



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee
on
Alberta's Economic Future

Ministry of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Consideration of Main Estimates

Tuesday, October 29, 2019
3:30 p.m.

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First Session**

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Gochring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP), Deputy Chair

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Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Participants

Ministry of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women

Hon. Leela Sharon Aheer, Minister

Pam Arnston, Senior Financial Officer and Executive Director, Financial Services

Lora Pillipow, Deputy Minister

3:30 p.m.

Tuesday, October 29, 2019

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

**Ministry of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Consideration of Main Estimates**

The Chair: Okay. I would like to call the meeting to order and welcome everyone here. The committee has under consideration the estimates of the Ministry of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020.

I'd ask that we go around the table and have all MLAs introduce themselves for the record. Minister, please introduce the officials that are joining you at the table. I am Glenn van Dijken, MLA for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock and the chair of this committee. We will continue to my right.

Ms Goehring: Good afternoon. I'm Nicole Goehring, MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs and the deputy chair of this committee.

Mr. Jones: Matt Jones, MLA for Calgary-South East.

Mrs. Allard: Good afternoon. Tracy Allard, MLA for Grande Prairie.

Mr. Reid: Good afternoon. Roger Reid, MLA for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Horner: Nate Horner, MLA, Drumheller-Stettler.

Ms Issik: Good afternoon. Whitney Issik from Calgary-Glenmore.

Mr. Rowswell: Garth Rowswell, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

Mr. Barnes: Drew Barnes, MLA, Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Stephan: Jason Stephan, MLA, Red Deer-South.

Mr. Toor: Devinder Toor, MLA, Calgary-Falconridge.

Mrs. Aheer: I'm Leela Aheer, and I'm Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women. To my right I have my deputy minister, Lora Phillipow; then to her right I have the senior financial officer, Pam Arnston; and to my left I have the director of policy, planning, and legislative services, David Middagh.

Mr. Deol: Jasvir Deol, MLA for Edmonton-Meadows.

Ms Pancholi: Good afternoon. Rakhi Pancholi, MLA for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Member Irwin: Janis Irwin, MLA for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

The Chair: I'd like to note the following substitution for the record: MLA Deol for MLA Gray.

Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard* and that the committee proceedings are being live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of this meeting.

Hon. members, the standing orders set out the process for consideration of the main estimates. Standing Order 59.01(6) establishes the speaking rotation while the speaking time limits are set out in Standing Order 59.02(1). In brief, the minister or member of Executive Council acting on behalf of the minister will have 10

minutes to address the committee. At the conclusion of her comments we begin a 60-minute speaking block for the Official Opposition, followed by a 20-minute speaking block for the government caucus.

The rotation of speaking time will then alternate between the Official Opposition and the government caucus, with individual speaking times being set to five minutes, which, if combined with the minister's time, makes it a 10-minute block. Discussion should flow through the chair at all times regardless of whether or not the speaking time is combined. Members are asked to advise the chair at the beginning of their rotation if they wish to combine their time with the minister's time. If members have any questions regarding speaking times or the rotation, please feel free to send a note or e-mail to either the chair or the committee clerk.

A total of three hours has been scheduled to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women. The scheduled end time of today's meeting is 6:30 p.m. With the concurrence of the committee, I will call a five-minute break near the midpoint of the meeting; however, the three-hour clock will continue to run. Does anyone oppose having a break? Thank you.

Ministry officials may be present and at the direction of the minister may address the committee. Ministry officials seated in the gallery, if called upon, have access to a microphone in the gallery area. Pages are available to deliver notes or other materials between the gallery and the table. Attendees in the gallery may not approach the table. Opposition caucus staff may sit at the table to assist their members; however, members have priority to sit at the table at all times.

If debate is exhausted prior to three hours, the ministry's estimates are deemed to have been considered for the time allotted in the schedule, and the committee will adjourn. Points of order will be dealt with as they arise, and the clock will continue to run.

Any written material provided in response to questions raised during the main estimates should be tabled by the minister in the Assembly for the benefit of all members.

The vote on the estimates and any amendments will occur in Committee of Supply on November 19, 2019. Amendments must be in writing and approved by Parliamentary Counsel prior to the meeting at which they are to be moved. The original amendment is to be deposited with the committee clerk, and 20 copies of the amendment must be provided at the meeting for committee members and staff.

I now invite the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women to begin with her opening remarks. Minister, you have 10 minutes.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Chair. Good afternoon. I am pleased to be here with you today to present the details of the Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women budget for 2019-20. Before addressing you today, I'd first like to announce that my speech will be available in French on Facebook. As the minister responsible for the Francophone Secretariat I'm proud to offer this information to the many French-speaking Albertans in our province.

Avant de m'adresser à vous aujourd'hui, je voudrais d'abord annoncer que mon discours sera disponible en français sur Facebook. En tant que ministre responsable du Secrétariat francophone, je suis fière d'offrir cette information aux nombreux Albertains et Albertaines d'expression française de notre province.

We are the ministry responsible for heritage, culture, art, sport, physical activity, the nonprofit and voluntary sector, multiculturalism, diversity, and inclusion. The budget we are discussing today reflects two realities. One is recognizing the importance of these areas to those we serve. The other is to bring

Alberta back to balance. Albertans agreed to this, and we are very proud of this budget. With me today, as I'd already noted, are the deputy minister, Lora Pillipow; senior financial officer Pam Arnston; the executive director of policy, planning, and legislative services, David Middagh; and members of the ministry's executive team.

Budget 2019 is a balanced plan to create jobs, grow the economy, and protect vital services. The total budgeted operating expense for Culture, Multiculturalism and the Status of Women in 2019-20, including general operating and capital grant spending, is \$276.5 million. Budget 2019 reduces funding for the ministry by 15 per cent, or \$50.1 million. We know that Albertans greatly value all of the sectors that our ministry touches and their impact to our quality of life as well as the economy. However, we must focus on aligning our spending with other provinces and increasing the value Albertans are getting for their tax dollars. We are committed to exploring ways to reduce red tape, finding efficiencies, and eliminating redundancy. Albertans agree with our approach, and this is what you will see today reflected in this budget.

I'd like to begin by presenting the changes to community and voluntary support services. This area provides funding to nonprofit organizations through our community grant programs and provides capacity-building supports for the nonprofit, voluntary sector. This sector thrives because of the dedication and passion of volunteers, the true backbone of our civil society. Each year 1.6 million Albertans volunteer and contribute more than 260 million hours to our 26,000-plus nonprofit organizations. We also know that Albertans are some of the most generous donors across the country.

Our investment from Budget 2019 includes \$25 million in the community facility enhancement program. The community initiatives program funding is receiving \$23.5 million to support community-based programs. The international development program grant stream has ended, providing \$1.5 million in savings. The Alberta government will continue to support international disasters in developing countries on a case-by-case basis. We will also assess our ability to support international relief efforts based on Albertans' priorities. The status of women community grant program is being consolidated into our community initiatives program, and there will continue to be support for community-based initiatives aimed at improving conditions and outcomes for women and girls.

Our approach to identifying savings was balanced and not across the board to all of our grant programs, which will help to lessen the impact. We are committed to working with stakeholders to strengthen our sector during this really tough fiscal situation. Our staff will continue to help nonprofits by providing support through facilitation and training on governance, leadership, and skill development. As well, in our commitment to find ways to reduce red tape, we've been able to shift to using electronic fund transfers, which gets grant dollars into organizations faster.

Finally, Budget 2019 reduces major fairs' operating grant funding levels by 25 per cent, for savings of \$3.7 million. This will impact the Calgary Exhibition & Stampede and Edmonton Northlands. Alberta is the only jurisdiction in Canada that provides this level of funding to major exhibitions.

Budget 2019 ensures ongoing support for Alberta artists and arts organizations by investing \$28.4 million in the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. It's a 5 per cent decrease in funding. This level of investment brings Alberta more in line with the national average for provincial art funders. We are developing the arts profession act, which, through legislation, commits to improve the social and economic status of the artists. As well, we're going to work to establish a creative partnerships Alberta program to mentor and

assist artists and arts organization in generating income and support from the private sector.

3:40

Books, magazines, sound recording, postproduction: these are a few of the amazing examples from an incredibly diverse sector that we call the cultural industries in Alberta. Budget 2019 invests \$46.7 million in the Alberta media fund, which consists of six grant programs to support growth and sustainability and competitiveness of Alberta's cultural industries. The largest grant, the screen-based production grant, is transitioning to a film tax credit program that will actually be administered by the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. The ministry has extensive experience in the delivery of tax credit programs, so we're really excited about the support that they're going to bring to this dynamic industry. The transfer is part of a government-wide commitment to revitalize the film industry for long-term growth in support of Alberta jobs and the economy.

My ministry is introducing a new grant, however, the Alberta small production grant. Alberta has a thriving film and television industry, and this grant will address the needs of smaller, grassroots, Alberta-based film and television productions and will help them to access capital a little bit more quickly and easier. It will help develop Alberta's film industry by supporting entry-level productions, emerging talent, and help for Alberta's cultural industries by 25 per cent, or \$1.5 billion, over the next decade.

The heritage division is focused on showcasing and preserving Alberta's unique history for all of us and future generations in Alberta. The work of this division spans from operating our network of museums and archives and historic sites to local heritage preservation and providing funding to the individuals and organizations that are dedicated to maintaining the history of our great province. Budget 2019 invests \$60.6 million in heritage and includes a reduction to heritage grant funding of 6 per cent, which will save the ministry \$239,000 this year.

As part of our commitment to reducing red tape, we're bringing the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation into the department. The important work done by the foundation will continue in government, and it will reduce spending and realize efficiencies. Individuals and organizations supported by the foundation can continue to access grants through the same channels. The consolidation will save an estimated \$200,000 annually.

Additionally, effective April 2020 there will be an increase in fees to the experience Alberta's history annual pass and the admission fees to five historic sites and museums. The fee increases are modest, between \$2 and \$5, and offset some of the operating costs for these heritage facilities. This increase will help us to fulfill our promise to provide fiscally responsible government and get back to balance.

Budget 2019 invests \$24.4 million in sport, recreation, and physical activity programs. We are also consolidating the Alberta Sport Connection and the function of its board into the department. This will be cost-effective, leverage greater department resources, and uphold our commitment to red tape reduction. We know that our commitments are supported by creative and innovative organizations that provide many sport, recreation, and physical activity programs to Albertans. That is why previous funding commitments to the 2020 Alberta Winter Games in Airdrie, the 2020 Alberta Summer Games in Lethbridge, and the 2022 Arctic Winter Games in the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo remain unchanged. These events promote physical activity across the province and have proven economic benefits to their host locations.

Alberta's Francophone Secretariat continues to serve as a vital link between the government and the province's rapidly growing

French-speaking communities. Budget 2019 maintains \$1.5 million to support the programs and operations of the Francophone Secretariat. Almost half of this funding comes from the federal government, and Alberta will be seeking a fairer share of funding as part of ongoing negotiations. Funding provided through the Francophone Secretariat helps to improve access to services in French across government such as early childhood, health, and employment services.

Status of Women and Multiculturalism is receiving an increased investment of \$1.2 million in funding in Budget 2019. We recognize the importance of multiculturalism, diversity, and inclusion, and this new priority requires funds to develop strategies and create relationships. Some of our work will include building relationships with cultural communities by celebrating cultural events, promoting existing proclamations, and participating in community events. We're also really focused on increasing access to government programs and services, translating government resources into multiple languages. This ministry is recognized as the government centre of excellence for GBA plus and supported the establishment of centres of responsibility in 21 ministries.

Budget 2019 is focused on bringing Alberta back to the path to balance. Our ministry remains committed to investing in communities and the arts while also finding creative and innovative ways to keep costs down, reduce red tape, and continue offering programs and services which support Albertans and the economy.

Thank you so much for your attention, and I would be pleased to answer your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

For the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the minister may speak. Our timer will be set for 20-minute intervals so that members are aware of the time.

MLA Goehring will speak for the Official Opposition. Would you like to go back and forth?

Ms Goehring: Yes, please.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Goehring: Minister, are you okay with going back and forth?

Mrs. Aheer: That's just fine. Thank you so much. Thank you, Chair.

Ms Goehring: Thank you.

I just would like to begin by saying thank you to everybody for coming today to participate in these estimates. I know that we also have many visitors that are here from industry all across the province that are not only present in the room but also watching online, so it's wonderful to have them with us. I've heard from so many who've reached out to my office to share their fears, their concerns, their solutions regarding the budget, so it's wonderful to be able to have this opportunity to be their voice in the committee.

I would also like to let you know, Minister, that members from the industry have reached out to me, so the majority of the questions that I'll be posing today are directly from those individuals. I would also like to state that this is a short timeline, and there might be points where I do interrupt. I'm not intending to be rude; it's just in a process to try and get through as many questions as I can. I hope that that's okay, and if we can, I would like to begin.

I would like to point to page 63 of the budget, line 3.3, regarding cultural industries. It indicates, "Supports Alberta's cultural industries, including books and magazines and sound recording, operates the provincial film commission, and oversees the operation of the Northern and Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditoria." There's

also a note in there that says the book publishers of Alberta's impact on the economy was \$29.7 million. This line item shows a decrease of 51 per cent, so I'm curious, Minister: in the last year, how many projects under this line item were approved?

Mrs. Aheer: You're asking about the – sorry. Just to clarify your question, are you asking about the reduction, or are you asking about how many projects?

Ms Goehring: How many projects in the last year were approved?

Mrs. Aheer: What I'll do is I will get back to you with the exact number of projects.

Ms Goehring: Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Aheer: Sorry. I'm just clarifying. Are you speaking directly to exact projects or . . .

Ms Goehring: Exact projects under this line item.

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. Okay. We'll have Pam respond.

Ms Arnston: I'm Pam Arnston, the senior financial officer. To explain that decrease: actually, in '18-19 we had a one-time grant transfer from our ministry to Infrastructure for the Jubilee back-of-house renovations, so that's why you see such a large decrease. It's just a one-time transfer that we made in the prior year. There are no impacts on the number of projects. It just happens to be that in '18-19 we made a one-time grant transfer from our ministry to Infrastructure for renovations.

Ms Goehring: Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Aheer: That's why I was asking you. If you're asking me about specific projects, I'd have to go into specifics about those, but the actual dollar amount has been described in the Jubilee auditoria and their renovations.

Ms Goehring: Thank you. My next question was going to be: what is the number of projects that are being approved going forward? You're saying that there is not a difference in the projects from last year to the new budget with the decrease?

Mrs. Aheer: Well, what will happen is that as the projects come across, as you know, the departments will take the opportunity to look at the criteria of those projects, and then those will be granted accordingly. As you know, there's a ton of criteria that comes across the docket, so the department takes that criteria, looks at the projects that are available. Just to give you an example, like, over the next three years, I guess, there will be a total of \$92 million committed, so 2019-21. You keep asking about projects, but I'll give you dollar figures if that's okay. Does that answer your question adequately? Is that what you're looking for?

Ms Goehring: Okay.

Mrs. Aheer: In 2019-21 there will be \$42.26 million in this, and then the further budgets out from that we're happy to talk with you as we get closer to those budgets. In terms of projects and taking in projects and whatnot, it's the same process as it's always been. People will apply for grant funding the normal way through the department. The department will review that criteria, and then we'll get back to them accordingly. So there's not a particular number of projects one way or the other. The dollars will be allocated as those grant applications come forward.

Ms Goehring: Okay. So the decrease of 51 per cent will not impact the number of projects.

Mrs. Aheer: It's not a decrease. Let me clarify again. There is no decrease of 51 per cent; \$9.3 million of that money was allocated to a one-time grant to fix the back of house of the Jubilee auditoria, including – I don't know if you've been in the orchestra pit. There's a lot of spit in there . . .

Ms Goehring: Yeah. Thank you, Minister. If we could go on to the next question.

Mrs. Aheer: . . . because there are clarinets and trombones and whatnot. Just to clarify, because I want to make sure that I'm very clear about this, there's an absolute necessity to make sure that those orchestra pits are fixed . . .

3:50

Ms Goehring: Absolutely agree with you.

Mrs. Aheer: . . . and that's why those dollars are there. Just to be clear, it's not a 51 per cent decrease. There's \$9.3 million that has gone to fixing the Jubilee auditoria.

Ms Goehring: Thank you.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you.

Ms Goehring: If we could go to page 63, line 3.4, the Alberta media fund.

Mrs. Aheer: Sure.

Ms Goehring: This indicates supports Alberta's cultural industry sector, provides grants to support film and television production in Alberta, and support for cultural industries, initiatives, and organizations. This sees a decrease of 6 per cent. I'm not clear with the screen-based production grant if it maintains a \$45 million annual cap, and were there other costs involved in the budget line? Can you clarify?

Mrs. Aheer: Sorry. Say that again.

Ms Goehring: Were there other budget costs in that budget line? If you could clarify that, please.

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. Let me start from the beginning of this, too, because there's been a tremendous amount of information that goes out about this. This \$45 million, as you know, is being transferred over to Economic Development, Trade and Tourism as a part of the tax credit, but that will go over slowly. As you probably know, there are commitments to the film and media industry that have already been made through the Department of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, so in order to be able to honour those – and several of those are hedged out over several years depending on how those projects come forward. Right now the way it works is that they're paid after they bring their receipts forward, so we have to make sure that we honour those commitments that have already been done.

What we will do, again, is that as we slowly take the dollars over to Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, the tax credit will be coming forward fairly quickly here. Again, it's just to make sure. The screen-based commitment is still \$42.26 million. Plus, like I was saying to you, we have a new Alberta small-screen-based production grant, and that's a new grant that will have \$1 million within culture itself. We're actually really excited about it. It's what the industry has been asking for, to have these tax credits, and

Economic Development, Trade and Tourism has the opportunity to be able to really make and facilitate this tax credit.

Again, just to make sure that there's an ability to create jobs in the economy and make sure that we're having a lot – we've had a lot of really great discussions with the industry as well, as you know. So we're really excited to see this coming forward.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Minister. Like you had said, many in the industry applaud the move to a tax credit; however, they also say that a reduction to \$15 million per year and a cap of \$10 million per project will only support two to three medium- to large-budget shows and devastate the industry. How is this in line with your promise to create jobs in Alberta?

Mrs. Aheer: Sorry. Can you clarify where your \$15 million – what are you talking about there? Can you please clarify?

Ms Goehring: Regarding the tax credit.

Mrs. Aheer: Uh-huh. How is there a decrease? Say that again. I'm just trying to understand your numbers. Sorry. Where is that in the budget? What page? What number? What line?

Ms Goehring: I can't see it right here.

Mrs. Aheer: I'd really need to see that before I comment on that, but what I can say is that we value cultural industries in Alberta and recognize, obviously, the importance of the economic value that they bring to our province. That's the whole reason for going forward on the tax credit in the first place, because it's what the industry asked for.

Ms Goehring: It's on page 153.

Mrs. Aheer: The largest Alberta media fund grant, of course, is the screen-based grant. I'm sorry. Pardon me.

Ms Goehring: It's on page 153 of the fiscal plan.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much. Is that on the Economic Development, Trade and Tourism budget? That's not in ours, correct?

Ms Goehring: It's transforming support for Alberta's film industry.

Mrs. Aheer: Like I was saying to you earlier, and I'll just wait for these numbers, but based on the feedback from our industry partners, the whole point of the tax credit is to revitalize and grow the film industry, and that is going to take some transition time, as you know. When I was speaking with the industry, of course, they had talked to previous governments for many years about a transition to this tax credit. We're really honoured that it's our government that is taking this forward.

As I had these discussions with the industry, they said that they'd been talking about it for years and years and years. Upon talking with them, it's a very complex and very interesting process to go through this. It takes some time. You don't want to rush into it. You want to take your time and make sure that you do it appropriately. The current agreements under the screen-based production grant and Alberta production grants will continue to be administered – I think I mentioned this already, but I'll say it again just to be clear – by our ministry, the Ministry of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

There's no additional funding that will be allocated to the original program, the SPG program. So the applicants from the May 2019

and August 2019 intakes of the program will not receive support from the original SPG. That will go to economic development and trade. Then the producers who applied to the SPG in the May 2019 and August 2019 intakes will be able to apply to the new tax credit program, the new Alberta small-production grant program when it launches. That will be around 2020.

The other thing, too, is that the funding is going to continue to be capped – I think this is what you were looking at – due to the fiscal situation. I should probably add in at this point in time that the program is oversubscribed by \$91 million.

Ms Goehring: Are you able to show the numbers to where those grants were approved and who got the money and the titles?

Mrs. Aheer: Well, actually, as you know, the who and what is actually proprietary information between who applied and the grant programs. What I can do, certainly, is show you where – I'm happy to share that information with you.

Ms Goehring: Yeah. Because we keep hearing that number, yet we don't have any documentation to show . . .

Mrs. Aheer: What I will say, too, is that the oversubscription to the program from previous years is expected. When the grants are paid – I think you know this – it's disclosed. It's very easy to find once I have it.

Ms Goehring: But those numbers don't add up to your numbers, Minister.

Mrs. Aheer: But you're also asking about numbers that are going on in the future, right? Like, this is hedged out over the next four years minimally because it's \$45 million per year, and approximately \$91 million has been oversubscribed. The program is expected to be \$15 million in 2021, and then we can talk about future budgets as we go forward, largely in part because the money that was there has been hedged out and has been oversubscribed. So the dollars that are left are what's left over from the \$45 million that will be put forward into the tax credit, which is what was left to us when we actually got into this.

Ms Goehring: Can you identify which years it was oversubscribed, Minister?

Mrs. Aheer: It's been oversubscribed – pardon me?

Ms Goehring: Can you do the breakdown of the years where it was oversubscribed?

Mrs. Aheer: I'd be happy to get that to you. Absolutely. Thank you.

Yeah. Pam, do you want to jump in?

Ms Arnston: Sure. Hi. Pam Arnston again. When we run this program, a grant application will come in and it will get approved. Then we enter into a grant agreement, and that's when the commitment is made. The commitment is for a future time period. So the project is done, and then they submit their deliverables, and that's when we pay it. When it's paid, it is disclosed, but we do keep track of those commitments, and those commitments are disclosed in our financial statements. We have to do that for accounting purposes.

With respect to this \$91 million, \$92 million overcommitment, it occurred over the last three fiscal years. We do have those numbers, but we would have to provide it in writing because we don't have them with us.

Mrs. Aheer: But just to be clear, too, like when people are entering into these grant agreements, that's proprietary information until it's disclosed. When people are asking for their dollars to be repaid, then we do disclose that publicly, obviously.

Ms Goehring: Yeah. I would say that even if it's oversubscribed, this would indicate success in the industry.

Mrs. Aheer: Well, oversubscribing – you know what? – the success of the industry is obvious. I would agree that there is a tremendous amount there. However, we are under an extreme fiscal situation here. In order to make sure that we can provide a sustainable amount of dollars for this industry – and you know, I've had the huge privilege of actually sitting down with so many of the creators, the industry producers, the Alberta media, the Banff media festival that we have was just an absolute eye-opener for me. Learning from the industry what it is that they bring into this province, I applaud the incredible work that is done here. Quite frankly, I heard nothing but super positive responses from the industry, especially because this government has made the commitment to actually move forward with the tax credit. There's so much that will be opportunities for the industry as we move forward. As you can imagine, this gives them the opportunity.

4:00

On top of that, we have the lowest taxed jurisdiction, we have no carbon tax here, we are open for business, and we have a job-creation tax cut. All of those opportunities added into the tax credit, added with all of those things together, the most beautiful vistas in the world – I'm sure you can agree – amazing crews, and the opportunities here: we are the perfect place for any industry to be able to come and do their business, and I'm very, very proud to continue to support that.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Minister. On page 42 of the ministry's business plan, key objective 1.3, it states: "Grow Alberta's film and television industry and help Alberta compete for major media projects." B.C.'s \$4 billion screen industry has a tax incentive program that has no yearly cap and does not have a juried system that picks winners and losers. How do you see a reduced yearly cap and a juried system making Alberta's screen industry competitive with other provinces, and how does this create more jobs?

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you for the question. Again, we are building a made-in-Alberta project here. It's actually a really great question because you do need to look crossjurisdictionally to sort of see where people are at. If you look at most of those jurisdictions, it's taken them time to be able to build and to build capacity and make sure they were in the direction to be able to do that. I will state again that when we were meeting with the industry, the biggest issue that they had with this province – and keep in mind that even with the capped program that was there before, we look at the successes that are already in this industry, even with a capped grant program. So the ability to grow here with that tax credit is a very viable methodology, but it does take time.

As I've stated earlier, there are certain dollars that will transfer over to economic development and trade, and then we have to honour the commitments that have already been made. It would be lovely to be able to suggest that we can just, you know, assume that that will change overnight, but it won't. It takes time, and we have smaller crews here. It takes time to build up crews. Again, we are the lowest taxed jurisdiction in North America at this point in time. I just can't imagine, given that situation and the immensely talented people we have in this province, why they wouldn't want to produce here.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Minister. With all due respect, the time that it's taking is frightening industry, and there's a great risk of many people leaving the province who, we know, once they've left, are very unlikely to come back.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you for that, and I'll respond to that because that's actually been a concern over the last four years as well simply because there wasn't a tax credit and also because there was no commitment to growing the industry. Actually, I think one thing that we can probably all do together collaboratively in this room is help alleviate those fears . . .

Ms Goehring: I agree.

Mrs. Aheer: . . . and make sure that we work together to help the industry do the very best that they can. Again, I would suggest that the one thing that the industry asked us for was to make sure that we turned this into a tax credit, and I'm super proud of this government for doing that. That was a promise that we made. I can't even remember the number of meetings that we had. There are several MLAs in this room, actually, that have quite a bit of work that goes on in their areas. Especially for rural Alberta, this is a wonderful opportunity to invest. I might add, again, that Alberta is the best tax jurisdiction. You add to that what is going to be happening with the tax credit, you add to that the talent, you add to that the beautiful vistas, the fact that there's no carbon tax, the fact that we are rallying to the industry, the fact that we're obsessed with job creation. I think you put all of those things together, and collaboratively we can work together as a government to really make sure that folks are getting the reality of what's actually happening here, and that funding will continue.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Minister. It would be nice for industry to hear that directly from you.

Mrs. Aheer: They are hearing it loud and proud.

Ms Goehring: I've heard various concerns that they have not had an opportunity to meet with you, so their fear is real because they haven't heard it.

Mrs. Aheer: Actually, I will respond to that. We've met with them a whole bunch. You know, the truth is . . .

Ms Goehring: Can you indicate who you've met with, Minister, to go over your budget, who you've consulted with in this process?

Mrs. Aheer: We consulted with them right from the beginning . . .

Ms Goehring: Who is "them"?

Mrs. Aheer: . . . once we figured out our numbers.
My goodness. I can give you a list if you like.

Ms Goehring: I would love a list.

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah, I'd be happy to supply you with that. It'd be my pleasure, actually.

Ms Goehring: Thank you.

Mrs. Aheer: No. Thank you for the question. I appreciate it.

Ms Goehring: On page 9 of the fiscal plan it states that "total support [for the film industry] in four years is expected to be \$180 million for commitments under the grant program and the new tax credit." However, page 153 of the plan states that "due to the fiscal

situation and the over-subscription of the grant program from previous years . . ."

The Chair: That's 20 minutes, but you may continue.

Ms Goehring: ". . . funding under the new program is expected to be \$15 million in 2020-21, \$30 million in 2021-22 and \$45 million in 2022-23." This only adds up to \$90 million. Where's the other \$90 million totalling the \$180 million coming from?

Mrs. Aheer: I think that if you look at the budget commitments, you will see them there. It's over the next three years that it's listed. For the record I'll say this again. In 2019-2020 the committed dollars to the screen-based production grant is \$42.26 million, then in '20-21 it is \$31.71 million, and in 2021-22 it's \$16.3 million.

Ms Goehring: What is that total?

Mrs. Aheer: That's \$90.2 million. Does that answer your question?

Ms Goehring: I don't think so.

Mrs. Aheer: Our share is in our budget – right? – and then the other chunk is with Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

Ms Goehring: Thank you.

Could you clarify how much of the \$180 million is allocated to the Alberta small production grant and how much is allocated to the tax credit program on a year-by-year basis?

Mrs. Aheer: Sure. I think you asked me this question already, but I'm happy to clarify.

Ms Goehring: Did I?

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. That's okay.

One million dollars will be going to the Alberta screen production – small production. Sorry; I haven't got that acronym quite right yet. One million dollars will go to that, and that is additional funding.

Ms Goehring: Then how much is allocated to the tax credit program?

Mrs. Aheer: Are you asking me about economic development and trade's budget or mine?

Ms Goehring: Where would this lie under? All of it would lie under . . .

Mrs. Aheer: No. Part of it stays with us.

Ms Goehring: So the part that stays with you.

Mrs. Aheer: Okay. The tax credit is in Economic Development, Trade and Tourism's budget. That might be something that you want to talk to them about, their dollars. I mean, if you want, I can explain to you their fiscal plan. In 2020 that will be \$15 million; in 2021, \$30 million; and in 2022, it's \$45 million. Do you see where it adds up? One is smaller; one is bigger. One is transferring; one is staying.

Ms Goehring: Yeah. It adds up to \$90 million, not \$180 million.

Mrs. Aheer: It's \$90.2 million on one and \$90 million on the other, right?

Do you want to clarify this, Pam? Maybe I'm just not explaining myself correctly.

Ms Arnston: Hi. What is staying in our budget is with respect to the one that's called Alberta Media Fund. That is where the screen-based production grant funding is. Over time as we pay our commitments, it's going down. What is remaining in our budget this year, in '20-21, and in '21-22 is to pay off those outstanding grant commitments. As new projects come on, they'll be going under the film tax credit program in Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. So their budget is going up; ours is going down. Theirs is going up \$15 million, \$20 million . . .

Mrs. Aheer: Thirty million dollars and \$45 million.

Ms Arnston: Sorry; \$15 million, \$30 million, and \$45 million. Ours is going down by the corresponding amount.

Ms Goehring: Okay. So it's being transferred.

Ms Arnston: Correct.

Mrs. Aheer: Correct. That's right.

Ms Arnston: So between the two of us it's \$180 million. Right now it's \$90 million over those years in our budget and \$90 million in their budget as the tax credit goes up.

Ms Goehring: Thank you.

The industry has heard that all those who applied for the SPG in the spring of 2019 will have to reapply, also that those who applied for the fall intake will not receive the grant or tax incentive. Can you clarify?

Mrs. Aheer: There's going to be a transition into the tax credit, and we just want to make sure that all of those who are applying are going to actually have access, if they end up getting the grant funding, to that tax credit. That's what the industry wanted. If we continued under the grant program, it takes longer to be able to transfer those dollars over to the tax credit. The longer that we actually hold and continue doing funding under the screen-based production grant program – it takes longer for that to transfer because none of those dollars or anybody who's in that industry can then have access to the tax credit when that rolls out. It was really important that we do it as quickly as possible, but there is that bit of transition time. We are really super-excited about folks being able to apply. We want to make sure that that legislation is there so that they're able to do that, and we want to get that legislation through as quickly as possible to minimize the transition.

4:10

Ms Goehring: What kind of timelines for this transition?

Mrs. Aheer: I can get that to you. We have to, of course, pass the legislation to get the tax credit across.

Ms Pillipow: I would just add, Minister, if that's okay.

Mrs. Aheer: Please. Please, go ahead.

Ms Pillipow: Economic Development, Trade and Tourism will be announcing the timelines for the new program in the new year.

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. We have to get everything organized on our side of things as well. As you can see, the fiscal piece of it is really confusing, so you can imagine how difficult and complex it is making sure that we do this as quickly as possible. I think we're moving very quickly. Again, I'm very, very proud of the government for being able to create this tax credit.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Minister.

So the tax credit and the small production grant have a cap. Will they be juried?

Mrs. Aheer: Now, this is a departmental issue. Did you want to talk to that, Lora, a little bit?

Ms Pillipow: I would say that the implementation of the tax credit program will be run by EDTT, so we wouldn't be able to . . .

Ms Goehring: That would be referred to them?

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. In terms of jurying and all of that it is important, especially when government is providing dollars like this, that we make sure that criteria is fulfilled. It's a very, very important part of going through a government program, and actually we're really excited about some of the programs and projects that might be coming forward.

Ms Goehring: Thank you.

Mrs. Aheer: Oh, I should also say to the member that this is a competitive grant. Do you know that? Right? It's a competitive grant process, so that's why they're juried. Yeah.

Ms Goehring: Is there anything that the industry has to fear about this new system that's coming forward, the tax credits?

Mrs. Aheer: Again, this is what the industry wanted. We are very, very pleased to be able to bring it forward. As you know, there are a ton of different groups and people and interests in the province, so it takes a lot of consultation and work to make sure that you get to a point of understanding sort of the finances of the province and how we're able to support the industry.

Ms Goehring: In this interim there's a lot of fear and uncertainty, and a lot of people are saying that they haven't been consulted. I'm just curious. They're afraid of what this is going to look like and have asked me to ask you if there's anything that they should be afraid of.

Mrs. Aheer: Well, I think that there's confusion in some of the messages that are coming out that are nongovernmental. I think we've been really clear. Initially when the budget was first released, of course, there was tremendous fear put into the folks in the media industry about this big \$50 million, 80 per cent cut, that was coming from sources that didn't have the correct information. We tried as much as possible to alleviate those fears by explaining the way that the dollars would be transferred.

I think the best way, of course, with any industry, in order to make sure that they feel comfortable, is to make sure that those facts are put forward appropriately, without any misinformation, and collaboratively to make sure that together as a government, on all sides, we're supporting the industry and not politicizing an industry that is really a huge economic driver in this province. There's such potential here, but I just want to be clear that if messaging is not appropriately put forward and is misinformed, that's when you create fear.

Ms Goehring: Thank you.

Something that we heard from industry was that a bump-up for shooting in rural locations was suggested as it's a boon for small Alberta communities as it attracts production to these areas and has major economic spinoffs. Despite industry asking for this, the bump-up for rural shoots was not considered. Can you please explain?

Mrs. Aheer: I think that's probably a better question for Economic Development, Trade and Tourism as the file will actually lie with them now. But I would suggest that, again, it takes time to be able to put these programs together.

Ms Goehring: We don't have time, Minister.

Mrs. Aheer: Well, to that point, if you don't mind, I'll answer that. The industry has been asking for this for a long time.

Ms Goehring: They have.

Mrs. Aheer: We're actually coming through quite quickly. Again, I give complete kudos to the industry, and I'm very proud of our government for being able to bring this forward. So the tax credit will be available fairly soon, I would imagine.

Ms Goehring: But not with the recommendations from industry.

Mrs. Aheer: Absolutely. The recommendations are there. The tax credit actually was the recommendation.

Ms Goehring: It is.

Mrs. Aheer: I think, too, that rural communities offer so much in their availability to be able to be wonderful scenes.

Ms Goehring: They absolutely do.

Mrs. Aheer: I mean, we have everything in Alberta from desert to rainforest to the hoodoos to beautiful mountain vistas.

Ms Goehring: But if production is leaving the province, Minister, all of that beautiful landscape is not going to be beneficial to the industry here.

Mrs. Aheer: Production will stay because of the lowest tax jurisdiction that we have in Canada, because of the lack of carbon tax, because we are job creators here. The industry understands and gets the opportunities that they have here because of what this government has created to be open for business.

The film industry is like any other industry. They have to know that government is onside.

Ms Goehring: They don't know that right now, Minister.

Mrs. Aheer: They know that we're onside, and I think that the bigger concern is that there has been so much misinformation.

Ms Goehring: I disagree.

Mrs. Aheer: As you well know, so much misinformation that has gone out and in press numbers . . .

Ms Goehring: There has been a lack of clarity from the ministry, which is a wonderful opportunity to sit down with you to ask some of these questions that, unfortunately, we're still not receiving clarity on.

Mrs. Aheer: You know, I will respond to that because we've had such an absolutely amazing time responding to the industry. They've been so wonderful in asking their questions.

Ms Goehring: Absolutely.

Mrs. Aheer: We've been very honoured to be able to reply appropriately. I think, again to this point, that part of the fear was the misinformation about the transfer. I believe, now that you have

the correct information, you are going to be a major part in making sure that the appropriate information goes out and that the industry has everything that they need because, really, it's going to take all of us in this room to make sure they have the right information.

Thank you.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Minister.

Do you know if there's a separate tax incentive for low-budget local features?

Mrs. Aheer: Well, we have the new media fund, so the small productions. That new small-production grant is tailored towards those smaller Alberta film and TV projects. It allows the new Albertan filmmakers to enter a competitive market, to learn their craft, to grow their portfolio, and allows for more talented and experienced Albertans to work.

What we'd heard from the industry was that a lot of the newer and younger generation that is coming out, who are educated, were having a really hard time breaking into the larger industry parts. The way that we looked at it was that if we could have a smaller production grant, we would be able to help some of those younger, not even so much younger but newer, people in the industry, able to support them going out. That's one of the ways that we're able to help with that. I don't know if you had a chance to talk to them about this, but one of the things was having a bit of differentiation between the tax credit and the grant program. This was one of those things that we had discussed at length to make sure that there were opportunities for newer folks coming on the scene to be able to grow what they're doing and potentially break into the larger industry.

Ms Goehring: Thank you.

Is this the \$1 million that's staying in culture?

Mrs. Aheer: That's correct.

Ms Goehring: So \$1 million for this.

Mrs. Aheer: That's correct.

Ms Goehring: This is going to have a devastating impact on local documentary and other filmmakers in the province.

Mrs. Aheer: Actually, I think it's a wonderful opportunity for them to be able to break in. This is really for a lot of the newer folks that are coming in. As I said to you earlier, all of the other dollars are moving over. There is no decrease in the funding. The funding is moving.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Aheer: It is staying the same. The money is moving over to economic development. Again, this is about messaging. Let me be clear, just so that the messages that leave this room are clear, so that the industry is not feeling fearful. The dollars are staying, including the funding that's going over to Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, and then we bumped an extra million dollars for this small-production grant. It's actually a wonderful opportunity. For any of those other projects that want to apply for that tax credit, which, again, is really what the industry had asked us for, I actually believe that this is a wonderful opportunity.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Minister.

Given that some productions from earlier intake periods have been granted letters of intent allowing them to move forward, yet some have not received information or have been rejected: who is

green-lighting these projects, what are the criteria, and when can they expect a response?

4:20

Mrs. Aheer: As far as I understand – Lora, if you want to maybe step in.

Ms Pillipow: The minister has indicated before that the outline of the budget for the screen-based production grant is honouring existing grant commitments. So if you have specific projects that haven't received their grants, please let us know.

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. Let us know.

Ms Goehring: So you would like a list?

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah.

Ms Pillipow: Our budget includes the commitment to the grant agreements that have already been made and the letters of intent . . .

Mrs. Aheer: Have already gone out, as far as I know.

Ms Pillipow: . . . that were also agreed to.

Ms Goehring: There are many that have indicated they have not received any information from your office.

Mrs. Aheer: Please send us that list. If you'd like to send us that, we're happy to take a look at it.

Ms Goehring: Thank you.

Mrs. Aheer: Which applications are those? Do you know which intake that was?

Ms Goehring: This is earlier intake periods.

Mrs. Aheer: Oh, you're talking about intake. Are you talking about intake or letters of intent?

Ms Goehring: Their question. Given that some productions from earlier intake periods have been granted letters of intent, allowing them to move forward, and some have not received any information or have been rejected, they want to know: who is green-lighting the projects, what are the criteria, and when can they expect a response?

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. If they've received a letter of intent . . .

Ms Goehring: They have not.

Mrs. Aheer: They have not?

Ms Goehring: Oh, so they've been granted letters of intent allowing them, but they haven't received any more information.

Mrs. Aheer: If they've been granted letters of intent, that means that we are committed to honouring those commitments. I think I've been very clear about that.

Ms Goehring: Well, they're unclear, and they're asking. They asked me to ask you this question directly.

Mrs. Aheer: They? Who?

Ms Goehring: Many, unfortunately, Minister, are not comfortable coming forward and identifying themselves. They've seen in the past what has happened.

Mrs. Aheer: So how am I supposed to understand what it is that I need to find out?

Ms Goehring: I will reach out to them and ask them.

Mrs. Aheer: That is an interesting way of asking a question. If I can't know who I'm supposed to be helping, I really don't know how I can help.

Ms Goehring: They're not comfortable. Many in the industry, Minister, have indicated that they're fearful of the cuts.

Mrs. Aheer: If they're fearful of the cuts but they don't know if they're being cut, how am I supposed to know and answer you whether or not that's happening?

Ms Goehring: I will get you a list of those that are comfortable.

Mrs. Aheer: Just to be clear, if there's a letter of intent, that means that there's a commitment to follow through with that. We've been very clear that we will honour the commitments. That's why we are making sure that that transfer is very slow over to Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, because we actually have to honour those under the SPG grant in our ministry.

Ms Goehring: And if they haven't received a letter of intent?

Mrs. Aheer: If they have not received a letter of intent, then that means that either they haven't done the intake or they haven't made the application or they didn't get grant funding.

Ms Goehring: So they can assume that if they have not received a letter of intent despite having applied, they did not get approved?

Mrs. Aheer: Applications do not guarantee grant funding.

Ms Goehring: But will they be messaged that they didn't get approved?

Mrs. Aheer: Of course.

Ms Goehring: Okay. They're saying that they haven't received information.

Mrs. Aheer: Then I'd have to know who that is, Member. Like, you need to let me know.

Ms Goehring: I will reach out to them.

Mrs. Aheer: In order for me to adequately and fulsomely answer your questions, it can't be based on guesses.

Ms Goehring: I think that this is just a generic question. I'm not asking for specific projects or specific grants.

Mrs. Aheer: Yes. But a generic question, especially on something like you were talking about, just to be clear, about the fear in the industry – if you are suggesting that there's fear . . .

Ms Goehring: This is coming directly from industry, Minister. This isn't my question; this is them.

Mrs. Aheer: If there's fear in the industry, Member, I would really, really appreciate being able to alleviate that. If you give me the opportunity to do so, it would be my absolute pleasure to do that, but I can't give you answers on guesses and assumptions.

Ms Goehring: Okay.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you.

Ms Goehring: A simple question, just asking when they could expect a response. That's not a . . .

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. I'm just going to have my deputy jump in here. Thank you.

Ms Pillipow: Just to clarify, any applicants who have received letters of intent should have received correspondence from the ministry in the process of getting a grant agreement. Any applicants from the May and August intakes from the program will receive communication from the ministry, and they will be encouraged to apply for the tax credit program.

Ms Goehring: Do we have a timeline when they would be hearing from the ministry?

Mrs. Aheer: That would be EDTT, too.

Ms Pillipow: We will respond to them. I don't have a timeline. I can confirm the timeline, though.

Ms Goehring: Thank you.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you.

Ms Goehring: Thank you.

I would like to now go on to community and voluntary support services on page 63 of the estimates. Community and voluntary support sees a reduction of 21 per cent for other expenses. Combined with grants, this area sees a total of 28 per cent in reduction. Over the four years community and voluntary support services will see a 50 per cent reduction in funding. Where is the line for the – sorry.

Mrs. Aheer: Which page are you on?

Ms Goehring: Page 63 of the estimates.

Mrs. Aheer: Okay.

Ms Goehring: This is again a question from a stakeholder wanting to know how nonprofits who rely on this funding will continue to survive. No communication over the summer regarding the program other than . . .

The Chair: That is the conclusion of the second set of 20 minutes. You have 20 minutes remaining in your time.

Ms Goehring: Thank you. I still have 20 minutes?

The Chair: Yes, you do.

Ms Goehring: Thank you.

They're saying: no communication over the summer regarding the program other than "Please wait for news on the website." Is there an update regarding the SCIP grant?

Mrs. Aheer: Specifically the CIP?

Ms Goehring: The S-C-I-P grant. SCIP.

Mrs. Aheer: Well, we're continuing our commitment to invest in this sector.

Ms Goehring: It shows a reduction.

Mrs. Aheer: There's a path back to balance that has to be struck here. We are honouring our commitment. The one thing that I realized – and, again, I'm sure you've done lots of consultations as well – is that Albertans are really all in this together. They understand.

I was going to say that a portion of the budget decreases to this sector includes changes with capital grants. The way that it's explained is that there is a lot of flow – right? – of money coming in and money going out, including the federal programs, which I think is what you're asking about. The capital grants are one time, they're paid, and they fluctuate. There are amounts over the period of years that they match the cash-flow requirements of that specific project, for example. I can give you a list of the projects where you'll see the dollars really go up and down depending – like, there was Telus and Vivo and a whole bunch of other projects that were done through the ICIP granting – I'm not sure if I'm saying this correctly – and the Winspear, right? The dollars are there based on specific requirements of the project, and by 2023 the commitments for some of these one-time capital grants will have been completed, so that sort of gets reflected in some of those dollars.

I think that answers some part of your question. I'm sure you'll have more questions. We'll continue to invest in programs, especially not-for-profits, and helping them to become self-sufficient.

I have to say that I have to give severe massive kudos to our department. We have some of the most incredible department staff ever, who actively work on building capacity and building community and looking at how those investment dollars can really be stretched in the communities. One of the things that you learn when you're on this side is just the amount of incredible work that gets done by these folks. They mentor them through how it is that they can use their dollars in their community; if they're applying for grants, whether there are actually outcomes that are going to make a huge difference in that community. We have all sorts of grants that build capacity, that help out with new Canadians, multiculturalism. There is just an immense opportunity.

I really have to give a shout-out to the department and Anne Davidson, who's behind me here on my left, and her group that do so much incredible work in the communities. There is tremendous leadership, especially right now when we're in such a tough fiscal situation. These nonprofits and these groups that work in all of our communities – and I think I mentioned in my opening comments about the number of volunteers and volunteer hours in all of our communities – on which so many of us depend to really get a lot of this work done. So just a huge shout-out to the department for the work they do in building capacity in this area.

Ms Goehring: Thank you. I agree. There's a lot of incredible work happening out there all across the province.

You had made a comment: helping them to become self-sufficient. It just brings me to a broader question about the business plan and how you're planning to track the success of these goals without specific targets.

Mrs. Aheer: Do you have a page number there?

Ms Goehring: It's just a general comment on all of the business plans regarding culture. Some of them have targets; some of them do not. I'm just curious what metrics you're using to measure success. When you're saying that you're helping them to become self-sufficient, what is your strategy to do that?

4:30

Mrs. Aheer: That's a really great question. Part of what the department does is help to build capacity in those areas. They support facilitation, which means, you know, that a lot of what happens is that when nonprofits are setting up, they have to set up governance boards, and they have to have folks that are working within the community and making sure they have people to reach out. What the department really, really does is help them to become self-sufficient through strengthening management and leadership and also operational capacity – right? – because that's largely, in part, where some of those dollars will go at times.

To be able to look at a community and – I don't know; we can take an example of, you know, a cultural community that is trying to do a Diwali event, for example, because Diwali is ongoing, and there have been lots of events. They'll look in their community and sort of see how it is that they're bringing people together, look at building that nonprofit, for example, that maybe works with a particular group of people. Then our department will work with them on helping them to achieve outcomes that show that it actually contributed in a positive way to their communities.

You know, there are criteria that are involved with these specifically for that, to help them understand their outcomes. Really, it's not government deciding what an outcome should look like in a community. That community: they're grassroots. These are people who know, understand, and love their communities more than I, certainly, ever could, not living in that particular community, or any of us living in the space of government.

It's really, really important that those folks have the opportunity to work with our department members at that grassroots level to understand what it is that they need to fulfill within their community, help fund raise dollars there. Then they can match dollars with government and leverage those dollars to actually help build capacity in their communities. Our staff provides all of that through facilitation, training on governance because that's sometimes the hardest part, leadership, skill development.

It's really, really collaborative. Government and the sector representatives, build awareness on important roles of the sector. They give us really great input, too, on understanding how we can help them and identify goals and address key issues.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Minister. I just find it confusing as how it can be transparent when it's not clearly identified what the targets are, what the outcomes are, and what the measurements are.

Mrs. Aheer: You want the government to be prescriptive to small grassroots communities?

Ms Goehring: No. But when you're saying that there are these outcomes that you want to see, how do you know that you've been successful in supporting them? Like, what does that look like to Albertans? How can you measure that?

Mrs. Aheer: Each one is going to be unique, right? Every single situation is ...

Ms Goehring: But some of the business plan has targets; some doesn't.

Mrs. Aheer: Sorry. Did you want to jump in, Lora?

Ms Pillipow: Sure. Are you referring to certain areas that don't have a performance measure? I apologize.

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. I'm just not sure exactly what you're – if you could give me a number, that would be helpful.

Ms Goehring: Page 33.

Ms Pillipow: And a specific measure that you have a question about?

Ms Goehring: In 1(a) there are specific targets for charitable donations, the targets for 2018, '19, '20, and '21. What's the plan to get those numbers up to that for charitable donations?

Ms Pillipow: Minister, are you okay if I ...

Mrs. Aheer: Yes. Please do, and I'll jump in. Yeah. By all means.

Ms Pillipow: This measure tracks the cash resources that are donated to registered charities in Alberta. It was previously an indicator in our business plan for 2018-21. We've added it as a new measure. The metric is a means of assessing the direct charitable giving of Albertans and their support of the charitable sector.

The donations do include a variety of factors. The results have ranged for different types of generosity from Albertans from a high of \$1.6 billion in 2015 to a low \$1.44 billion. As the economy continues to recover, we are expecting to see donations increase.

We'll also note that the methodology that is used is StatsCan. Charitable donations data that we can use are collected from the income tax returns of Albertans and then submitted to Canada Revenue Agency. The data doesn't include the donations where a tax receipt was not issued.

Mrs. Aheer: This is just part of us giving everybody in this room and anybody who is reading the budget some transparency on understanding those baselines that are coming from, basically, philanthropic giving in the province. We wanted to be able to be really transparent about the giving side, like, what's coming in from, you know, the private sector and other groups like that and being able to share that so that you understand how it is that we fill gaps and are able to work with the sector collaboratively.

Ms Goehring: Yeah. Knowing that there are going to be a lot of cuts to nonprofits, there is an expectation that Albertans give more to help them stay afloat.

Mrs. Aheer: Well, I think that there is not an expectation. Albertans are, by far, per capita the most generous people in the world.

Ms Goehring: But it shouldn't be reliant on donations when it's a government responsibility.

Mrs. Aheer: Governments and communities and people in general: we want to make sure that people in their communities have a sense of making sure that we're building this together. And you know what? In tough fiscal times people really, really come together. I've seen it over and over again. You see any time there's a fire or any sort of serious situation, the level of giving in this province is just unbelievable. So absolutely we want to encourage other sectors to participate because they want to.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Aheer: But we wanted to give you a very transparent understanding of where we were. It's a new measurement that we're providing to make sure we're as transparent as possible. We certainly don't want to take credit for the private-sector giving in anything that we're doing. We want to show our collaboration, we want to be honest about where we are in our fiscal plan, and we definitely, definitely want to give shout-outs and kudos to those

who are willing and able to participate and help build their communities.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Minister. Going into page 63, line 2.3, community initiatives program – I think that's a nice segue – this funds community-driven initiatives under the following grant funding streams: project-based operating; enhanced capacity advancement program, or ECAP; major cultural and sports events; Alberta Culture Days; and other grants. I know that this is an important grant for Edmonton-Castle Downs. We've seen numerous community league renovations. Through being able to renovate their community league, they're able to increase revenue to their hall and host more events in the community, which is absolutely essential for programming that our communities rely on. So I am concerned that there is a decrease of 17 per cent.

I'm curious what this will mean for the grant recipients, such as those preschools that are run through the community leagues, that have been given grants in previous years under our government to upgrade their preschools so that they could have a better learning environment for our young students. Yeah.

If you could answer that: what does this mean for just general grant recipients under the CIP program with this decrease?

Mrs. Aheer: We're committed to investing in people in their communities, absolutely. It is a tough fiscal situation, but we will continue to invest in those. We're hoping that the investments trigger matching funds from other levels of government, private companies, individual donations. I think we have to give some really big shout-outs and credit here to the not-for-profits. We all know that they deliver critical social, recreational, cultural – exactly to your point – programs and support Albertans.

We recognize that the reduction is significant, but we've taken a really balanced approach. We've looked at it sort of across the board so that we minimized that impact. We'll continue to invest. We have an investment of \$25 million into the community facility enhancement program, and we have \$23.5 million into the community initiatives program, which ensures that the province will have continued access to important programs. In addition, we're looking at working with stakeholders to strengthen the sector. I think we'd already talked about this, but I think it's worth chatting about again.

All of us in this room have associations and groups, amazing people who work in their communities to build capacity and to really, really understand what is needed at that grassroots level in the communities, better than any of us can fully understand sitting in here. It's really, really important that we're reaching out and working with them. I've been very, very honoured to talk to so many of these groups who understand where we're at right now. They get it. I'm very appreciative of that, and I would like to take an opportunity to thank every single one of the stakeholders that's reached out, because these are really beautiful folks.

Ms Goehring: I have a comment from a stakeholder that directly says: "At this point a cut to CIP seriously compromises our ability to deliver services at the scale that we have been delivering them. For some organizations too ground down to even complain – and I have heard that alarming defeatist vibe on Facebook – this could be the difference between keeping going and throwing in the towel or completely going under. It certainly does not inspire the kind of boldness and adventurous spirit that this province and its artists pride themselves on."

That, to me, doesn't sound like it's something that's accepting and understanding. It's a cut, so many organizations that are community initiatives driven are afraid. They rely heavily on

volunteers. They rely heavily on communities to come together and build that park and do bottle drives and do all of those things. Now, with the decrease in the budget, it's saying: you need to do more, and we're going to give you less. So with all due respect, Minister, I'm not hearing from community members saying that this is something that they're accepting.

4:40

Mrs. Aheer: Well, I would suggest that if you have a particular group of people that are concerned or if they haven't gotten any information back on their grant application, would you please let us know? If we've missed something or if we've missed out on a particular – again, it's very hard to answer based on assumptions and not knowing exactly which group. We are continuing to invest.

Ms Goehring: I'm not identifying a specific group saying that they haven't received information. They're saying that with this cut they are afraid of what that means going forward.

Mrs. Aheer: But again, if they make an application for the grant, we have every capacity to be able to look at that grant and the criteria and make sure that we continue to build capacity in these communities.

I think, again, that the important factor to understand here is that – and lookit, I know that these are tough fiscal times for everybody. But I have to say that crossministry – and I'm extremely proud of our ministers – we took a very, very collaborative approach all together. In the past there has been a lot of insular work that gets done within ministries. Every single one of these ministers looked at how it is: how do we look at our fiscal situation and still continue on? And you know what? The efficiencies and the changes that we've made within our ministry are going towards funding the work that's going to be done with the opioid crisis, palliative care . . .

Ms Goehring: Minister, we're here to talk about culture and . . .

Mrs. Aheer: . . . the ministry that is dealing with mental health beds, you know? Health, Education, all these things: it's crossministry. Since you've been asking me about other ministries, like Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, I feel it's very important that everybody in this room understand the collaborative and immensely incredible work that has been done on behalf of all of these ministries to make sure that the finite dollars that we have are being spread towards making sure that vital services are protected.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Aheer: I can honestly tell you that within our ministries we are looking at building capacity and making sure that folks in this province know that those dollars all across ministries, everybody everywhere, went towards things that Albertans really asked us about and that we have a very good overview and a broad perspective over that.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Minister. With all due respect, I'd like to get back to your budget. I appreciate you not wanting to talk about your budget, but if I could get back to questions about culture.

Mrs. Aheer: Well, actually, you asked me about this . . .

Ms Goehring: I absolutely did not.

Mrs. Aheer: . . . so I wanted to explain to you with all transparency that it is such a collaborative effort on behalf of this government,

on behalf of all of the ministries to make sure that vital services are protected. That means that when you have finite dollars, we all look within ourselves to see how it is that we can help, and we will continue to invest in communities.

Ms Goehring: Thank you.

If we could go to page 63, the other initiatives program, line 2.4 in the budget, this indicates that it funds projects that fall outside of the parameters of the CIP and the CFEP. It includes one-time projects, internal disaster relief, and projects that are emergency or urgent in nature. Some of the examples of recipients in the past have been the Edmonton Heritage Festival and, like you had mentioned earlier in your comments this afternoon, the Edmonton Opera Association. This has seen a decrease of 82 per cent. Can you please explain that?

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. The budget will provide \$1.5 million for the other initiatives program, which supports unique community-based projects that fall outside, like you said, the criteria of the community grants programs. Just again, these are one-time grants, and they are discretionary initiatives. This budget line fluctuates. Yeah. There have been some great projects that have gone through there. Some of the ones that are upcoming still, that are funded, are the 2021 IIHF world junior cup champions – that's a \$2.25 million initiative – the 2026 Calgary Olympic plebiscite . . .

The Chair: Thank you, Minister. We have come to the conclusion of the 60-minute speaking block for the Official Opposition.

We now begin a 20-minute speaking block for the government caucus. I believe, MLA Allard, you will begin and be going back and forth with the minister.

Mrs. Allard: Please, if that's acceptable.

The Chair: Minister, is that acceptable, to go back and forth?

Mrs. Aheer: Absolutely.

The Chair: Okay. You may proceed.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Chair, and, through you to the minister, thank you for the work you've done on the budget and to your staff as well. We sincerely appreciate the level of detail in the budget.

I want to start off. I sit on the Red Tape Reduction Task Force, and I note that on page 31 of your business plan, under Ministry Outcomes, you do talk about: "unconstrained by red tape." I'm just wondering if you could elaborate a little bit more on what the ministry is doing to assist in the reduction of bureaucratic burdens. I suspect, Minister, that as we reduce red tape across ministries and particularly when ministries are working together, that reduces the cost to organizations and particularly nonprofit organizations that are accessing funding.

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. As you know, the government has committed to reducing regulatory requirements by one-third. This is a very ambitious job. Thank you again to the hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction, Grant Hunter. It's been an absolute pleasure working on some of these initiatives with him.

There was one-third against the May 1, 2019, baseline count, contributing to the goal of making Alberta the freest and fastest moving economy in North America. It's of course supported by our government and Treasury Board and Finance. In our commitment to find red tape, one of the things we're most proud of at this point in time is our ability to do electronic transfers for grants. It could have taken upwards of six months before, and we can bring it down to almost five days.

I can give you, actually, a really good example if you don't mind. Yesterday we were able to fund \$75,000 to a group in Edmonton called Free Footie. I don't know if you've had a chance to see these guys. Tim is just an absolute rock star with his coaches. It basically provides free sports to children that are coming in, like new Canadians, refugees, and children who have very serious socioeconomic issues, that kind of stuff. Tim has been able to leverage these dollars. He actually has a funding campaign going on right now where you can buy a basketball and contribute to his fundraising campaign.

More than that, what I thought was just really, really amazing was that he saw the ability to do this and be able to help these kids out. Not only does he provide sports – and it's not about being an awesome athlete – but it's actually about getting kids out and participating, about isolationism. We have lots and lots of new Canadians that come in, and there are language barriers. Sometimes both of the parents are working in order to be able to make ends meet. I mean, they're in a new country. They help them find boots and coats and all sorts of stuff, especially when they're coming from hot countries to this very cold climate that we live in.

It was a real, real pleasure to be able to not only do that on behalf of the government and Albertans, really – these are taxpayer dollars, so every Albertan has contributed to Free Footie – but to be able to know that that money will be in his bank in, like, a few days to be able to participate and to be able to do these amazing, amazing initiatives. Talk about groups that are leveraging government dollars to be able to just spread those so much. It was one of those moments when I was super proud. Because we were able to cut red tape and be able to get that six months shaved off to be able to get them their money, they're able to really use those dollars right away. It was pretty spectacular meeting with him yesterday and finding that out.

There's another opportunity, too, especially for some of the not-for-profits that have had continuing work, and we see that growth in the work that they're doing. Together with us, we can look at them doing multiyear grants. As we go down the road, there's a lot of consultation that needs to be done with not-for-profits still to make sure that we get that right. So we're looking forward to that. Over the next little while here there's going to be a lot of consultation with Albertans in understanding how it is that we can best serve them in the non-profit sector.

4:50

As I was mentioning earlier, there are 26,000-plus non-profits in Alberta, so you can imagine that it's a large group of folks that do so much great work in this province. We want to be able to provide, especially in this really tough economic fiscal situation that we're in, some stability for some of these groups and to be able to say: you know, instead of having to reapply every year, we might be able to do long-term agreements and help them out with that. A lot of that has to do with the work that we're doing with civil societies and helping to bump up the work that's happening there, so it'll be nice to be able to work with those groups. A lot of the communities will be very positively impacted by that.

We're also supporting the Ministry of Service Alberta in the freedom to care act. There are exemptions that can happen with charitable and nonprofit groups. This has been an ongoing issue; you've probably heard from a lot of your groups about how it is. Quite often the regulations are designed for commercial use, and they're really, really difficult to navigate, so the applications for those regulations have unintended consequences of preventing charitable organizations from being able to do their work.

Again, it's a huge outreach into the communities to make sure that we get that right. As you know, sometimes when you make a

change in one piece of policy, there are ripple effects, and in our charitable communities we really, really want to make sure that we're not causing them undue extra stress, outside of other things that are going on, to make sure that they know what's going on.

There's so much great work that's being done, and we want to be able to acknowledge that, too. Going forward, what we're really looking forward to, from all members, is having feedback from their communities and the groups that are working alongside you and building capacity to understand how we can better support that. Again, I have to give a shout-out to our department. They are absolute rock stars. They work with these communities in every single aspect of all government members to make sure that we're doing the very best that we can under our fiscal situation to continue to invest in communities.

Mrs. Allard: Well, thank you.

If I can continue on, Minister, I'm referring now to page 63 of your estimates document, specifically line items 6.4 and 6.1. We're looking at Alberta Games and recreation and physical activity. They're being reduced by \$800,000 and \$650,000 respectively. I'm just asking on behalf of taxpayers and particularly my constituents, a number of whom are in organized sport – you know, our daughter is going to the Alberta Games – that kind of thing. We're just at that age and stage where we know a lot of families that are also participants. There are just questions and queries around specific aspects of programs that are being eliminated or reduced. Is this a general cut, and what are the expected impacts for this decision?

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you for that question. Thank you for the opportunity to provide some clarity around this. Again, a lot of this goes to the way that information is interpreted, how it's put out to the general public, and what is actually happening. The current investment provides a really substantial base to allow government to support this sector. We consolidated Alberta Sport Connection, the programs, into the department, and the department will actually review the current grant streams to ensure that they continue to meet the priorities of the sector.

One of the things that happens – and we've been talking a lot about duplication and things like this. What happens now, when the Alberta Sport Connection comes within the government, is that we're able to just go right through the department and make sure all of those funding arrangements and grants and all of that would still flow through. The granting department, the department that does all of that, will continue to be able to take applications for grants that way and to be able to meet the needs of this sector.

I also recognize that it's really, really important to continue dialogues with the sector. I was really thrilled. I had a small conversation with some folks from the Active Alberta coalition. They are groups that are, you know, sports communities, elite sports. I mean, it's just a huge spectrum. They all sit at one table together. They're a volunteer organization, so they'll be doing a lot of work to help inform us as to what needs to happen in this sector. We're actually super excited to be meeting with them. It's very informal, but it's all-around physical activity and recreational sports. We would really love to encourage everybody to be able to have conversations and bring some of that information to us to help us inform our go-forward.

There's a lot of collaboration that actually can be done between government and those groups, and this is a partnership with the ministry. This is really what it boils down to. I think that collaboratively we can look at duplication and overlap and see how it is that we can use our very precious dollars to make sure that we're impacting at the best level, getting our biggest bang for the dollar, as it were, as much as possible.

One of the things we're really excited about is that we've extended an invitation to an elite athlete to be able to serve as an honorary ambassador to elevate, hopefully – there are so many opportunities just within all of us here to be able to bring people together and not be divisive and actually work with the communities. We thought that we could get one of these really amazing athletes to come forward and really, really help to, hopefully, leverage and trigger dollars in the private sector and other communities but also to get the youth really involved and excited. Right? When we watch the Biancas of the world and all of those people who come forward and really elevate sport – you know, look what happened with the Raptors. How exciting was that? So we can leverage all of that excitement and those amazing things, I think, by having an ambassador that will go around and work with communities to help them figure out how to leverage their dollars, how to work in partnership with government.

Mrs. Allard: That's excellent, and what I'm hearing is a synergy between the work the ministry is doing and then, potentially, the private sector as well.

It's a great segue into my next question. I'm referring to page 34 of the business plan, objective 2.4, just discussing outcomes for sports and rec. Specifically, you're talking about a top-tier athlete or an elite athlete, and I'm wondering about continued funding for world-class training for Alberta athletes.

Mrs. Aheer: That's a great question. We actually had a lot of elite athletes calling us directly about this, again because there is a lot of misinformation out there. We'll continue with our grant funding. Applications can be made. Nothing is changing other than the fact that it's just going to go directly through government versus going through the board. But the grants are always processed through us. Anyways, a lot of that work was being done by people in government already. Those folks will stay on to continue to work under the granting department because they're the experts in that field, right? Certainly, I'm the farthest thing from an elite athlete that there is, so you wouldn't want me making that decision; that's for sure.

It's really nice to know that there are folks out there who really, really understand. I mean, that's a whole microcosm, elite athletes. It's very, very competitive. There's a lot of emotional, physical, family sacrifice that goes into this. We really want to make sure that we honour who these people are. They're such amazing ambassadors for our province, right? This is just amazing, and we're so committed to high-performance sport. You can probably see it across the breadth of the ministry's funding to communities and community infrastructure.

I'm not sure if you know about the Podium Alberta program. It's something that everybody in government should know about, especially if you have up-and-coming athletes that sort of fall into that elite athlete category. This provides just unbelievably great support for Alberta's nationally carded, high-performance athletes, encourages them to fulfill their educational goals as well. As you know, we have lots of swimmers sort of in our circle. They're in those pools all day long. A lot of these high-performance athletes really, really need to be able to focus on their educational goals, too.

We're going to review and determine – ooh, and the lights go out. That's fun.

The Chair: Okay. We'll just have a break for now.

Mrs. Aheer: Okay. That's time for a break. I can keep talking if you like.

5:00

The Chair: I think, to be prudent, we're going to stop the time and try to understand our difficulty.

Oh. Here we go.

Mrs. Aheer: Look at that. Woo, I have spots in my eyes.

Can I continue, Chair?

The Chair: Okay. We're back on air, apparently, so you may continue. Sorry about that.

Mrs. Aheer: Just to be clear, I think it's really important, along with working with the associations, to review and take a look at the most effective and best investments that we can make supporting athletic development, especially of Alberta's top-tier athletes.

That was really the last thing I had to say about that, anyway.

Mrs. Allard: Awesome. One final follow-up, if I may, also on page 34. Just at the bottom of the business plan it just talks about advancing sport and active living in Alberta, and then it goes on to talk about excellence in sport. I'm wondering specifically about improving female participation in sport. Can you elaborate on different initiatives to achieve this outcome and also to achieve the outcome where we have female ambassadors in the top tiers of their sports?

Mrs. Aheer: That's a really great question. I don't know if you've noticed, but there's a huge shift to understanding just what it's like and a lot of the barriers that need to be broken down. We have elite athletes actually sitting with us. I'm sure that the member from Calgary-Glenmore could probably very much elaborate on being an elite athlete and being a woman lead athlete in hockey, I believe it was. Right?

An Hon. Member: Football.

Mrs. Aheer: Football. Sorry.

What I wanted to say was that – are the lights going out again, or is that just my eyes? – for the stakeholders and partners across the sports system I think part of it is saying the words that we want to increase participation of women and girls in sport. One of the things that folks might not be aware of is that we have the Alberta women in sport leadership impact program. The coaches have partnered together; it's an association in Canada. They've actually already helped out 14 different organizations to support the advancement of women in coaching through apprenticeship and mentoring training programs. There's an investment of \$45,000 into that training program.

There are also 21 of the Alberta sports organizations. The participation rate of women and girls represents over 50 per cent of the athletes. I know that these are numbers that we just don't get to hear very often. It's really, really important that we elevate those numbers and talk about that with, like, great gusto. That doesn't mean that more shouldn't be done, particularly in nontraditional sports – right? – targeting women and girls. Again, I think it's a really important conversation to have. One of the biggest privileges for me, having been in this role, is meeting just with outstanding, outstanding athletes just generally. Some of the women athletes that I meet are unbelievably driven. I really feel like they could probably lift an airplane if they wanted to, with the amount of energy and just absolute drive that they have.

This year's federal-provincial-territorial ministers' meeting was actually hosted in Alberta and yielded Red Deer's declaration on the prevention of harassment and abuse in sport. This is a part, again, we just don't talk about enough. You've probably heard

some of the recent pieces that have come out about that. There has to be a commitment from government as a partner in this to really, really work with the sports sector and the stakeholders. They use, you know, the words: to make sports safer and more welcoming. That's an understatement. It cannot be ever acceptable ever again that women would feel unsafe or harassed, for heaven's sake, in a sport.

Granted, in sports, you know, there's a whole different level and a whole different dichotomy in how people speak to each other and all of that, but to talk about it in such minor terms is actually quite aggravating. We cannot accept that. It has to be stated over and over again that any acceptance of that completely demeans everything that we've worked so hard for and the women who have come before these, the trailblazers that really, really tread this path for some of the new up-and-coming what will probably be elite athletes in their fields. There is absolutely no acceptance, tolerance for this kind of behaviour. It's really, really nice to see that shift that's happening. There's huge momentum. So many people have done so much work on this.

There is the Sport Leadership Conference that was held on May 1 to 4. There were lots of sessions about this. Oh. One thing I should probably mention, too, which was really, really quite a game changer for me, anyways, was that we actually met with the Edmonton Eskimos and went through their sexual harassment piece that they work on with the rookies and talked with them about, sort of, what is faced and how it is, you know, in a sport like football, where you're taught to go out and take each other out on the field and all of this, and the transfer of that that happens in their daily lives. I was absolutely blown away. I actually participated in this with them. I had young men about the same age as my son – he's only a little bit older, 23, 24 – that sat there, and they just wanted to have these deep conversations of understanding how it is that they can be better men.

The Chair: Good. Thank you, Minister. Thank you for this.

We have now come to the conclusion of the 20-minute speaking block for the government caucus. I will now call a five-minute break. If five minutes will go by quickly, we will reconvene at 5:11.

[The committee adjourned from 5:06 p.m. to 5:11 p.m.]

The Chair: Good. Thank you, members. I now call the meeting back to order.

We begin the rotation of speaking time that will alternate between the Official Opposition and the government caucus, with individual speaking times being set to five minutes, which, if combined with the minister's time, makes it a 10-minute block. I will remind members that discussion should flow through the chair at all times, regardless of whether or not the speaking time is combined.

We begin with the Official Opposition. You have 10 minutes. Would you like to proceed, and speaking time combined?

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sure.

The Chair: Okay.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, sir. How are you?

Mr. Deol: Very good. Thank you.

Mrs. Aheer: Good.

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Minister. Thank you for the opportunity to ask a question. One thing specifically I was looking at in this portfolio on multiculturalism was antiracism grants. Going through

the pages, I didn't really find this specific word. Are there any grants allocated to antiracism activities? If you could elaborate on that.

Mrs. Aheer: Just to make sure I understand the question, Chair, you're asking me about antiracism grants?

Mr. Deol: Antiracism grants. Yes.

Mrs. Aheer: Okay. Sure. What we've done, actually, in our business plan is put all of the grants together under the community initiatives plan. What will happen is that with the criteria around that, what we can do is take a look at making sure – it's the same thing with the status of women grants. All of them will be underneath the community initiatives plan. There will be lots of opportunity for folks in communities who are wanting to work on particular things, antiracism, especially multiculturalism, because we gave extra money into status of women and inclusion and diversity to make sure that we have added dollars to be able, well, especially working within communities with new Canadians coming in, to build capacity with those communities. So many of them want to share their cultures, and we're really, really wanting to promote the positive intersectionality of those cultures but also acknowledging the work that needs to be done for antiracism.

One of the things that I should probably point out is that in our platform we had a significant amount of work to be done with new Canadians on professional designations and also security around folks, whether that's a synagogue or a mosque or a church, to make sure that there's security there for those folks, to make sure they are safe to pray. This is a big issue. As we know, there have been many situations where we were very concerned about people and their particular faiths and whatnot being able to pray safely without having to look over their shoulders.

So our plan, our platform, actually, very much aligns with the antiracism initiatives that were taken. In fact, we're very, very pleased to see that that initiative aligned with many of the factors that we're bringing forward and making sure of new Canadians and folks recognizing their professional – I think this is a huge piece. We have the fairness for newcomers as well so that if folks are, say, wanting to go out to a rural community and being able to set up shop there, there are lots and lots of opportunities for these folks going out there to potentially receive some mentoring, microloans, all sorts of things like that to be able to set up in those communities. It helps to build capacity within those communities. The more we know about each other, the more we're educated about each other, the more that we learn to work together and in community together, the better.

Mr. Deol: We don't have any – do you want to go ahead? Actually, I'm just going to switch. I'll come back.

Member Irwin: Yeah. I'm just going to jump in just because I have to go to Private Members'. Yeah.

The Chair: That's fine. Yeah. That's fine. Go ahead.

Member Irwin: Okay. Thank you. Sorry about that.

As the critic for Status of Women and LGBTQ2S-plus issues I'm happy to be here to ask questions about Status of Women.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you for being here.

Member Irwin: Yeah. No, thank you. I don't have a lot of time, so I'm going to jump into it right away. The first thing I want to point to is your business plan. I notice that performance metrics for many of your key objectives appear to be missing.

Mrs. Aheer: Which page?

Member Irwin: Yeah. I can refer you to pages 36 and 37. Those are your key objectives. You've got performance metrics on page 38. On page 38 just two metrics are listed, and one is about sexual assault and one is about violence. My first question for you is: how will you measure any of the many other outcomes that are listed on pages 36 and 37?

Mrs. Aheer: Let me talk just a little bit first about – do you want to talk about 3(a) first?

Member Irwin: You know, I could ask about each of them specifically.

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. Why don't we go through them a little bit if you don't mind.

Member Irwin: Okay. We can do that. I'll just point out that the performance metrics that you have are for, essentially, 3.8, 3.9. They're sort of indirectly connected to a couple of them. They only account for about \$1.1 million of your \$3.58 million allocated. For instance, women's leadership, 3.5, developing and advancing initiatives that support women's leadership: what metrics will you use to measure those?

Mrs. Aheer: For advancing leadership?

Member Irwin: Exactly. Yeah.

Mrs. Aheer: Well, actually, that's a really great question. One of the things that we realized when we were putting our platform commitments and whatnot together was making sure that we recognize sort of where we've been failing in understanding how it is that you elevate women in particular jobs, breaking through particular industries that might not necessarily be where we see a lot of women, where they're underrepresented, and any of those kinds of things. The leadership comes from a lot of different places.

I'll probably get Pam and Lora to talk a little bit about metrics, but just overall we see, if we're talking about the gender pay gap, for example, or anything like that, when you get reports and you look at things, you're initially like: oh, my goodness, we're failing on so many levels. But the best thing about receiving a report like that is that you know what your go-forward is.

One of the things that was mentioned in that report – you probably realized that – is around the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, coding, all of that, and we realized that we'd really missed the mark on being able to elevate and promote young girls and other women into these fields, especially when you talk about that we have the trades. There are so many opportunities for women in trades, and I'm really pleased to have been working with the Minister of Advanced Education for Women Building Futures. I'm sure you've probably met with them. They're just an incredible group of people.

Member Irwin: Yeah. Absolutely. I am probably going to have to interrupt you just because I have so many questions, and I'm obviously really passionate about this. Again, we could go through each of these points and ask where the metrics are, but I guess my question is that I have the benefit of looking at previous business plans, and of course, you know, previous business plans gave defined metrics, performance indicators for each of their objectives. My question is: why are there no – how are you going to be measuring these? There are no objectives apparent other than sexual assault and partner violence. That doesn't account for women's

leadership, that doesn't account for women's economic security, and that doesn't account for LGBTQ2S-plus community members and so on. This is my question.

Ms Pillipow: First, Minister, do you want me to speak?

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. Yeah, go right ahead, and then I'll jump in. Thank you.

Ms Pillipow: Minister Aheer has asked us to develop some new measures based on the consolidated business plan from the previous Status of Women measure. One of the things that we're looking at is some new data that's coming out, of course, with the Alberta One Line that's come out. We want to look at the data that's come out from the success of that particular area and see what we can develop for a new measure.

We'll also be looking at just wrapping up a three-year pilot for some opportunities for administrative roles through the administrative mobility program.

Member Irwin: Right. Yeah. It's a good program.

Ms Pillipow: Those are some things that we're looking at for metrics. The minister is also very passionate about women in leadership, and we do support a resource program. We just need to make sure that we have the right data as Treasury Board does have a requirement for performance measures and indicators to focus on specific progress towards ministry outcomes. We're looking at which data we could use to develop some new metrics.

5:20

Member Irwin: So what I hear is that performance indicator measures will be coming. Do you have a timeline on that? Again, it's a small pot of money. We know that the ministry has been decimated. It's a small pot of money, so I want to know that that money is going to be used effectively for women and LGBTQ2S-plus.

Mrs. Aheer: To your point, too, about 3(a), a lot of the data that we have is, I think, from 2014, 2015, and there's new data that is going to be coming out. As you know, the number of people who actually report sexual assault, domestic violence is highly underrepresented. Even when you do look at the numbers that are there, we know for a fact that many of these numbers are based on what we understand to be reporting. A lot of the work that's been done with One Line, with the work that's being done with sexual assault centres, everything like that, will help us to determine a little bit more, I would suggest better, data on all of the issues that you're talking about.

Member Irwin: Absolutely. Don't get me wrong. Gender-based violence: these are critical issues. I appreciate that you have indicators for that topic and domestic violence as well. My concern are the other objectives, of which there are many, that I'm not seeing indicators for. But as you've said, we can expect those. I'm hoping we can expect those in a timely manner as well.

If I can just come back to the – I've noted the reference to the LGBTQ2S-plus community multiple times in your business plan, and I appreciate that, but again I fear there aren't a whole lot of specifics there. I would like for you to explain a little bit. I'm going to refer you to page 37 of the business plan. I note that \$655,000 is being allocated to improve their position and conditions, and I think you're referring to the previous clause that speaks about women, girls, the LGBTQ2S-plus community and vulnerable populations.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. That's the conclusion of the first 10-minute block. We can possibly come back to that after.

We now move to the government caucus. MLA Horner, I believe you will have the next 10-minute speaking block with the minister.

Mr. Horner: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Through you to the minister, I'd like to switch topics to heritage, Alberta's heritage, if you'll allow me.

Mrs. Aheer: Awesome. Great subject.

Mr. Horner: I know you know the Royal Tyrrell Museum in Drumheller is in my riding. It's a local gem, a global attraction. Your answers here will be of great interest to my constituents. I'd start with page 34 of the ministry's business plan. Key objective 2.3 discusses historic resource and heritage initiatives. Minister, I believe showcasing and preserving Alberta's history is of the utmost importance, as I know you do. How much money is being allocated in 2019-20 in support of this endeavour?

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you for the question. As you know, preserving our history, understanding the history of this province is, I believe – actually, after spending a great deal of time within this ministry, again, we have very, very strong leadership in our department on this. There's so much more we can do to really, really honour the incredible history of this province. I met with some folks yesterday. They had questions around Punjabi heritage in this province, which dates back fairly significantly. It was interesting to find out that our indigenous brothers and sisters were actually some of the first people to welcome the Punjabi communities into these areas because they understood that folks from those countries may not have adequate boots and coats and all of those kinds of things – it would have been significantly different at that time, obviously – but also how to dig into this barren earth and create a world where they could live here. The Punjabi people are extremely resilient. They're a farming community, just absolutely wonderful history there that I actually didn't even know about my husband's culture, about the history here.

As we've talked about before, for example, the very first mosque in Canada was right here in Edmonton, built in collaboration with the Ukrainian families that lived here. It's a beautiful collaboration. It just shows that Albertans have always worked together to be able to make sure that we bring that amazing diversity together.

One of the things that I think is really important and gets lost with all of the messaging that's flying around is that this budget actually invests \$60.6 million into heritage. I've said this many times and I will continue to repeat this, that government remains committed to providing Alberta families and visitors from around the world with world-class opportunities to explore our province's history.

You come from such a unique part of the world. I've been going to the museum in your riding since I was a little girl, and my children have spent many, many days there. I think we go at least four or five times a year. I think there was nobody more excited than I was to see the new bronze of the albertosaurus that's in the new section that has just been recently completed in the Tyrrell museum. We've seen a lot more people coming through that beautiful – and in Edmonton here with RAM reopening their doors, we've just seen an absolute increase in folks coming through and wanting to find out about their history and their world. The Viking exhibit that we just had at the RAM had unbelievable numbers coming through there. I actually have a bit of Scandinavian in my background, too, so I had a moment in the Viking section. It was very fun.

One of the most visited museums, as you know, is the Royal Tyrrell Museum. It's a key tourism attraction. I can't imagine

anybody who doesn't want to go visit the dinosaurs. We were just talking about that expansion. It's a 1,300 square metre expansion. You get over 430,000 visitors a year, so it was just wonderful usage of that space. I want to thank you, too, for the incredible advocacy that you do in your community. That is a treasure in this province, and it's important for us to make sure that we are continuing to invest in these incredible, incredible facilities. Thank you very much for your work as well.

Mr. Horner: Thank you very much, Minister. A few of my subquestions here: how does Alberta's delivery of museums and historic sites compare to other delivery models?

Mrs. Aheer: Well, actually, we're world class here in terms of our delivery. If you look at the numbers, especially with the museum in Drumheller, we compare pretty well. The last real research that was done on this subject was done in the '90s. It continues to be revisited, but the operating of museums and historic sites is actually governed. It's a board-governed legislated corporation model. What that means is – the Royal Ontario Museum, which is a board and agency governed by the government of Ontario, is an example of an alternative model. But there was some analysis that was done in the '90s that showed examples like the Royal Ontario Museum earning revenue as a per cent of its total revenue to be about 5 per cent compared to 13 per cent for what was then the cultural facilities and historical resources foundation. If you move forward to 2016 and '17, the Royal Ontario Museum's earned revenue as a per cent of total was 35 per cent compared to 40 per cent of the heritage division of museums and historic sites.

This type of analysis is part of the evidence and conclusion that we need that commercial and entrepreneurial activity from museums. They're really highly dependent on corporate culture. There are other factors. You can't take away the assumptions of how advantageous they are, especially when you have friends of. There are a lot of groups that work in collaboration with museums to actually build on the amazing facilities.

For example, here at the RAM, the Friends of the RAM actually helped build a stage and a showing facility to be able to bring in scientists and documentaries and all sorts of really interesting stuff. They actually have talks where they invite patrons to come in and sit and have a glass of wine and a talk with a local scientist. There was one fellow who was here recently talking about a bear that is a hybrid of a polar bear and another kind of bear. I'm sorry. I can't remember exactly what he was. He was a brilliant guy, and I got to talk to him for a few minutes. Anyways, he was able to tell the story about this hybrid bear and was able to bring in a whole bunch of patrons and interested folks to come into the RAM and fulfill a really neat piece of science that probably not a lot of people would know about. That was really an interesting part of what these facilities do.

That's further away from government and more private sector, and it's absolutely imperative that we look at how it is that we can look at different funding models and learn from other jurisdictions.

5:30

Mr. Horner: Thank you very much, Minister.

I'm sure this has to do with the recent expansion at the Royal Tyrrell, but on page 63 of the estimates, line items 5.2 and 5.3, the Royal Alberta Museum budget increased by \$1.7 million while the Tyrrell's was reduced by \$1 million. Maybe you can just explain for clarification: what's driving these changes?

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. I'm just going to make sure I've got my numbers correct here. Part of that is because the RAM was closed, so when the RAM opened again, we saw a huge increase in numbers

coming through there. That was a part of that fluctuation, because it had been closed for I think almost a year. Is that correct? I believe so. Oh, it was three years for the renovation. Yeah.

So the minute the doors opened again – I don't know if you've had a chance to go in there. That has a lot to do with that. I don't know if you know that there's just a bunch of new exhibits. I'm a bug person, so the bug exhibit is my favourite. We knew that the museum would be popular with families and children, so there are really a lot of positives that have come out of that. That's part of the reason for that fluctuation in the numbers.

Mr. Horner: Very good. Well, if they ever let us out of here, I'd love to check it out.

Mrs. Aheer: Every one of you should if you haven't visited the RAM yet. Make sure you rub the mammoth when you go in there. It's good luck. It's a really beautiful facility, as is the Tyrrell Museum in your area. It's fantastic, yeah.

Mr. Horner: Thank you very much, Minister.

I'd transfer whatever I have left back to . . .

The Chair: We have about 25 seconds left . . .

Mrs. Aheer: All right. I can breathe.

The Chair: . . . if another member from the government caucus wishes to proceed, or we can cede the time.

Okay. We will cede the time to the Official Opposition at this time. We begin another 10-minute speaking block. MLA Irwin.

Member Irwin: Thank you. I was just asking, when my time was cut off, about the \$655,000 that's being allocated. This is page 37 of the business plan. I was speaking about the commitments to the LGBTQ2S-plus community. I just wanted to know specifically how that money will be allocated, because I couldn't find any further details on that.

Mrs. Aheer: Sorry. Could you repeat the last little part of your question?

Member Irwin: Yeah. I was just curious how that money is being allocated. It says "to improve their position and conditions." Again, this is at the bottom of page 37 of the business plan.

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. Sorry about that. I just needed to hear that last little bit.

The advancing of gender equality, diversity, inclusion are obviously critical priorities for all of us as government members. These priorities are linked to social outcomes, economic growth, and the realization of human rights, too, which is a huge piece of what we all need to – this is a discussion that is continuing and ongoing and very important for our government, as I'm sure it is for you as well.

The ministry works to ensure that policies and legislation – as I'd mentioned in my opening comments, GBA plus, that is throughout 21 of the ministries, is a centre of excellence to make sure that that lens is on absolutely every piece that goes through. I'm not sure if you're familiar with the centre of excellence relating to GBA plus.

Member Irwin: Absolutely, yeah.

Mrs. Aheer: It's one of those things that's actually really interesting. The government started that process. I think one of the things with the go-forward that would be really important is to see that stretch out into corporate and other areas and really using the

availability of those pieces to see if corporate is able to, you know, use that lens and the information that's come. In previous governments we weren't allowed to have access to those. We were told that it was none of our business and not part of what we should know because it was intragovernmental. It's really nice to see that work that has actually been transferred out, because we've all learned a lot from that. The partners across government: we have to increase our understanding and improve decision-making throughout government, specifically around issues that affect diverse communities – women and girls, LGBTQS-plus, and all of the different communities – making sure that the ministry champions those things.

Member Irwin: Am I interpreting that correctly, then? So part of the \$655,000 is going to be going towards GBA plus?

Mrs. Aheer: The GBA plus is actually completed in terms of how it stands as a centre of excellence. Now we can use that information that has been created in the ministry to be able to, hopefully, go – the government already does that. It's part of the centre of excellence. There's one in each one of the ministries. I'm sorry. Maybe I didn't describe that correctly.

Member Irwin: No. That's fair. I do know a fair bit about it.

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. It's in each one of those ministries, so that lens is already there. The hope is that through leading by example, other groups and corporations are able to pick up on this and see the importance of making sure that those lenses are within their particular businesses and groups.

Member Irwin: Okay. That's good.

That leads into my next question, which was actually about the status of GBA plus. You've mentioned it multiple times, but there's no reference to GBA plus. It could be a semantic thing, perhaps not, but you refer to gender and intersectional analysis multiple times. GBA plus: as we know, the feds have done a lot with it as well, and we know that many civil servants have been trained in GBA plus. Is GBA plus being fully – like, you're saying that it's completed, that it's done. The program around GBA plus is not . . .

Mrs. Aheer: The work that was done by the ministry: that work as a whole in creating GBA plus was done. The applications into the centres of excellence are continuing. It's just a matter of it being there as part of policy discussions. It's a matter of having that lens at all times. It's not an entity that comes and goes. It was implemented. It stays. It continues. It is honoured and respected and seen as a very important part of how we look at policy and legislation.

That lens is on everything, and the department, in fact, is reprofiling that program to look into multiculturalism because it's such an important part of what we're doing in that ministry. You take that information, this huge piece of information that has been a lens in government, and you reprofile it to make sure that new ministries, like mine, that come online have access and make sure that we have those lenses and that we're looking through that. It's actually a very important method of intersectional analysis that is imperative in this government to who we are and what we're trying to accomplish.

Member Irwin: Right. Again, you know, I took GBA plus. I know a lot about it, but I don't know exactly what is clearly meant by gender and intersectional analysis. Do you know if that's available somewhere publicly so that we can see that? What I gather from you is that you're still using that language.

Mrs. Aheer: Of course.

Member Irwin: I imagine that you're having conversations with your cabinet colleagues and whatnot about taking an intersectional approach to the policies that they develop.

Mrs. Aheer: GBA plus, as you know, is a global phenomenon. It's a global movement, actually. Any government, any group of people that are looking to understand – lookit, in Canada we are unbelievably blessed to be in a country that sees this as a priority. You know, our global partners also see this, but we have a lot of work to do, especially even outside of our borders. We have so much that's going on. When we talk about gender-based violence, I think the tendency is to sometimes think insularly about what's going on only in our province or in our space. We have issues of child marriage. We have issues of female genital cutting. We have issues all over the world where we have to be leaders. Gender-based violence is not something that we can deviate from ever, ever, ever.

Member Irwin: Absolutely, and I don't dispute that.

Mrs. Aheer: GBA plus is only a small portion of understanding the language. That's only the language around it. It leads to broader and much more important discussions as Canadians about how we function. How do we protect new girls and women coming into this country, into our province?

Member Irwin: Okay. I appreciate that.

Mrs. Aheer: This is so much of a larger issue under Status of Women, the collaboration with all genders, with every single person to make sure that – I was saying this earlier, when the other member was asking me about having a safe and caring space in sports. That's ludicrous. It should be safe and caring, absolutely, but it's beyond that. That harassment or any sort of violence could be acceptable by any government, especially in a country like ours, is not okay.

Member Irwin: Okay. Thank you, Minister.

Let's shift gears to just a different topic, because this is something I'm quite curious about. This is on page 190 of your fiscal plan. I note that 32 FTEs are being dropped from the ministry, writ large.

Mrs. Aheer: Dropped?

Member Irwin: That's right. Yeah, a change of 32 FTEs.

Mrs. Aheer: Are you sure? They're not being dropped. It's attrition.

Member Irwin: Okay. That's my question.

Mrs. Aheer: Just to be clear.

Member Irwin: Okay. So those 32 FTEs are via attrition?

5:40

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. Retirement. We're not replacing any of those positions.

Member Irwin: So not filling those roles.

Do you know how many of those are in Status of Women?

Mrs. Aheer: Not particularly. I can look that up for you and let you know.

Member Irwin: Okay.

Mrs. Aheer: Again, it depends on – I'm not sure who's retiring.

Member Irwin: Okay. But that is all through retirements, through attrition, then, all 32 of those?

Mrs. Aheer: Oh. One is in Status of Women.

Member Irwin: Okay. Great. Thank you.

One of the performance measures in the past pointed to the percentage of grant recipients reporting positive outcomes for women and girls. I can't find the status of the Status of Women community grant program, but you did mention in your opening comments that that is going into community initiatives.

Mrs. Aheer: Correct. Yeah.

Member Irwin: I appreciate that. Is there a breakdown available of what that means? What percentage of those grants will now be allocated to women, to gender diverse folks? Again, I'm not seeing any . . .

Mrs. Aheer: All of them, because, really, the criteria is as broad as you want to make it. The hope is that with the lens that we're looking at things with, the shift is on all grants, and those lenses are there at all times. The hope is that when you're applying – and the criteria will also help to define that. Again, the communities really know what's in their best interests.

I'll give you an example. At the Telus World of Science there was a Status of Women grant that went out for a robotics class for STEM – science, technology, engineering, and mathematics – and it was an amazing opportunity. I went in, actually, to see these little munchkins that were working on coding in there. It was fantastic. They had some really rock star women engineers in there, and they were actually talking about what it was like being in their field, about barriers in that field.

My dad is a chemical engineer. I think that in his lifetime there were maybe one or two women. My godfather was the dean of engineering at the University of Calgary and was constantly trying to pull women into this field because they're brilliant and smart and thoughtful, obviously, and competent in this field. So it was very, very profound to see the way that those dollars worked.

Member Irwin: Right. That was under the Status of Women community grant program?

Mrs. Aheer: Correct.

Member Irwin: I just learned that. One of my questions was going to be, like, "Where, and what happened?" but you explained that.

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. It's a really good question.

Member Irwin: Just so I'm clear, there will be no Status of Women specific grants. You're saying that you're going to take the lens of . . .

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. They're under the CIP grants.

Member Irwin: So it'll be broad CIP, but there will be some criteria in which women . . .

Mrs. Aheer: Absolutely. The criteria is there, yeah.

The Chair: Thank you for that. That brings to a conclusion that 10-minute speaking time.

We now move to the government caucus. MLA Reid, I believe that you will begin.

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Chair, and I'd like to say thank you, through the chair, to you, Minister, for your hard work in preparing the budget. It's a privilege to be able to say thank you in person to so many of your staff as well.

Mrs. Aheer: They're awesome.

Mr. Reid: I appreciate that.

I want to shift gears a little bit. I want to talk a little bit about the capital plan. Again, going to page 64 in the estimates, you show \$49.3 million for capital funding. I'm just curious: what are some of those capital projects that the ministry is looking at?

Mrs. Aheer: We've got a few that are sort of in the works at this point in time. There are a lot, actually. The community facility enhancement program, fondly referred to as CFEP, supports culture. There's a ton of support for culture infrastructure. There's \$13.3 million for I think it's the Vivo centre. I'm not sure.

I didn't have my lines directly in front of me. I apologize. Yeah, there's \$13.3 million for the Vivo centre. Again, this is a huge multicultural piece. This is in an area where we have a ton of new Canadians coming in, so it builds capacity in that community to really have a central focal point for families and groups to come together, to be able to work in that area. Especially with new families coming in, we really need to make sure that they're embraced by those communities.

We have \$5 million for the Winspear Centre, and \$4 million went to the Telus World of Science. I'll actually get you these exact numbers because I think that these aren't quite correct.

Sorry. I said that wrong. The total is \$13.3 million, and it's broken down as \$5 million for Vivo, \$4.3 million for Winspear, and \$4 million for Telus world. I was adding it up in my head and going: that's not right. I apologize.

Then there are the ICIP grants. These are the investing in Canada infrastructure grants. Community, culture, and recreation was a total spend of \$11 million. From that one, Vivo got \$5 million; the Winspear got \$2.7 million; Heritage Park got \$1.3 million; the YWCA Calgary hub, \$1.3 million; Telus World of Science, \$0.5 million; and the Inter-faith Food Bank got \$0.1 million. I hope that helps to understand. Like, we're continuing to invest.

Of course, now we're just waiting to see what's happening with our federal government at this point in time. I had a very good relationship with the former minister of culture. I don't know if you know this, but the culture federal, provincial, and territorial meeting is actually here in Alberta in June of next year. That will be a wonderful opportunity to show them some of our beautiful facilities here and, hopefully, get them really interested in investing further in this province so that those of you who are on the ground in your communities, who have projects that are, you know, really big community builders and stuff can, hopefully, work together with our federal partners to help build that capacity.

I have to say that I've been so proud – and I have to say, right across the board, members on all sides are so good at really, really supporting their communities to get the projects that are necessary in their communities. I'd like to make sure that people understand that writing letters of support for your community members and for their relative projects is really helpful. We get a lot of them in from all government members. I'm very grateful for the work that all of you do in your communities to really support those projects. So thank you to you for your immense work. I know there's a lot going on in your community right now, so I really, really appreciate the extra work that comes out from you.

Thank you.

Mr. Reid: Just a further question, Minister, just in regard to criteria. We see that some of the same capital projects have been funded through two different funds. How are the decisions made for why these projects are funded and others aren't?

Mrs. Aheer: That's a really good question. We look at various criteria, and I say we loosely. It's the department that does this work. As the member from the opposition was mentioning earlier, there are particular criteria that we look at. One of those things is the dollars that they're able to raise in their own communities. Sometimes there is an idea of being able to have money, and it looks like they may have dollars coming in. The biggest part for us is that if we can work – so the ICIP grants are completely dependent upon federal and provincial governments working together, and one is dependent on the other.

The CFEP grant is the community's opportunity to be able to put forward dollars and be able to potentially have matching grants. Sometimes, if it's a historical site, they can actually get matching grants for buildings, up to \$100,000 on certain buildings, especially if it's a historical site. We want to make sure that communities have access to this as well to be able to do their building. There are multiple places that they can pull dollars from. If the federal government is willing to help raise dollars, we want to make sure, if we have the capacity to do that, that we're able to help out with that.

The other thing, too, is that sometimes projects are funded in chunks. For example, they might start off with the ICIP grant for the larger part of the funding for land purchase or buildings and then the community grants and programs will come in to help out with programming, maybe a renovation or an upgrade on a pool or something that actually impacts the community directly. So there are a lot of different ways that that goes.

It's a really great question. It's very unique and individual to each one of the grants. It's really good that we can work collaboratively with them because they can leverage those dollars a lot better through being able to fund raise at a community level, but also to be able to have government help to leverage dollars with the federal government.

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Minister. I'm going to switch gears a little bit to a reference on page (iii) of the estimates preface. I know that we've talked a lot about looking for streamlining and efficiencies, but it indicates in the preface that you have dissolved the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, the Alberta Sport Connection, and the historic resources fund. As you know, I live in a riding that has a lot of great historical sites. In fact, one of my local folks said: "We have too much heritage; we can't afford to have all the heritage we have. It's expensive to maintain it." Can you tell me a little bit about your decision-making process behind dissolving these agencies?

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. It's, again, a really great question. Thank you so much. Part of the reason for doing that is that – and they're separate agencies, right? We wanted to improve the alignment between the department's role in policy development and the delivery of programs and services that the staff are focused on. Aside from efficiencies, there's actually a huge reduction in administrative costs by actually bringing it under the government. Not only just savings but they can be consolidated into the general revenue fund. The good part about that is that money is sitting there and doesn't – when we bring it under general revenue, that means that the grants still, basically, come through the same way. You can still apply exactly the same way you always have, but those dollars can actually go down and be used and leveraged in debt servicing

at this point in time as opposed – and that's actually a huge part of getting to balance.

5:50

I really believe that it's one of the really positive opportunities, looking at this, because otherwise the dollars are just sitting there. They're not – this way we can still actively work on grant funding to particular areas, especially in yours. I know about lots of your projects that are going on, some really great projects that are happening, but we're able to achieve efficiencies and be able to, you know, reduce some of those administrative costs but also be able to use those dollars to help out with this unbelievable debt servicing we have. As you know, it's \$2 billion a year. It's a school a week. It's absolutely appalling that dollars have not been used and brought in to help out with that debt servicing.

We've been talking a lot today about our fiscal challenges. Largely, in part, our fiscal challenges are due to this massive debt. If we can do anything at all collectively in our ministries to help out with that in any way possible – I'm really, really happy to say that the department and our staff worked really hard to figure out how we could help out with that but still be a really collaborative partner, yeah, with the Historical Resources Foundation and making sure that we can get those designations for those buildings.

We have a lot of projects, actually, on the go right now. It's been a real privilege working with people who care so deeply about their communities and the historical pieces that are there. There's one in particular right now, the McDougall church, that is out in the Stoney Nakoda area.

The Chair: Sorry to interrupt, but thank you, Minister, MLA Reid. That comes to the end of that 10-minute speaking block.

I now move back to the Official Opposition for the next 10-minute speaking block and recognize MLA Deol.

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Once again thank you, Minister. What I've learned so far on the question I'm referring to, antiracism and status of women, you know, it seems like these grants have been removed. There's no separate, you know, program initiated under these: antiracism status and status of women. You mentioned these have been already moved to the CIP, community initiatives program. I'm looking here on page 63 of the estimates. I saw many entries cut approximately 17 per cent. So that's going to have a huge negative impact on those community groups. They have been working very hard and depending on this government to promote diversity and inclusion in communities. How do you think this will work compared to the funds that they've allocated in previous years?

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you for the question. Just to be clear, they're not dumped. The status of women is a clearly defined part of my ministry, as is multiculturalism. Let me just be clear . . .

Mr. Deol: Sorry to interrupt. Like, the community initiatives program is already being . . .

Mrs. Aheer: Just let me finish. You asked me a question. Just let me finish my answer, and then you can have your turn. Here's the thing. We consolidated all of them together because there is a broad lens that actually needs to be brought to all of these funds and the dollars that are going out. The truth is that we're continuing to invest. We're going to continue to invest. There are so many communities that are doing such great work and we want to continue to help them to leverage those dollars within their communities, to be able to do that. If you have a particular project or anything that you're interested in, we'd love to hear from you.

Make sure you write letters of support for those. Really, the department will be looking at those criteria. I think that the word that you probably want to use – they're not dumped. It's just been replaced. Those grants will fall under that new grant stream. As you know, multiculturalism got a bump, actually, of \$1.5 million, so there's no dumping happening. In fact, multiculturalism is the line that antiracism will fall under because there's so much more to it. I mean, we learned this. You probably know this. You've talked to, obviously, your community members.

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Minister. What I'm trying to refer to is that, you know, under the collaborative program – like you said, this is consolidated now. The community initiatives program without the consolidation had a much bigger fund last year. Except now the consolidated funds – how is it going to serve the purpose? We had a separate antiracism grant, a status of women grant. The community initiatives program was much bigger than the consolidated fund that we have right now.

Mrs. Aheer: It's just a difference in terminology. What you're calling antiracism, we're calling a new multiculturalism and inclusion grant program. It's just a language change. We're taking all of those considerations into that new grant funding that's there, for that \$1.5 million. It's just a change in language because antiracism falls within the compass of multiculturalism.

Just to be clear – and I've said this earlier, too – I'm very, very proud of this government for taking a crossministry approach at looking at the finite dollars that we have and for continuing to put dollars into the opioid crisis, mental health beds, palliative care, health, education. These were things that we looked at collaboratively, with the finite dollars that we have, to see how it was that we could find efficiencies, through attrition of our staff and all of these different things, to make sure that dollars are available, to make sure that we're able to fund vital services. This is part of our commitment to Albertans, and this is what Albertans asked us to do. These are really, really tough fiscal times. We all acknowledge that.

I would have to suggest that there is \$2 billion in debt servicing that happens every single year as a result of previous budgets. That \$2 billion is a school a week. Can you imagine if we had that \$5 million a day to put into the programs that you're asking about. Right now our fiscal capacity is looking at: how do we bring that back, how do we get back to balance, and how do we stop paying \$2 billion a year in debt servicing?

So to your point, multiculturalism and inclusion will incorporate antiracism into those grants. We are going to make sure that criteria is available for status of women, women and girls, multiculturalism, building capacity, and make sure that our policies and the work that we do are about building unity and bringing communities together.

Mr. Deol: Under multiculturalism on page 64, line 7.2, are we continuing with the antiracism council?

Mrs. Aheer: I've had a couple of chats with their co-chairs. We're just figuring out which direction we're going right now. To tell you the truth, what I was most proud of is that the antiracism – the document that came out from that actually very much aligned with our policies that we had in our platform commitments, making sure that there's security for those who are in mosques and churches and synagogues and all that. I mean, we've seen what has happened to people that are peacefully praying: we have people come in and murder people while they're on their knees praying. We need to make sure that we provide security for those.

Mr. Deol: Have you set any targets or measures?

Mrs. Aheer: We have to also make sure that when new Canadians are coming in, they're supported through things like professional designations, understanding that when we invite people to Canada and tell them that we need doctors and nurses and all these other folks, they're actually recognized for their professions. Those things are very much – the antiracism plan that came out very much aligns with a lot of our policies, so we actually figure that we're quite a bit ahead of that. We're really looking forward to continuing to chat with the Anti-Racism Advisory Council.

Mr. Deol: Do we set any measures, like, to see how we're going to achieve these goals?

Mrs. Aheer: The measures are actually outlined significantly in our platform documents.

Mr. Deol: It doesn't really show either in the – I've been through the multiculturalism pages in the business plan. It doesn't really show anything. I'm just asking.

Mrs. Aheer: In the program area what we'd like to see happen is that – the grassroots organizations in your communities and our communities really, really understand their role and what it is that they need to accomplish.

Mr. Deol: But we don't set any targets?

Mrs. Aheer: Hopefully, they'll be able to work within the criteria of those grants and be able to work with our program staff to help build capacity in those communities. That's what they're there for. I mean, these people build capacity. They work on training programs, they help with creating boards and organizations with the 26,000 not-for-profits that we have in this province that build capacity in there.

6:00

The new programs: I think the deputy minister has mentioned this before, that we're coming out with more outcomes as we go. This is a new program for us, so largely in part we'll be able to report outcomes as they come along.

Mr. Deol: Was there any analysis done on this, like, before consolidating all these programs together with less funding. What kind of impact is it going to have?

Mrs. Aheer: Well, this is about continuing to fund. This is actually about continuing to fund culture, multiculturalism, status of women, sports, and all of that. This is about continuing funding and looking at the dollars that we have and how we stretch those finite dollars, how we work with communities, how the department staff look at – really, in all honesty, communities are so good at getting dollars together and then leveraging the government, because we're a partner. Right? We're a partner in this. We're helping to build resilience and capacity in those communities. That's our purpose and our job in this department. That's for sure.

I think, again, one of the things that I really encourage, too, in your own riding – multiculturalism is a grassroots initiative, right? It's about the intersectionality of all of our cultures that are able to work together.

Mr. Deol: I'm getting texts from my constituents. They are listening right now. That's why they wanted to know.

Mrs. Aheer: It's a great question. Yeah.

Mr. Deol: We had \$2 million specifically set for the antiracism grant. That's the question that came directly from someone who's watching right now.

Mrs. Aheer: This is a broader scope, and we can encourage a lot more diverse projects and community groups to get involved, actually. I think there's going to be a lot of opportunity here.

Again, if you ever need to send me an e-mail about a particular project that some of your community members are working on, we'd love to hear about it. Really, the folks in our communities, they're the directors of these dollars, so we're really excited to work with them.

Thank you very much for your question.

Mr. Deol: Yeah. One more question I have on this. On the business plan it has been mentioned, the use of the enhanced capacity advancement program, but then I didn't see any funds allocated to that, the use of this program.

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. I was going to say that the grants with the government of Alberta that exist to support the voluntary sector capacity-building organizations: they're continuing.

Mr. Deol: So any specific funding?

Mrs. Aheer: Do you want a list?

Mr. Deol: Yeah.

Mrs. Aheer: We're working with the Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations, the FuseSocial Wood Buffalo Society, Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations, Volunteer Centre of Calgary . . .

The Chair: I hate to interrupt. That concludes that 10-minute speaking block.

I now move to the government caucus. I believe, MLA Allard, you will have the next 10-minute speaking block with the minister. Combine the time?

Mrs. Allard: Yes. Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Chair, through you to the minister, I'm going to refer to page 32. I just want to get right into my questions because I have so many to ask you. Key objective 1.1 states that one of your department's goals is: "growing Alberta's creative and cultural industries by 25 per cent, or [approximately] \$1.5 billion." I just wanted to ask: how will the department go about achieving this, and what is the plan to grow these industries in the province?

Mrs. Aheer: This is a really great question. There's the Alberta media fund, of course, which will be moving to Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, but like I mentioned earlier, it'll be sort of a slow transition because we have to pay out our commitments. There's a really great potential for growth in that. Then, of course, we have our small productions grant as well. But the dollars have to be invested wisely for the best return.

One of the things that we wanted to look at is that, through cultural industries, the grants support businesses and individuals, hopefully promoting through this. Culture has such an opportunity to grow. A lot of us in our small rural ridings have a lot of handicraft businesses, for example. Right? If you look at any of the red dresses that I wear, these are all made by local artisans that are beading and putting these beautiful, beautiful pieces together. It's an incredible opportunity to be able to grow the industry.

We've talked to a lot of our First Nations and Métis and Inuit brothers and sisters as well about how it is that they can grow capacity

in those communities with tourism, being able to function within the community and finding out about a lot of the home-grown businesses that are there. Also, we export some of our cultural pieces. There's a huge opportunity – huge opportunity – to export culture.

Also, we've been working with associations with China and Japan for winter festivals, bringing those folks here. There's a huge opportunity, again, for growth for tourism through that but also through our cultural industries and making sure that those people in those groups have the opportunity not only to sell their items. Our book publishers just recently went to Germany to be able to be part of a larger group there to show the immense capacity of book publishing in this province. One of my favourite things that I have done so far was meeting with those associations that work in the industries that have cultural growth and where they're deciding to go and what they want to look at. The book publishers are some of the best in the world. They are incredibly resilient people. It's not easy to publish a book, first of all. The level of work that comes out of this province is just absolutely top notch.

Some of the things that we're looking at, going back to media: there are postproduction visual effects and digital animation grants; there are project script development grants. I don't know if you know this, but a lot of scripts come out of Alberta-based writers, a lot of really great material. There is a cultural industries organizational operating grant. There is a cultural industries organizational project grant. I mean, there are just a great amount of grants that work to support cultural industries.

One of the things that we're super excited about, actually, in the promotion of the culture and arts is that we're going to be doing – it's for the artists. It's about supporting them in legislation and making sure that they're being paid appropriately for their work. Yeah, the arts professions act is specifically going to be where government leads by example because art is work. This is our mandate. This is a completely absolute opportunity for musicians, artists, sculptors, painters, writers of scripts, music, books, whatever, to be acknowledged for the work that they're doing. Government needs to lead by example and make sure, when we're hiring these folks to come to work with us, that we're paying them adequately for the incredible work that they're doing. As you know, when a person shows up to play music, they're not just showing up and playing. They've practised. They've put in time. They've put in effort. They've created scores, worked with bands, you know, all of these kinds of things. We want to make sure to understand what that looks like. This piece about artists will be very, very important.

Also, the creative partnerships Alberta program is going to be helping artists to look at how it is that they intersect with the private sector to help leverage dollars into their particular art form in order to create those partnerships, because all of these folks are entrepreneurs, right? Some of them are storefronts, but some of them are out of their houses, the backs of their cars. I met a lovely gentleman today at the '60s scoop event at city hall who sells the beaded – I think you have one of these. Yeah. They're beautiful. They're lanyard holders and bracelets and earrings. He just kind of totes it around with him wherever he goes. It was gorgeous. Like, there is such an unbelievable amount of talent in this province.

By supporting them through a piece of legislation that actually acknowledges that art is work and that artists need to get paid the value for what they're doing but, on top of that, creates that partnership, that mentoring, that ability for artists who are coming on scene to be able to leverage dollars . . .

The Chair: Thank you, Minister. I apologize for the interruption, but I do need to restrict you to a five-minute block.

Mrs. Aheer: Oh. I'm sorry. Thank you. I could talk about this forever.

The Chair: I'll return to MLA Allard for her next question.

Mrs. Allard: I appreciate the fulsome answer, and I would like to reinforce the answer with respect to some time that I spent sitting on the Grande Prairie Boys' Choir not-for-profit board. We accessed your ministry – I guess it wasn't yours at the time – multiple times for grants and different things. One of the initiatives in my constituency through that organization is really about honouring the artists and their training. We have a real vision to pay them appropriately for the work that they're doing. I think it's unusual in the northern communities to see that kind of vision, but it's very exciting to be part of it.

6:10

I don't have much time left, and I would be remiss if I didn't ask you a little bit about the francophone community. We've talked a little bit about this. I do my best to be the franco-parliamentarian on behalf of the Speaker. Sometimes it's a little rough, but I do my best. I am married to a francophone. Page 32 of the business plan discusses francophone communities. Mr. Chair, we recognize the importance of supporting our francophone community, and we also recognize that it is, I believe, growing in Alberta. I just wanted to, through you, Chair, to the minister, ask about what is happening to prioritize the continued delivery of services en français?

Mrs. Aheer: En français, merci beaucoup. There are a couple of things that have happened. One of the most exciting things that has happened recently – I'm not sure if your husband is aware of this – is that there's an action plan that was put forward by the Francophone Secretariat on behalf of francophones in order to create an action plan that works in conjunction with the federal government. We have members of the Francophone Secretariat here. They are phenomenal human beings who fight very hard to make sure that they can leverage dollars from the federal government to help with programs here. So this action plan really takes into consideration that there are about 38 pieces that have check marks beside the boxes, 21 that are in continuation, and about 61 total initiatives that the secretariat along with the francophone communities has brought forward that they believe are necessary in order to continue elevating and helping out with services in French.

This is a proud, fierce, amazing group of people, a large population in this province, whether that's francophone or French speakers. You can find so many of us, really, at the Legislature. It's quite amazing. The importance is actually putting emphasis on services and supports that best respond to the needs of French-speaking Albertans. This is, again – and I'll say this as many times as I need to – within existing resources. I have to say that I've never been more proud than working with this department on understanding our finite resources and how it is that we stretch those dollars. These are amazing, resilient people. The amount of gratitude that we all have for each other and how it is that we work together under these fiscal situations – I have no words to express my gratitude to this community and their extreme advocacy on their behalf but, more than that, their understanding of our fiscal situation. I am beyond honoured to work with them.

As I was saying, October 18 was actually the date when we published Alberta's very first annual report on French policy implementation. It gives a very detailed look into the accomplishments since the adoption of the French policy, which actually happened in 2017. It's been really, really wonderful to see that transformation. There are a lot of folks there that are really,

really interested. I don't know if you know this, but the Francophonie lens is through every single ministry. There are dollars provided within each of the ministries that provide services through various parts, whether that's Education, Health, or whatever.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister. That concludes the 10-minute speaking block for the government caucus.

I now move to the Official Opposition for the next 10-minute speaking block. MLA Eggen, you may proceed.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, and thank you, Minister, for your presentation. Certainly, it is a ministry that has many very interesting and important categories and funding areas. I mean, each of those places, be it the book publishers or music and so forth, if they're not funded properly, then it becomes words on a page but with less substance than actual support.

Although, yes, I totally concur that the ministry is full of wonderful people that do extraordinary things, essentially this budget halves your operating expenses over the next four years. I look at, for example, the arts and creative industries, which is approximately a third of the budget, and it takes more than a 50 per cent cut over the next four years. I'm curious to know what is being cut in the arts and creative industries line on page 39 of your ministry plan. Does it include people like the book publishers and the media development fund and so forth?

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much for the question. I'll clear this again. You know this; you've been sitting in my position before. The decrease that you're seeing, the large decrease that seems to be perpetuated over and over again: the budget line is primarily attributed to the gradual conclusion of the screen-based production grants. So \$45 million will slowly be moved over.

Mr. Eggen: Yeah. But you're still responsible for the media fund and the screening . . .

Mrs. Aheer: Let me just answer that question because you actually stated a number, and I'm going to explain to you what that number is.

Mr. Eggen: Sure.

Mrs. Aheer: To be clear, there is a gradual conclusion of the screen-based production grants, and those are transformed into this film tax credit, which will be administered by Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. There are impacts to other groups, and I've clearly outlined those, but what I would like to suggest also is that the dollars that remain within our ministry will be honoured and those production grants that have already been honoured, signed off on, or anything like that, will be honoured. As we slowly move it over to Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, you'll see a fluctuation, of course, because some dollars are moving over and some are staying. Then as one gets paid out, the other one will – one lessens and one gains in that transition.

Mr. Eggen: Yeah. I dealt with this when I was in Culture, and it was very problematic.

Mrs. Aheer: Yes. I know. We've talked about this many times. It's very complex.

Mr. Eggen: One thing, if I can caution you, just offer you some constructive advice, is that in the transition to tax credits you have to look at the overall industry because the industry, although it's very creative and robust, I think, in individuals, is fragile in terms

of its viability and its economy. As you make that transition, as you said, you need to honour the contracts and the grants that are out there, but you also need to be sensitive to not starve out some of the industry in the media and the film industry that is very mobile and can, you know, simply disappear, right? We have to look no further than the province of Saskatchewan, where they made some major transitions in the film industry there and it expired, basically. I don't want to see that here – you don't either, I know – so we have to be very, very careful.

Mrs. Aheer: The money is being transferred sort of directly across, with . . .

Mr. Eggen: Along with many of these other industries, again, they are resilient, talented people, but they can virtually disappear overnight without proper subsidy. I know that we're in difficult economic circumstances, but an investment dollar into arts and culture pays back exponentially in regard to our economy, in regard to our livability as a place to move to. For industry to make choices around investing, they do look at, you know, perhaps the energy industry, but they also look at the schools and they look at the culture industry to see if they want to live and have a place there.

I'm quite concerned about the reduction – I'm sure you are as well – in your Culture budget. You know, I will hope to advocate for proper funding for this essential part of our economy.

Mrs. Aheer: I just want to be clear. You're talking about a couple of different things. Again, just to be clear, the dollars that are in the SPG right now will transfer accordingly across to Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. So there is no major decrease in funding to that industry. In fact, we've done a million-dollar bump for the small productions within my ministry as well, which I'm really excited about.

More than that – I've said this before, and I'll say it again – I think that, to your point, you're right. These are resilient, amazing folks. They know their craft. We have some of the best in the world and some really great crews here. I've had the privilege of sitting in on set on a couple of different functions and met some of the people and had some really very honest conversations about what's going on and the need for growth and all that, and I recognize that.

I also recognize, though, that if you look crossjurisdictionally at many of the other provinces that have done this, you know, it takes a bit of time to be able to do that. We're actually moving faster into this tax credit than any – I mean, I guess it could have been done before, but you and I have had conversations about the complexities of this, so we'll start with that tax credit. But we're also in a jurisdiction where we have low taxes, and we have a lot of dollars that are going to be going into making sure that it's a job creation tax cut. We have no carbon tax now, too, which also helps immensely with the ability for companies to come here.

6:20

You know this; you've done this before. When a company actually comes in to decide where it is that they're going to do work, what's the first thing they look at? Whether or not there's a tax credit. But they also look at the cost of buildings, the cost of crews, staff, the availability of beautiful vistas, what the tax jurisdiction looks like. It's a complex issue with many, many layers. I know for a fact that we offer so much more on the flip side of what's available than many, many other jurisdictions. There's so much opportunity for growth here, but in all honesty that's a collaborative effort on both sides of our government to make sure that we're encouraging this growth and that our messages are really honest and straightforward about what it is that we're doing.

It's been such a pleasure for me to meet with the industry people, not just the creators, who are magnificent people, of course, but also investors that are really interested in looking at this area for this. There's a huge opportunity, especially through creative partnerships, to look at media as well, to see what kind of private-sector investments can be made in that, especially because there's also a tax credit, right? So if you look at it at multiple levels, you can sort of see the go-forward. But the industry is amazing and phenomenal, and there are some beautiful projects that are on the go here right now.

Mr. Eggen: Absolutely. I thank you for that. You know, certainly, they're listening to us now.

Mrs. Aheer: I'm sure they are.

Mr. Eggen: We need to make sure we're backing up our kind words with constructive action.

Mrs. Aheer: Absolutely.

Mr. Eggen: I would like to cede the rest of my time over to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much for your questions.

The Chair: Fine.

MLA Goehring, go for it.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Speaking of people that are listening right now, there's a large amount, Minister, that are in the overflow room. They've been listening, and they've been providing me with some feedback.

Mrs. Aheer: Good.

Ms Goehring: I had an opportunity to go talk to them. They're here. If you have some time after the end of this meeting, they would love to talk to you.

They've indicated to me that they have not been consulted with about this budget going forward, that they are still very concerned. Despite asking questions, they're not hearing responses. It's also taking place over social media right now, as they're tuning in and watching estimates. Some of the really concerning things that we're hearing are comments like: so much for keeping Alberta rolling. One individual, who's a previous Edmonton film prize winner, who would fall under the small production producer, has indicated that based on your cuts and your responses today, he is leaving the province of Alberta and going to B.C.

Mrs. Aheer: Sorry, Member. Which cuts are we making specifically? Can you outline, like, which one?

Ms Goehring: Your budget regarding the small . . .

Mrs. Aheer: Are you talking about media, or are you talking overall? Sorry. I just want to be clear because there are several different layers here.

Ms Goehring: This is specific to the \$500,000 small production grant, the SPG.

Mrs. Aheer: It's not cut. It's moving.

Ms Goehring: Minister, could you clarify what . . .

Mrs. Aheer: I have clarified. I'm just making sure that your messages that are going out to folks are accurate.

Ms Goehring: They're listening. It's not my messaging. They're following along, listening to the estimates right now.

Mrs. Aheer: Okay. Just to make sure that we're clear. There's no change in funding. It's moving over.

Ms Goehring: My question regarding this... [Ms Goehring's speaking time expired]

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you.

The Chair: Sorry for the interruption.

We have about seven minutes left for questions from the government caucus. MLA Reid.

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Chair. Again, Chair, through you to the minister, I want to jump in and talk a little bit about the nonprofit sector and civil society. It's a huge part of how we operate in rural Alberta – you know, you make lots of reference to the power of what happens when community comes together, whether it's cultural events or historic events – the passion that folks in Livingstone-Macleod have for our heritage and our culture down there. I want to go back and look at your business plan. Under key objective 1.6 you state:

Reduce bureaucratic burdens such as renewal obligations for proven civil society groups that deliver results for Albertans. This includes moving to five-year funding agreements where possible and ensuring that faith-based charities and non-profits have equal access to government grants and contributions.

So clarify that a little bit for me, because these are a number of the groups that do operate and are a significant part of the contributions to our rural communities, and then maybe talk a little bit about whether there are any risks to the government in terms of looking at these five-year renewal pieces and what you've looked at in terms of mitigating some of that risk.

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. Thank you. It's a good question, a very full question. I'll start, first of all, with the civil society piece. When we were looking at how it is that we engage with charities and with groups that are nonprofits and all of that, we want to as much as possible have those communities be able to leverage as many dollars as possible, that they're able to do. There are so many groups that work within their communities that need to be acknowledged, their work specifically, so we want to make sure that we're able to do that. This program will actually be run through Community and Social Services with Minister Sawhney. However, we have a part in our ministry to help with developing and empowering those particular groups to be able to participate with that.

There's a lot of work that's gone into consultation. When we were first starting to take a look at this, I mean, and even before I was in government, we met with just a massive number of groups through different groups like United Way and all of those amazing groups of people that do incredible work. There were a couple of different things that were suggested so that groups would be able to work together and collaborate because there are a lot of different groups that are doing similar work but actually don't know that the other person is doing that.

By bringing in civil society and shining a light on that, it helps us to look at those groups collaboratively and, with their help, figure out how it is that we best support services in communities because government is a partner, and we work collaboratively with these

groups. We want to make sure that the work that they're doing has that partnership, that ability to work with us together. So we're really shining a light on it to make sure that we have people around the table that are informing us as to how we can best serve in those communities.

Part of that is through grants – right? – a lot of work like that, but also a lot of it is through information. There is so much incredible information that these groups do because they're the grassroots groups. They're on the ground in these communities, and they're the ones that are able to best explain to us where dollars need to go into their communities, whether that's a rec centre, whether that is programming. There's operations; there's capital. So there are a lot of different things. But we really need to make sure we incorporate all pieces of that – the nonprofits, faith-based groups, community organizations, all of that – because they are the heart and soul of how our communities run.

I think government has a tremendous responsibility in engaging with these groups and elevating the work that they do. I think we can do a lot better in explaining who our partners are. For example, if you look at a lot of the large dollars that go into large community developments, a lot of it is oil and gas or large companies in particular, you know, towns. Sometimes it's car washes. Sometimes it's a steel company, whatever. They are very, very interested. They are philanthropic people who care deeply about their communities. How do we work with those partners in the private sector along with a particular group, a community group or a faith-based group, that's in that community to leverage those dollars, to extend them further?

I know that in Strathmore in my riding, for example, there's the Strathmore Overnight Shelter. A lady there – her name is Pastor Karp – has managed to bring all of the community partners onsite, people like the grocery stores and local businesses along with her ability within the faith community and council, all together, like, three levels of government plus some provincial government funding, to open an overnight shelter for absolutely anybody. They collect clothes, and then they have a kitchen every Sunday where councillors from the town of Strathmore come and actually help cook food and share in a meal with the community. I can tell you that her work in this community has been just outstanding. We also have a women's shelter in Strathmore as well. I'm just speaking about mine in particular. I know that all of you can relate to these in your own communities.

With so many of those, there are partners that we don't recognize, and we don't realize the amount of community work there's been. So to answer your question, it's imperative, absolutely imperative to look at how we stretch these dollars and how we work with these communities to help make sure that we are doing the very best that we can in those communities. And I'm very grateful.

Mr. Reid: Maybe, Minister, just for clarification: how do you see, like, extending the funding agreements at five years? How's that going to help some of these groups?

Mrs. Aheer: Oh. Right. Sorry. I forgot to answer that part of the question. For some of the groups that have proven outcomes and who have had to resubmit over and over again, it's a red tape regulation burden. It costs a ton of money just within government to do those, but it also is a lot of red tape for them, too.

The Chair: I apologize for the interruption, but I must advise the committee that the time allotted for this item of business has concluded.

I would like to remind committee members that we are scheduled to meet next tomorrow, Wednesday, October 30, 2019, at 9 a.m. to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Advanced Education.

Thank you, everyone. This meeting is now adjourned.
[The committee adjourned at 6:30 p.m.]

