing measurements.

[22:00]

Mr. Forbes: — So now that raises a couple of questions though. Who is the third party that will be . . . Has that process been developed?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — The credit union and the Mah family. So there's . . .

Mr. Forbes: — Who's going to do the evaluation?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Deloitte will probably be doing the assessment.

Mr. Forbes: — So has there been a benchmark process set up for how you're going to measure this? And what has been the cost of that?

Mr. Acton: — Yes. There's a process set up in terms of putting the contract together initially. And just going back to the evaluator or the independent audit that would take place, the agreement was that the service provider, Egadz, would select that auditor, and it would then have to be approved by the other two investors and the ministry. And I'm sure it was Deloitte. Is that . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, but it's not finalized. Oops. So but we did get some advice originally from Deloitte on the structure of this.

And you were asking for cost, and if you give me a minute I can tell you what that was. So \$11,274 we paid to Deloitte to help put that agreement or that structure together.

Mr. Forbes: — Now when did they actually do that work?

Mr. Acton: — That would be happening in February, March, April. There was some early discussions about this in terms of, is it even a possibility? Would we consider anything like this? Then we did, certainly had some discussions inside the ministry about, like, how would you actually do this? But a lot of the work was done — I'm just going by memory now — but I

believe February, March, and April.

Mr. Forbes: — And the reason I'm asking because, now you can correct me if I'm wrong, but I don't think it was mentioned in the budget or the minister's remarks. So we were, when the announcement was made, as I said, in the last week of session that . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes. It wouldn't have been in the budget because we didn't put the money up.

Mr. Forbes: — Not in this budget. But I mean in the one a year ago.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes. But the investment was from Colleen and Wally Mah and the Conexus Credit Union.

Mr. Forbes: — Right. But I'm asking about the 11,000 that was spent. And it's relatively a significant way of dealing with finances and whether, you know . . . I mean, we were kind of caught off guard that, as I said, in the last week, that there was another process of how to fund social innovation.

So I guess I'm going to ask this then. So the bill from Deloitte was 11,000. How much did Wally Mah and the credit union folks, what was the total cost of the project?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — They each put 500,000 in.

Mr. Forbes: — 500,000. So it was a \$1 million project.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — But just to address what's in the budget, obviously we don't present publicly a line by line by line, especially down to \$11,000 expenditures within the budget.

But another thing that wasn't in the budget last year but was done as a new initiative within the ministry was the CBO funding for medically fragile children. So you have a budget that if you can find room within — you know, a fairly large, significant budget — to address an issue of importance, you need to find the money or else you need to go back to treasury board for that money. But there are initiatives that happen. We don't stop looking for ideas or initiatives the minute the budget arrives. You have to keep thinking of what you can do as the year goes on.

Mr. Forbes: — Sure. That's fair enough. But I remember in supplementary estimates, you came forward with those costs for those homes.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — For that initiative we did. Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes. And so we weren't surprised later when we saw the press releases coming out. There was . . . You know, we could see where the dots were going, and fair enough. But with this, and I'm just saying that a significant way to fund a project was a little bit under the radar for us, and so we were surprised. And so now that we have the social impact bonds process and this will be more under the bailiwick of the Premier than under Social Services, you've done one project; you may not do another?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I think that the general vetting will be under the privy of the Premier, but I think if we do decide to have another project it will be under the relevant minister to whatever it applies to. So it will depend on what particular initiative we are measuring.

Mr. Forbes: — So with this project, the investors if they . . . Now, what the deal is that they do get their basic investment back. It's whether they get the interest or some sort of bonus or something if it works. Is that the correct system? Have I got it right?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — No, it's not correct. They may not necessarily. If it is a disaster, they may not even get their original investment back. But it's based on of course the outcomes and they're measured, and if it is a success or whatever percentage of success will be the percentage they get back plus 5 per cent.

Mr. Forbes: — And then what role will the Provincial Auditor have in this?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I'm going to turn to our accountant.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay.

Mr. Acton: — The Provincial Auditor will be involved in actually auditing or reviewing the process to ensure that we did due diligence there. How did we determine the outcomes? That will be the process that the auditor will look at.

Mr. Forbes: — Then this may be a question for Public Accounts. We can ask the auditor this. But do you anticipate that they'll make a comment or we'll be asking them to make a comment about, is this a good way to work with CBOs and CBO funding? Is it an effective way to do this kind of work? Because I'm not sure, you know. The auditor is doing more and more to see if there's value for the work, and Social Services has had several chapters written about, you know, their relationship with CBOs and contracts and that type of thing, whether you anticipate that will be the case with this as well.

Mr. Acton: — I can't speak for the Provincial Auditor. But the thing that I, the portion of this that I think the Provincial Auditor will appreciate or will be positive about is this is really focused on outcomes. So the measure is, can you deliver? It gets back to value for money or did you achieve the outcome that you're hoping for, not necessarily a number of outputs, which I would suggest that, as a ministry in the past, we did a lot of that. I mean we'll count how many students you train or how many applications you process. We struggle a little bit in terms of measuring what you really achieved as opposed to, how many folks did you train? How many folks are employed today and have stayed employed, you know, a year after you trained them?

So on the outcome side, I think that'll be very positive. Comments about the funding component, that I . . .

Mr. Forbes: — One question I would have is, is this considered debt or is there a liability here for the \$1 million? Because in effect, somebody's got to be liable for it until they're found to be . . . either they pay it off, or this is not working. So I don't

know how that would work. What's your anticipation of that?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — By accounting practices, it's not a debt because we don't know what we owe. And I want to clarify, like the payment to the investors is contingent on success, and if there's less than 75 per cent success, they receive none of their money back. So they lose it all. So it has to be . . . And then it's a sliding scale from 75 per cent success to 100 per cent success.

So it is by accounting practices counted as a contingent liability where the:

Possible obligations that may result in the future sacrifice of economic benefits arising from existing conditions or situations involving uncertainty. That uncertainty will ultimately be resolved when one or more future events not wholly within the government's control occurs or fails to occur. Resolution of the uncertainty will confirm the incurrence or non-incurrence of the liability.

That's the professional accountant speaking.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Now I worry about this sometimes.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — We'll get a lawyer next and really be confused.

Mr. Forbes: — Sure, yes. Absolutely. If it isn't successful and they don't get their money back, then will they be considered . . . How will the credit union deal with that? Will they just write it off, or will they consider it a donation to Egadz? Or can they consider that a . . . How will they deal with it in their books?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I think that's a question for the credit union.

Mr. Forbes: — They didn't ask you? I mean they just can't just walk away from 500,000 and say, we're just . . . I'm sure their members must have thought, we should ask the people we're making this deal with because if we're just going to walk away from \$500,000 . . .

Mr. Acton: — They were prepared. They entered into this agreement on the understanding that they might lose the money and, if they lost the money, they would view it as a contribution to the community. They make other investments or donations to the local community, and so they recognized there was some level of risk. So we don't have a liability back to . . . I mean if they lose the money, then that's going to be their approach, or at least that was my understanding when I first chatted with them.

As we measure this, the contract calls for a review by the independent auditor at year two and year four, and then the final one at year five. So depending on what that independent review tells us at the end of year two, that may impact whether or not . . . you know, how we show the contingent liability. If I understand this right, at that point we may have to say, well you know, there's a likelihood that we owe some of this \$1 million. So then we have to start looking at it, but at this point we don't have that.

Mr. Forbes: — Are you entering into any discussions right now with other groups around social impact bonds, any of the CBOs that you work with?

[22:15]

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I've been approached by one group and I failed to give . . . Like I can't even think of the name that has interest in being an investor without a particular proposal. My understanding is there is other groups that have particular proposals, but now those will be viewed by Ms. Draude as the Legislative Secretary responsible, and the Conexus Credit Union managers that I met with are very interested in potentially future investments in social impact bonds.

Mr. Forbes: — Good. Thank you. I just have one . . . It's a bit of a situation here, and somebody approached me to make sure I raised this question, but it's around Youth for Christ in Regina here. How much funding are you providing for them this year?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — We're not providing funding or we weren't providing funding for Youth for Christ to take a trip to California. And we'll find out how much we provide for them otherwise.

Mr. Forbes: — I think they run a group home — don't they? — in town, new homes offered to Regina . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes, there was a trip that we weren't going to provide funding for, but we support them, and we will get that number. I'm not sure if you're referencing the trip?

Mr. Forbes: — No. I'm thinking about these — they were announced a few years ago — these three new homes: Utturn, Ezekiel house, and Jacob house for youth at risk.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — So this year's funding will be \$2,024,689.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Now how do you keep track of information about individual clients in Youth for Christ? Do you have a protocol for that in terms of your workers making sure that the youth are getting their services from Youth for Christ?

Ms. Kirkland: — The youth in those homes that are under our care would each have their own child care worker, their own worker who would manage their files and ensure they're getting the services that follow their treatment.

Mr. Forbes: — Is it typical that youth that are in homes like this, they're required to sign contracts or are allowed to sign contracts if they're not 18, or lease agreements? Or how are the arrangements made with the homes that they're living in?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Do you have any specifics? Because none of the officials are aware. Like we're not sure.

Mr. Forbes: — Well from what I understand, the youth that I'm talking about has signed a contract or a lease agreement, and it sounds like it's a one-year agreement to live in this facility. And that sounds not like a typical or a good thing necessarily. But you know, this has just come to my attention. It

seems to be unusual, whether this is a usual practice or a typical practice.

And then the second part and where the real jam is happening right now is — and this happens quite often — the whole thing where youth who are at risk, when they turn 18, then there's that transition. They're finishing up high school or whatever. And so there's been pressure put on this young person to say, listen; we want you to stay for a year. What are you going to do? So he says, well I'm just turning 18. I've got three months till I finish high school. I'd like to stay where I am. The place seems to be working out okay. He doesn't have any complaints about this place, but it's just it seems like it's not a very good situation bureaucratically.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Something of what you're describing sounds vaguely familiar in the correspondence I've received. But if you could give us the details, we'll definitely look into this situation. This youth was just about 18, like within weeks of being 18, if I remember it correctly.

Mr. Forbes: — I'm not sure you would have got any correspondence on this at all.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Okay. Summaries and . . . If you could give us any, you know, off the record, if you want to give us any details on this particular scenario, we'll take a look in.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — And I'll get back to you.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes. And it sounds like there's not issues around Youth for Christ. It's just that having designed something for a year . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes, and was it a misunderstanding is what we're wondering. Were they signing agreements of sort of rules of conduct if you're going to live in our facility, and they thought it was a lease contract. We need to look into any specifics that could be involved with this issue.

Mr. Forbes: — Well I'd sure appreciate that because I think this has always been a challenge, and one that . . . I know there's a youth group, kids out of care, that have identified that it becomes really a big issue. And it's a pretty fragile time; it's a huge time for that. So many more questions, I've got to tell you. But I see the clock, and we'll stop at 10:30. We'll go from there.

But the one I just wanted to just maybe wrap up, or we'll see how it goes, but in the Public Accounts, I was struck by, if I look under the goods and services, and I don't know if you have the page with you, 204 from last year, but how many lawyers social services uses. How many lawyers . . . What's the total legal bill for Social Services? You could start there.

Mr. Acton: — So the question was what do we pay for legal services?

Mr. Forbes: — Yes. Well what did you pay in 2013-14? Because I don't know, I recognize some legal firms here, some I don't know. And I may have questions later about that. But

what was your total bill last year, and what are you anticipating this year?

Mr. Acton: — Last year, '13-14, our total bill was \$1,080,096. This year at the end of the third quarter, we had expended 934,429. So I think we'll be slightly higher than last year. It varies a little, depending on the number of trials that we may have. So in '12-13, our total legal bill was 1.3 million; last year, 1.08 million. I think we'll probably be 1.1 this year when the book's closed off, but I don't have those final numbers yet.

Mr. Forbes: — Do you set aside so much for this coming year, '15-16? Have you set aside a contingency fund?

Mr. Acton: — I wouldn't think of it as a contingency fund, but yes we recognize that we'll have those bills.

Mr. Forbes: — I do have to say, when I was looking and I saw this, I looked through other departments. Other departments don't have nearly the legal costs. And you may comment on this because you're from Justice but, you know, in my own experience in Environment and Labour . . . But I looked at the others, you know, and their general goods and services. They don't come close to what . . .

Mr. Acton: — The difference would be that in those other ministries generally the bulk of the legal services would be provided through the Ministry of Justice. So it would be in-house legal counsel, and that counsel would be paid for under the Ministry of Justice. Now we have some services that are provided for us as well through the Ministry of Justice here in Regina, but we have a pretty large business, you know, across the whole province. And at this point, Justice doesn't have that kind of capacity to do that day-to-day work on family matters appearing in local court houses in, you know, in all the different areas that we have, including the entire North. So as a result, we end up with entering into agreements with various law firms around the province to provide that service for us.

Mr. Forbes: — So is it really just the family matters that is the bulk of the . . .

Mr. Acton: — That's the bulk of it, yes.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. I just think that in some ways, and I know in Labour and Environment when we decided to specialize — and actually this government has even stepped it up more in Labour, I think — it has paid off by having specialists in the areas of labour and environment. And whether or not it would be time to . . . because if we're spending \$1 million, whether that's an efficient use of resources.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — And that is going to be something we're going to review going forward, if it is efficient to have a number of contracts with different law firms, or whether we would be better to have in-house is again not pressing and urgent at this moment. But definitely there has been preliminary discussions on that very issue.

Mr. Forbes: — I just think there are so many benefits to having in-house. You have specialists. You have lawyers who can do better work, and all these other issues that can happen. And when it looks like \$1 million, I go through this and I look at

some of the bills are pretty phenomenal. And it's consistent, so this is something that is a big thing.

So just a couple of quick questions. National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 214,000. What would they be doing?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Just for clarification, do you mean the CRC [criminal record check] which is . . .

Mr. Forbes: — Well, I'm just going by what's in page 204, National Council on Crime and Delinquency, \$214,323.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — So that's our contract for the SDM.

Mr. Forbes: — Oh, okay.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — Fair enough. Okay. Good. Well at this point I think we're close enough to 10:30 before I start another topic. But I want to thank you and your officials. It's been a very informative evening. And we'll meet, I guess we've got one more session and we'll go from there.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Can't talk you out of it, eh?

Mr. Forbes: — No, no. I still have more questions.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I too want to thank the officials and the committee members for their time and interest in what I believe to be a very important area of the work that our government does. And until we meet again, thank you.

Mr. Forbes: — Great. Thank you very much.

The Chair: — It being past the hour of 10:30 or the hour of adjournment, this committee stands adjourned to April 15th, 2015 at 3 p.m.

[The committee adjourned at 22:30.]