



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Third Session

Standing Committee
on
Alberta's Economic Future

Ministry of Culture and Status of Women
Consideration of Main Estimates

Tuesday, March 15, 2022
3:30 p.m.

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The 30th Legislature
Third Session**

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UC), Chair
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP), Deputy Chair
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)
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* substitution for Deron Bilous

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Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Participants

Ministry of Culture and Status of Women

Hon. Ronald Orr, Minister

Hon. Whitney Issik, Associate Minister

Melissa Banks, Assistant Deputy Minister, Creative and Community Development

Carmen Vidaurri, Executive Director, Financial Planning

3:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 15, 2022

[Mr. Neudorf in the chair]

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

The Chair: Good afternoon. I would like to call the meeting to order and welcome everyone in attendance. The committee has under consideration the estimates of the Ministry of Culture and Status of Women for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2023.

I'd ask that we go around the table and have members introduce themselves for the record. Minister, please introduce the officials who are joining you at the table. My name is Nathan Neudorf. I'm the MLA for Lethbridge-East and the chair of this committee. We will begin, starting to my right.

Mrs. Frey: Oh. Michaela Frey, MLA, Brooks-Medicine Hat.

Ms Rosin: Miranda Rosin, MLA for Banff-Kananaskis.

Mr. van Dijken: Glenn van Dijken, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

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

Mr. Walker: Jordan Walker, Sherwood Park.

Mr. Orr: Minister Orr, Minister of Culture. I have with me at the table executive director of financial services Carmen Vidaurri – hope I got that right – assistant deputy minister Melissa Banks, and Deputy Minister Heather Caltagirone.

Ms Issik: I'm Associate Minister Whitney Issik, Associate Minister of Status of Women.

Member Irwin: Good afternoon. Janis Irwin, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Ms Hoffman: Sarah Hoffman, Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Renaud: Marie Renaud, St. Albert.

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

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we will go to the members participating remotely. When I call your name, please introduce yourself for the record. Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Good afternoon. MLA Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

The Chair: Thank you.

I would like to note the following substitution for the record: Member Hoffman for Member Bilous.

A few housekeeping items to address before we turn to the business at hand. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard* staff. Committee proceedings are being live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. The audio- and videostream and transcripts of meetings can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website. Members participating remotely are encouraged to have your camera on while speaking and your microphone muted when not speaking.

Remote participants who wish to be placed on the speakers list are asked to e-mail or send a message in the group chat to the

committee clerk, and members in the room are please asked to signal to the chair. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

Speaking rotation and time limits. Hon. members, the standing orders set out the process for consideration of the main estimates. A total of three hours have been scheduled for consideration of the estimates for the Ministry of Culture and Status of Women. Standing Order 59.01(6) establishes the speaking rotation and speaking times.

In brief, the minister or member of the Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf will have 10 minutes to address the committee. At the conclusion of the minister's comments a 60-minute speaking block for the Official Opposition begins, followed by a 20-minute speaking block for independent members, if any, and then a 20-minute speaking block for the government caucus.

Individuals may only speak for up to 10 minutes at a time, but time may be combined between the member and the minister. After this, the rotation of speaking time will then follow the same rotation of the Official Opposition, independent members, and the government caucus. The member and the ministry may each speak once for a maximum of five minutes, or these times may be combined, making it a 10-minute block. If members have any questions regarding speaking times or the rotation, please feel free to send an e-mail or message to the committee clerk about the process.

With the concurrence of the committee, I will call a five-minute break near the midpoint of this meeting; however, the three-hour clock will continue to run. Because this requires unanimous consent, I will only ask one question. Does anyone oppose having the break? Hearing none, we will call a break at approximately midpoint.

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 and are asked to please introduce themselves prior to recording their comment.

Pages are available to deliver notes and other materials between the gallery and the table. Attendees in the gallery may not approach the table. Space permitting, 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 individual speaking times will be paused; however, the speaking block time and the overall three-hour meeting 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 March 21, 2022. 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 with 20 hard copies. An electronic version of the signed original should be provided to the committee clerk for distribution to committee members.

Finally, the committee should have the opportunity to hear both questions and answers without interruption during estimates debate. Debate should flow through the chair at all times, including instances when speaking time is shared between a member and the minister.

I would now invite the Minister of Culture and Status of Women to begin with your opening remarks. You have 10 minutes.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Chair. Before I begin, I would like as the Minister of Culture to acknowledge that we are on Treaty 6 territory, a land that also has deep importance to our Métis people as well as many people from many tribes, nations, and cultures around the world now as Alberta evolves.

I also am joined in the gallery by my chief of staff, Brett Sparrow; my press secretary, Amanda LeBlanc; and members of the ministry's executive team.

I'm proud to say that this year Alberta's government has continued its strong investment in the province's arts, culture, heritage, nonprofit, and sport sectors as well as in women's initiatives and the francophone community. The ministry supports 26,400 nonprofit and voluntary sector organizations that deliver critically important programs and services to Albertans. In addition to improving quality of life, Alberta's arts sector makes a significant contribution to the economy. To help grow the arts in our province and to support the artists that call our province home, we continue to support the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.

Alberta is a diverse province, a home to diasporas from around the world, and that's why my ministry continues to support programs and initiatives for women and gender-diverse individuals. We are also committed to ensuring Alberta's francophone community is strong and thriving. In fact, we are currently celebrating Alberta Francophonie Month, and we continue to implement Alberta's French policy and multiyear French policy action plan.

My ministry also plays a unique role in promoting sport, physical activity, and recreation as an important part of everyday life. Sport and recreation are a significant part of Alberta's culture and play an important role in Alberta's mental health. From local recreational activities to province-wide sporting events, the ministry is helping Albertans to discover and to pursue a more active, healthy lifestyle.

This year the ministry's total budget increased by \$38.1 million, or 17 per cent, over last year. The total budgeted operating expense for Culture and Status of Women is 268 and a half million dollars. This includes \$158.9 million in general operating expenditures and \$109.6 million in capital grants. For the third consecutive year our investment in community and voluntary support service sector has grown. This year it is supported with \$147 million. That's 48 per cent, or \$47.8 million, more than in the previous budget. Of these funds, \$37.4 million is allocated to operating, including community grants, and \$109.6 million will go to capital grants, as I mentioned. Budget '22 sees a \$64.4 million increase in capital grants.

As part of our support for culture infrastructure program funding will go to Active Communities Alberta, McMurray Métis cultural centre, Repsol Sport Centre, SAM centre, Calgary Stampede Foundation, Glenbow Museum, and the Calgary Zoo. Also, four projects are receiving \$32.7 million in federal funding as part of the investing in Canada infrastructure program, specifically the Glenbow, Telus World of Science, Vivo for Healthier Generations centre, Winspear Centre. We are adding \$20 million to the community facility enhancement grant program.

At the local level our government is also committing \$20.7 million to the community initiatives program, or CIP, which supports projects and initiatives that enrich communities across the province. Within CIP Budget '22 provides up to \$2.3 million, or about 10 per cent, for creative partnerships Alberta, a program we started in 2021 to help build our alternative funding models and diversify their income for nonprofits across Alberta.

Budget '22 sustains our government's investments of \$25.6 million to the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. I know that the AFA will continue to do great things to support Alberta's vibrant arts sector now that we are moving forward. A \$4 million increase is included in the foundation's budget targets. This amount accommodates for potential donations to AFA as part of the new

arts sector donation-matching program the foundation has been asked to implement in line with the government's creative partnerships program.

While our government is supporting the arts, it is important to note that Alberta still continues to receive the lowest amount of federal arts funding in the country. We will continue to engage our federal counterparts to address the long-standing federal funding disparity for Alberta's artists.

3:40

Our government also continues to invest in our province's cultural industries. Alberta's cultural industries contribute about \$1.1 billion to GDP and support almost 12 and a half thousand jobs. In 2022 \$12 million has been allocated to support our cultural industries. This includes \$4 million for the Alberta media fund, which includes the postproduction visual effects and digital animation grant, the project script development grant, the cultural industries organization operating grant, the cultural industries organization project grant, and the cultural industry support organization operating grant.

In '22 \$6.5 million in funding is allocated to the Alberta Jubilee auditoria, the crown jewels of our province's live events. Funding for cultural industries also supports Alberta's film commission as it continues to support and promote and market Alberta's screen-based industry by updating marketing materials and cultivating new partnerships.

Budget '22 invests \$49 million to help preserve Alberta's heritage, a moderate increase of \$700,000. This includes \$3.2 million in sustained funding of heritage program grants. We're keeping our heritage alive and accessible for all Albertans to enjoy now and in the future, all the while being fiscally responsible.

We recognize that keeping Albertans active and encouraging safe participation in their favourite sport and recreation activities is critical to their physical and mental well-being. That's why our budget invests \$19.8 million in sport, recreation, and physical activity programs. We continue to strategically invest in these programs because they are important and they enrich the lives of all Albertans. Our government is also providing more than \$14.6 million in grants to provincial sport and recreation organizations. Funding from Budget '22 will help increase the participation of underrepresented populations such as Indigenous peoples, new Canadians, economically challenged people, persons with disabilities, and women and girls.

Alberta is home to the largest francophone population in western Canada. To support this community, Alberta's government continues to strategically invest in the Francophone Secretariat. The budget remains at \$1.4 million. The Francophone Secretariat is a vital link between government and the province's rapidly growing French-speaking communities, and it leads the crossministry co-ordination of French policy implementation. The secretariat's priority areas for the Francophonie are health, justice, early childhood, and education.

Alberta's government continues to invest in programs that support women in being active and equal participants in Alberta's economy and ensure they are included in Alberta's return to prosperity as we move forward. When women succeed, all Alberta succeeds. That's why the budget for Status of Women is \$4 million and is dedicated to initiatives supporting this outcome. In addition, grants to organizations supporting women via CIP, CFEP, and others lift the actual dollar amount well beyond the \$4 million.

We are also supporting women and gender-diverse individuals pursuing higher education and succeeding in fulfilling their career choice, especially in fields where women are traditionally underrepresented. Both the women in STEM scholarship and the

Persons Case scholarship continue to provide financial support for postsecondary education.

We're honoured to work with our partners and stakeholders who are critical to preventing and addressing gender-based violence, also supporting anti human trafficking efforts, and will play an integral role in supporting the implementation of the recommendations for the Alberta Joint Working Group on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

It is an honour to be Minister of Culture, to be able to connect with volunteers, community members, and stakeholders from across Alberta. Budget 2022 ensures that this important work can and will continue. When arts, culture, sport, and heritage thrive, Alberta is seen as a great place to live, invest, and start a business.

Thank you. I'll be pleased to answer all your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

For the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the minister may speak. Hon. members, you will be able to see the timer for the speaking block both in the committee room and on Microsoft Teams, large and right in front of you. Members, would you like to combine your time with the minister's? Ms Goehring.

Ms Goehring: Yes, please, Mr. Chair, if the minister is open to it.

Mr. Orr: I actually prefer to do 10-minute blocks, if that's okay. Thank you.

The Chair: That is your discretion.

Ms Goehring: Thank you. Thank you, Minister, and welcome to your first estimates meeting. I was hoping that we could have gone back and forth. I find it a lot more productive to be able to ask questions and then perhaps in real time follow up. Maybe after this block we can do some back and forth, but for now, welcome.

I'm going to start by saying that I find it really wonderful about the acknowledgement of the importance of culture in the province and to the economy of Alberta. I have to say that, unfortunately, it's something that we haven't seen in actionable ways within the province. We know that the culture industry has been the first impacted by the pandemic and likely the least to recover, which is very, very concerning. We saw some major instability in the culture sector due to inconsistency with the industry mandate regulations, with unpredictable implementation of mandate regulations, no financial support for artists or for venues to weather the storm. We saw incredibly talented employees leaving our jurisdiction to enter stable, predictable, economic ecosystems where they could be creative and were supported in a creative industry.

I'm going to be peppering a whole bunch of questions, and I look forward to your responses. How is the ministry diversifying, empowering creative industries to recover, just as other industries have recovered? We know that this is the last to recover, and I'd like some clear budget line items that talk about this support.

When it comes to community and voluntary support services – you mentioned that in your opening remarks – according to public analysis by the Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations this budget fails to deliver in supporting the very organizations that are at the heart of every community in the province, particularly when it comes to supporting community and volunteer support services. Can the minister tell us how reducing community initiatives grants below 2019-2020 levels will support the organizations that are seeing increased demand at the same time that they are seeing rising overhead costs that include heating and insurance costs?

The WCB premiums have increased for social and community support services and friendship/culture centres by 15.6 per cent. Community engagement, which is used to enhance the capacity of

the nonprofit and voluntary sector, is also below the 2019-2020 levels. How will this assist in growing and supporting nonprofits in the province?

Following years of reductions in capital grants for the community and family enhancement program and support for cultural infrastructure of over \$20 million, money that could have helped to keep community organizations operational and fixed issues, now we finally see an increase to capital grants in Culture. Does the minister think that this will make up for the last two years of underfunding? If a building had a leaky roof, does the minister think that it would get better or worse over the last two years?

At last year's budget I was joined by the two largest community league organizations in the province, the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues and the Federation of Calgary Communities, who had been trying to get a meeting with the previous Culture minister for two years. When this came up, her response was that she would love to be introduced. Can this new minister confirm that he has had conversations with these groups and has responded to meeting requests?

Now I'd like to move into media. Under the line item for the Alberta media fund I'm guessing that there are no longer any remaining funds for the screen-based production grant and that the transition to the film and television tax credit program is complete. I would love it if this could be confirmed.

Under the Alberta media fund there are four grants: the Alberta-made production grant; the postproduction, visual effects, and digital animation grant; the project/script development grant; and the cultural industry grant. How much of the budgeted \$4 million on that line is available for each of these streams? When it comes to deciding who is eligible for these grants or who is successful, who makes the decisions? How much was allocated for each of these grants in 2020 and 2021? I realize that the year is not complete, but what was the budgeted amount? Is the minister aware that through the process of breaking the grant reporting tables up into individual fiscal years, every year except the current one is broken and rendered unsearchable. This tool is a vital instrument for transparency and accountability. Might I request that the minister notify the necessary officials and provide an update when these tools are fixed and usable?

We've been told that the grants require tracking of economic impact, jobs, and are requiring higher levels of private investment. Is the purpose of these grants under Culture to increase cultural content, grow the talent pool, and enrich the lives of Albertans, or is it to grow jobs and provide a platform for the government to toot its own horn?

3:50

If the minister believes in the economic impact of arts and culture, like he mentioned in his opening comments, what additional supports, outside of infrastructure, are planned to help support the growth of the industry? When I talk to artists, they are saying that they are not seeing an impact. How does the budget support the development of the small- and medium-production industry? When we hear the government talk about the film industry, it's big productions. We hear names like Netflix. We don't hear the government talk about small productions from the province. How is the ministry working with the industry to promote smaller, Alberta-made productions? There is an increase of just under \$1 million for line 3.2, cultural industries. I would like clarity on what this will be used for.

I'd like to now go into heritage. Key objective 2.2 in the business plan is to "operate the network of provincial heritage facilities and lead the stewardship of Alberta's heritage resources." Yet Alberta is the only province without an overarching provincial body

responsible for heritage preservation. Can the minister tell us how he operates all heritage facilities when the ministry is not responsible for the upkeep of these resources? Can the minister tell us how many historical resources have been lost in rural Alberta due to lack of oversight, leadership, and stewardship following the dissolution of the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation in November 2019?

Funding for heritage preservation partnership programs and support for provincial heritage organizations has been flat for the last three budgets. Can the minister explain how lack of increases to account for increasing costs like insurance, heating, general inflation will ensure that we don't see a reduction in historical buildings and sites? How do we preserve our culture if all we have left are pictures? Some of the examples of some of these sites are the Strathcona county historical museum in MLA Walker's riding, the Ukrainian Village in MLA Armstrong-Homeniuk's riding, Métis Crossing in MLA van Dijken's riding, Medalta pottery in MLA Barnes' riding. How are you preserving the heritage of these assets while fostering an economic environment that is sustainable for future generations?

How does this budget support the opportunities for economic diversification within cultural diversity? You mentioned in your opening remarks that this was important, and you saw the importance of the economic impacts, yet when we're looking at the heritage of this province, we are not seeing that. How will the budget strengthen revenue streams for these businesses? How does this budget allow for these cultural organizations to be included in the economic recovery? Where in this budget does this reflect your value of these industries?

When I spoke with many that are involved in Alberta's heritage community, they have many questions, Minister. They notice that part of your budget and part of your strategic plan talk about the importance of sharing Alberta's story. They're curious: who's gathering these stories? Many have said that they haven't heard from your ministry. They would love to be able to participate in this, and they see it as important, but they want to know: who is gathering the stories? Who are you talking to? They want to know: where are they being stored and shared? This is information that they take very seriously. Where are the resources to support Alberta's diverse heritage? They're curious about which stories within Alberta are being valued under this ministry. Do you have an idea of what the prominent stories that you would like to be told are? How does the ministry show that they value these stories? Are there grants being provided to do this work? When the minister describes Alberta's story to others, what does he see that as, and how is this reflected in the budget?

The Chair: Thank you.

Minister, you have up to 10 minutes to respond.

Mr. Orr: Okay. Thank you very much. Yeah. Great questions. Starting at the top – I think I took some notes here – yes, culture and sports and physical activity people out there, in many ways the whole department, were first impacted and, in many cases, the last to respond. It is important to us that we try and diversify and that we try and help them to recover. I mean, the simple, upfront answer is that we've increased the budget for this department by \$38 million. I lobbied very hard to get that because I truly believe that economic recovery without human recovery isn't the kind of recovery that we really need.

An overall budget increase of \$38 million will go a long ways to helping out many of these organizations and many nonprofits and individuals to begin to recover but also, quite frankly, the entire budget. If we can get our economy back on track, which is

happening rapidly, increased incomes, increased opportunities would be there for everyone, and people will be able to go back to being prosperous and excited about what they're doing, including the arts community.

Quite honestly, I remember Fil Fraser's book on the golden era of culture in Alberta under the Lougheed years, and he pointed out very clearly at the front of the book that it took three things: it took creative arts people to do their thing; it took wealth, money, generated at that time by oil and gas; and it took a government that was willing to be supportive and partner with them. My goal is actually to be that government, to do what we can to support.

In terms of how we help them diversify, we're doing a number of things. I really do recognize that it's an important issue to help not just the government diversify – I mean, we hear often from the NDP that the government needs to get off the oil and gas roller coaster, and that impacts the creative industries as well. When government funding dries up for periods of time, creative industries suffer. Part of my goal is to diversify their revenue streams, to give them additional sources of generating self-sustaining wealth so that they can continue to prosper, so that they're not entirely dependent on just government funding, and we've had really good response to that.

Creative partnerships are a small part of our budget, just over 10 per cent of it, but it's an attempt to be innovative, to be creative, to move out into new ways of supporting all of the creative industries and the communities. Technology drives some of that. We're in a world of changing technology. Things like the crowdfunding platform fills in a niche need. We heard from many of the organizations: "You know, grants are great, but they're usually for larger amounts of money. It's a lot of work to fill out the applications. It's more work to do the reporting. Sometimes it isn't worth what we get."

We created the crowdfunding platform to fill a niche of smaller needs, smaller projects. It's free for nonprofits and cultural organizations to use, anywhere between roughly \$5,000 and \$10,000. We've already, in the few months that it's been up, seen the organizations receive almost \$100,000. So those are some of the ways that we're trying to diversify that revenue stream and that income. There will be more, working, of course, with the University of Calgary, with their UCeed project, on social entrepreneurship and those kinds of things.

In terms of meeting with groups, that's a fair question. I mean, there are 26,000 nonprofits in our province. I meet with everybody that I can in terms of trying to respond to their requests. Clearly, not everyone asked for a meeting, but I've met with just about everybody I can. I've always tried to do that. I'm open to meet with anyone who would like to meet with us, and I have meetings lined up moving forward as well. I think that's important.

What else should I pick here? You asked about support for nonprofits during COVID and how they are to recover. You know, the stabilize fund over the last two years, \$37 million, was aimed at both live productions and organizations. It was a real attempt to try and keep them alive so that we would still have them when we got past COVID, and hopefully we're getting to that point where soon they can get back to normal, where they can be open, where they can generate revenue, where they can have people attending. I think that's the key part of that.

4:00

In terms of the media fund, yes, to be clear, the old program, the old grant has come to an end. It's been replaced really with two different grants or funds. The tax credit piece is one that the industry, even when I was in opposition for four years, continually asked us if the government would consider a tax credit for larger

commercially viable projects, so we've given them that. They've received what they asked for on that. It's resulted in a substantial increase in the money available for them. But you're right in your question about the smaller projects, the Alberta-based projects, the ones that have a very different cash-flow situation than large commercial projects.

We have the Alberta-based production fund now – is that the right? Yeah. I get all these names mixed up. The Alberta-based production – I still don't think I'm – the Alberta-made production. That's the word I was after. Sorry; I knew I had it wrong. Alberta-made production grants really are aimed at smaller Alberta-based not necessarily commercially viable but, you know, Alberta content about Alberta, telling the Alberta story, helping to grow new talent, helping to grow new companies that are just trying to start out, that's what that whole grant is aimed at, to make sure that we have a growing and renewing fund process for them. That list of grants that I read off in the beginning is what that's all about.

I could give you some of those. The Alberta-made production grant, just for instance: Calgary-Buffalo, \$10,000; in Edmonton, Abeça Productions, nearly \$3,000; People & Peaks Productions, almost \$90,000; another one in Calgary-Buffalo for \$48,000; Milo Productions in Edmonton for \$33,000, the list goes on. There's a whole bunch of them. That's our goal. We transferred the large, business-driven ones to Jobs, Economy and Innovation, but we've kept the fund alive to try and enhance Alberta-made productions with all these different pieces of grant streams.

In terms of the exact numbers for each of those grant pieces, I'm going to have to ask. I think that maybe Carmen would be the right person to be able to give us some details on the breakdown of those grants. Maybe, Carmen, if you could do that? Is that possible?

Ms Vidaurri: On the community grants, Minister?

Ms Banks: On the media grants.

Ms Vidaurri: Oh, on the media grants. Yes. For cultural industries the final allocation between all of the grant streams has not been determined. We're still working with the sector to determine how the funds are going to be divided among all of the different streams that our ministry supports.

Mr. Orr: Okay. So we'll have to work on that piece a little bit.

Supporting the smaller productions is definitely part of the agenda, part of the goal. I should also say that there are those specific grants but some of these also work under the guidance of nonprofits, so some of the other grants for nonprofits would also potentially be eligible as well for them. That's the approach on that.

Heritage. Let me talk about heritage. Heritage is extremely important to Alberta, and part of the challenge over the last couple of years for many of the heritage sites has been that because of the restrictions and because of limitations many of them had to close, so their revenue streams are down. Consequently, their expenses, proportionally, not totally but somewhat, went down. I mean, they still have some expenses but not as much. We have kept most of those going and surviving. I've been, just this last summer, to the Ukrainian Village; great visit there. There was a good number of . . .

The Chair: Sorry to interrupt. That completes that 10-minute block.

We go now to Member Irwin for up to 10 minutes of questions.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Chair. Yes. I, too, wish we could be sharing time in the spirit of collegiality. Yeah. I've got a number of things that I want to touch on. You know, I must start by mentioning that I am having a bit of a déjà vu from last year's estimates. While

the people at the table have all changed, the concerns are quite similar, including the fact that there still is no significant recognition of the need to support women in an economic recovery plan. You again had an opportunity, through the chair of course, to address critical supports in the budget for women. We see again that there are a few fleeting references to women in the budget. I can't help but acknowledge the very recent news of the wage rollbacks proposed for front-line health care workers, many of whom are women.

Let's get into things here. I would like to turn my attention to the estimates document, page 64, in fact. You have, you know, in the scheme of things such a small budget, but it does appear that you underspent by about 5 per cent. We are still, believe it or not, in the midst of a pandemic, and I just wonder why there wouldn't be a push to, first of all, I mean, maximize the spending in the budget. It does send the impression that, again, you may not care about women in an economic recovery, so I would ask perhaps the associate minister if she's been advocating for budget increases in fact.

You know, one of the things I want to dig into a little bit is page 212 of the fiscal plan. You can see the number of FTEs in Culture and Status of Women, but it's not broken down by Status of Women, which is fine. That's how it's been in the past as well. I am just curious. How many FTEs are working specifically in Status of Women? Are they full-time within Status of Women? Of course, I know that's not necessarily a person but an FTE, but are they dedicated solely to Status of Women? Are their duties spread with Culture as well? Just curious about that.

Okay. One of the really big concerns, you know, that has been raised by many women in our province is labour force participation. Of course, I understand that the labour force participation rate is high nationally, but it doesn't change the fact that there is a gap. Your own fiscal plan, page 24 in fact, points out how the pandemic has magnified challenges, particularly naming barriers for women, Indigenous peoples, and underrepresented groups.

You go on in the fiscal plan or the budget documents go on to talk about Alberta's women's labour participation rate lagging behind that of men and point out some concerns around that, which is a positive thing. However, just like last year, your business plan – and this is a theme across the business plan – removes performance metrics. You know, there's only one that actually addresses women, and that's about partner violence. Of course, we can all agree that that's an important metric, but my question would be: why are there no measures to track labour force participation? You know, we've talked about this in the House as well, and I know that the associate minister thinks this is an important issue. Previous governments included those metrics in their business plans and, in fact, even your government included it in 2020. Why in the midst of a pandemic or any time, really, would you remove those indicators? Again, I guess, we know that without having measures and without being able to track, it sort of gives the impression that, again, it's not really that much of a priority for this ministry.

All right. Let's talk a little bit about STEM. Well, actually, I'll talk about STEM and gender-based violence, and then I'll unpack both of them a little bit. Last year in the business plan I believe that \$2.3 million was allocated to addressing gender-based violence and increasing the participation of women and girls in STEM programs. This year it's listed as \$225,000 for STEM and the Persons Case scholarship and \$450,000 for gender-based violence. You know, I wonder if the associate minister can tell us about the obviously successful endeavours that have been taken since last year to reduce the need for funding to these two areas to a mere 30 per cent of the level that it was needed at last year.

On the piece, again, on gender-based violence I will refer you to page 27 of the business plan, where you talk about developing a 10-year national action plan to end gender-based violence. Again, you've got \$450,000 targeted to gender-based violence prevention activities. I would just love to hear what specific initiatives those dollars are going towards.

4:10

Okay. On STEM, you know – and this is page 26 of your business plan. Your intention appears to be to, you know, support women and gender-diverse folks in careers in fields where they're underrepresented, but, again, without any indicators, without any metrics to track this, how will you measure the success of these scholarships, and how will you show that the work that you're doing and the money that you're investing is working?

Yeah. This is one that I always get quite concerned about, and that's just the whole – you know, I'll tie it into page 26 of the business plan, supporting women in being active, equal participants in Alberta's economy, ensure they're being included in Alberta's return to prosperity. One of the best ways we could get at an outcome such as this would be through an intersectional approach. By applying a gender-based lens, we can assess the impacts of policies, programs, and proposed legislation on women and underrepresented folks. Past business plans have very much discussed the key role of gender-based analysis plus, and all mentions of gender-based analysis plus, mentions of intersectionality at all are removed from this year's business plan and last year's as well.

So I would just like to know, because I have asked previous folks in this role, previous ministers, you know: is there any sort of gender-based analysis happening within the Status of Women ministry? You know, my fear, of course, is that without that, well, I mean, the implications are serious, but also without that, it sends a message that perhaps the minister and the associate minister might share the Premier's perspective that intersectionality is, quote, a kooky theory. Hopefully not. Hopefully, I can be proven wrong, that in fact that is an important lens and that it is being applied.

All right. Let's talk a little bit about 2SLGBTQ-plus supports. That's obviously page 27 of your business plan. I appreciate the mention of the community, but I just would like to know specifically what supports are in place for members of our community. Again, no metrics are assigned. So I'd love to just hear kind of what activities you are engaged in with the community and what funding is being provided specifically. Because, of course, again we don't have a breakdown on those components of what's a pretty significant outcome, 2.3, in your business plan.

It's also mentioned in that same outcome 2.3, very important work around missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit folks. I've asked about this in the past. In fact, I asked both Status of Women and Indigenous Relations last year about supports for MMIWG2S-plus. I just haven't gotten a lot of clarity around what Status of Women's specific role is. Are you dedicating any funds specifically to that work? You know, we know that the 231 calls for justice will require significant resourcing if they are to be implemented, so I'd love to hear again if there is any defined funding to support this work, and if not, are you going to be advocating for funding? Because, again, we're still, you know, I believe, at the stage of gathering that report and then sharing it, but I would imagine that it's going to need some significant funds.

Okay. I've got a couple of other things here at the end that I just want to mention as well. I note that all references to human trafficking have been removed from this year's business plan. Previous business plans made multiple mentions. I do as well understand that the task force is still engaged in that work, so why

would it not be named in this year's budget, and is it a priority for Status of Women?

Women on agencies, boards, commissions; leadership. You know, in 2020 your business plan actually had a new indicator, which was an important one, and it talked about men and women in management positions in Alberta. I was really hopeful that I would see that back in this year's business plan because it's something that, you know, when our government was in power, we really felt was important, to assess women in leadership roles. So I would just like for the associate minister to talk a little bit about that.

With that, thank you for the time.

The Chair: Well timed. Thank you.

Minister, you have up to 10 minutes, and you can ask other members at the table to speak at your discretion.

Mr. Orr: Yes. Thank you. I will turn most of it over to the Associate Minister of Status of Women, but I just want to reaffirm what I said at the beginning. We are maintaining funding, and in fact you have to kind of look for it a little bit, but because of the increased budget funding we have available this year for grants, many of those grants will go out to agencies and organizations that support women's issues, that support diversity issues, that will go a long way to actually increasing that dollar amount.

The only other thing I wanted to say is with regard to gender-based violence. I actually had a really cool opportunity to participate in one of the VOICE sessions – voice stands for valuable opportunities to inspire change through empowerment – working with sports professionals and young men, having conversations about what gender-based violence looks like and how to react against it. We've contributed \$398,000 to that. A very informative, educational piece. I actually heard back after that they thought it was very interesting that I was able to participate in that and share some ideas with them as well. Anyway, that's just my own personal engagement at that one. I'll turn the rest of it over for as long as you need to the Associate Minister of Status of Women.

Ms Issik: Fantastic. Thank you so much, and thank you for the questions. You know, off the top, women in economic recovery is absolutely key. We know that women are the backbone of our communities, our families, and our economy. I'll tell you that over the summer I had the opportunity to travel throughout Alberta and to meet with many, many groups of women across the province, from north to south and east to west, to discuss what challenges they faced both during the pandemic and what they saw their challenges would be coming out of the pandemic.

We know that women have been challenged throughout the pandemic with not only working in a challenging environment with respect to restrictions, but we had women in the child-bearing age group who had children at home with them, educating them at home when schools were closed at the same time. Try to imagine, you know, if you're a woman entrepreneur and you've got a small business and you're trying to educate your child at home at the same time as running your business. Great challenges. Additionally, we know that women have great caregiving responsibilities when it comes to eldercare, so those challenges became predominant also during the pandemic. There were many, many women who were very challenged with getting to work, being able to work from home effectively, being able to run their businesses with the duties of child care and eldercare, and at the same time recognizing that women contribute amazingly to our communities. With all of that, of course, there were many voluntary organizations who were stepping up to the plate during the pandemic. So there was additional work on that front as well.

What became very clear to me as we went through these sessions with women was the need to really address the ability for women to pivot, for women to be able to go to work, attend their businesses, attend all of their community work, and one of the biggest things that we have done as a government has been the deal that was struck with the federal government for child care. This has been key. This will reduce what families pay for child care by 50 per cent. This means that more women will be able to go to work more easily. It has already, in just the few months that it has been in place, made a huge difference for many, many women.

We also know that women learned over time during the pandemic that for many they wanted just to pivot. They wanted to perhaps change careers. They wanted to change how they work, perhaps working more from home or remotely versus going into the office every day. Women have decided in lots of cases to change sectors, and many women have decided to choose entrepreneurship as work, perhaps coming from unemployment status to entrepreneurship.

To that end, I'm very pleased that we've been able to provide some really good programming and funding. You know, we've been able to put in place upskilling and reskilling bursaries. Just recently, a couple of weeks ago, we announced that we will be doing \$1 million in bursaries to Bow Valley College, NorQuest College, as well as Yellowhead Tribal College. These are full bursaries with wraparound services to go with in order for women to be able to upskill into the STEM fields. As well, we were pleased in the fall to be able to offer the STEM scholarships, as was previously mentioned. And I'm very, very pleased to say that with the number of applicants that came in – I think there were 293 for the STEM scholarship – we're very, very pleased to be able to offer the scholarship to every single person who applied. That announcement will be coming soon.

4:20

We also continue to work with the Advanced Education ministry, and I think this is key. You know, the status of women ministry works crossministerially with many departments, including Jobs, Economy and Innovation, Community and Social Services, Advanced Education, Indigenous Relations, and through those different departments we are able to offer various programming and funding, that I think is incredibly important, including, recently announced, through the Department of Transportation \$3 million for the driving back to work program aimed at women looking for career opportunities and transportation.

Career opportunities in STEM, career opportunities in the trades, career opportunities in transportation. STEM, the trades: these are all high-paying careers for women. That will in and of itself help to reduce the gender pay gap. Women working in higher-paying careers will help reduce the gender pay gap, and I think that's incredibly important. That is why the STEM fields are important. We need to really work on STEM, and this is why.

The pipeline for STEM becomes narrower and narrower and narrower as time goes by from primary education to high school education to postsecondary education into actually working in the STEM fields and then into leadership in the STEM fields. I'll tell you, women have done reasonably well in participation rates in the biosciences field in STEM. But in math, engineering, technology, unfortunately, we've seen in prior years that this is beginning to stagnate and in some fields actually reverse, and we need to change that, which is why we are offering the kind of programming that we are and the kind of scholarships and funding that we are in the STEM fields, to encourage women and to support women to pivot into those fields because they are high-paying, fulfilling careers for

women. We need to make sure that that pipeline is less leaky as it moves towards participation rate and employment in the fields as well as leadership in the fields.

Turning to labour force participation, currently, I think, this month we are at 60.5 per cent participation rate, or employment rate, for women in Alberta. Coming out of a pandemic, where women have faced so many challenges, I think this is a great indicator. We're second in the country. We plan to continue to build on that, and we will build on that. Prior to the pandemic, I think possibly in 2019, we were possibly 1 per cent more in employment rate. So at 60.5 per cent in Alberta in February 2022 I think that we are moving forward, and we will continue to do that as we continue to build a province with great opportunities for investment, great job growth, and, as I said, focusing on some of these STEM opportunities and other opportunities for women in fields where they have typically been underrepresented.

Missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. This has been incredibly important work. I was very pleased to be able to work on that committee prior to becoming the associate minister. When the report is put forward, this will show the amount of work done by these incredibly hard-working women and men who came to that committee. These recommendations will be leading-edge and will really go a long way to addressing both prevention in the future but also addressing the needs of families and survivors for murdered and missing Indigenous women. It is such a critical issue in this province. I look forward to when that report is released and the recommendations are released.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now enter the final 20-minute block, with 10 minutes for MLA Deol.

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think I should actually introduce myself for the record.

The Chair: Yes, please.

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

My question is very specific, and this is to the Ministry of Culture. Through you, Mr. Chair, I asked some questions to both the Minister of Labour and Associate Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism regarding the multicultural grants that are currently listed under the Ministry of Culture. The answers I received were not satisfactory for members of my communities. Therefore, I would like to ask this minister, the Minister of Culture, the same questions.

In the current year the multiculturalism, Indigenous, and inclusion grant is overseen by Culture. The grant provides \$25,000 to eligible organizations. The last intake period was September 1 of last year, and the grant, which was new only last year, had an initial intake of March 1 as well. That date has come and gone with no updated information. In fact, according to the grant disclosure, only 19 grants have been given out this year for a total of roughly \$350,000, the amount that the associate minister says is allocated in his ministry for the grant. Yet that page says that processing is taking longer than expected, again, with no new information for 2022, so can the Minister of Culture tell us how much was allocated in the 2021-2022 budget for the multicultural, Indigenous, and inclusion grant and what the plans are for the 2022-23 budget?

My community members would like some answers under line 8 in the estimates. It shows \$4.1 million for status of women for Budget 2021-2022. Isn't that a bit disingenuous when that amount in last year's estimate included \$1.845 million for multiculturalism?

I would expect the minister will be able to provide some specific answers to that.

With this, I would like to share my time, and I will cede my remaining time to Member Goehring. Thank you.

The Chair: Member Goehring, you have just over seven minutes.

Ms Goehring: Thank you very much. I just wanted to go over some of the questions that I asked that weren't answered. To start, we'll go back into the community and voluntary support services. While I mention two of the organizations that I would suggest you reach out to, the Edmonton community leagues – they represent 161 community leagues, and the Federation of Calgary Communities represents 230 nonprofits, including 151 community associations, so they would be a great start, Minister. I appreciate that there are a ton of nonprofits in the province, but they are a wealth of knowledge, and they're eager to meet with you.

When it comes to the grant money being streamed to the four different grants under media, you indicated that the criteria or the money hadn't been allotted yet. I'm curious if you could clarify how that decision is going to be made. How are you going to decide how that \$4 million gets to each different grant stream? What are the criteria for your decision-making?

When it comes to – I guess, you know, you talked about the great work that's been done with film, and I appreciate that, but, Minister, that's not under your ministry. That falls under jobs. I'm asking specifically about what you're doing for small productions in the province, the Alberta stories. You talked about the importance of them and how wonderful they are, but you haven't articulated where in this budget you're actually showing them support to be able to share those Alberta-made stories. If you could provide some clarity around that, I would really appreciate it.

One of the things that I think is really important to note is that, you know, we talk about the impact of the pandemic on the cultural industry, and one of the things that the NDP has been calling for since 2019, at the beginning of the pandemic, is to have someone from the arts community actually at the table to be part of the economic recovery plan. You highlight how important it is to have them as part of that recovery plan, how Alberta thrives in so many other industries if our arts and culture are thriving. Again, I would ask that you consider having someone from the arts community as part of that plan. They're ready, they're eager, they want to talk to you. They want to see themselves reflected in that plan.

4:30

When we go through the budget, there are some questions that I have about the festivals, events, and productions. How were productions handled when they received a grant for production but were not able to perform the production due to the government's provincial mandate? There were many productions that received money and then, unfortunately, the mandates kept changing, and organizations and theatre groups and those types of things weren't advised ahead of time. They had to cancel productions, yet they received money. I'm curious what's been done with that funding.

Under performance metric 1(a) the ministry has a goal to return to pre-pandemic attendance levels for attending arts events two budgets from now, expecting attendance levels to remain well below these levels for this budget year. As we repeatedly brought up throughout the pandemic, a key to recovery would be ensuring the viability and sustainability of performance venues. Can the Minister of Culture tell us how many live performance venues have been lost over the last two years? Attendance is expected to be 20 per cent below 2019-2020.

When it comes to major events, there is a lot of talk about FIFA and what's been happening in the province with the FIFA bid. We know that the city and the federal government have all announced support for a FIFA bid and recognize the value to the Edmonton region and to the province immediately in the run-up to the 2026 games and during the tournament. Supporters of this indicate that the benefits would begin as soon as the province announces support funding. Total projection is that FIFA would bring in \$750 million in economic activity. This is support for our hoteliers, restaurants, small businesses in the downtown and Edmonton metropolitan region. This is something that we continuously are being asked about. What is the province's stance? Surely, given the portfolio of culture and sport, the minister has been encouraging the government to support funding for the 2026 FIFA World Cup games in Edmonton. Can the minister tell us if his government will be matching the municipal and federal funding to guarantee the \$750 million in economic benefits to the province, or will they be sending that economic influx and the thousands of jobs that it will create to B.C. or Ontario?

We've seen funding for multisport games continue to decline on line 7.3. You talked about the importance of sport and culture for our young people and, I would argue, for all people in the province. How can we showcase the talent that we have here in Alberta if we aren't providing opportunities for athletes to come here or to attend our province for opportunities?

In the arts. Can the minister provide more information on the donation program for the Alberta Foundation for the Arts that you've been directed to implement? Is the plan to reduce funding in outgoing years to the AFA, hoping that the public will make it up?

I think that when it comes to the questions that I'm being posed from industry, from communities – these are questions that they're directly asking and I am asking on their behalf, Minister. The more detail and more clarity that you can provide, the better. I know that right now there are many members from this industry that are watching and they're listening to the responses, and they're indicating that there's a lot of lovely language that's being used, but they would like some of that drilled-down information. They want to know exactly what your ministry is doing to support sports, to support communities, to support the heritage, and to support film in our province.

I have 26 seconds. Yeah. The more detail that you can provide, the better. I appreciate that this is information that I will be getting back to all of those stakeholders that I've been engaging with over the last three years, and I really appreciate any feedback and detailed information that you can provide.

Thank you.

The Chair: I'm sure the chair loves to fill that extra couple of seconds. Minister, you have up to 10 minutes to respond. That will conclude our block.

Just a prewarning: we will be trying to take our break at about five minutes after 5 so we don't compete with the other group in the other room, just in case anybody needed to know that.

Sorry, Minister. You now may proceed.

Mr. Orr: Thank you. You know what? All totally fair questions, and I totally appreciate the spirit of them. Very legitimate. In terms of multiculturalism, first of all, let me make very clear that we did transfer that over to Labour and Immigration. It's been set up as a separate associate minister so he can focus on that entirely. We transferred along with him \$500,000 of our grant money to support that program, and whatever he also picks up there from Immigration. That part of it I'm not aware of – it's outside of my

program – but I can give you some of the events just from this last year that we have been able to support.

A Somali community Olympian round-table event with SPAR sport because, well, that's – yeah. Athletes for the Tokyo Summer Olympics. Okay. I'm looking just for ones with multiculturalism here. Black History Month. We did a number of round-tables, a number of events with Black history. I really, really appreciated getting to know some of these folks and the comments, the business development, the solution-solving stuff. Really great people. Black History Month also with Black women entrepreneurs and one with youth, which was really interesting.

A round-table with Francophonie youth is coming up, Francophonie artists, Francophonie business. All of these are parts of that multiculturalism grant as well as the fact that we sponsor a number of special events throughout the year, all kinds of different cultural events that happen. I understand that for those grants there were 39 applications totalling \$791,000, and 19 of those grants, for \$340,000, were approved for funding. I think it's a program that you'll see expanding as we move forward. I totally enjoy getting to meet all of those people. As well, I should say that there are some CFEP, community facility enhancement program, grants that will go out as well to multiculturalism. So there are a number of grant streams there for them.

I'm more than happy to meet with the Edmonton community league and the Calgary Federation of Community Leagues. I think that would be great. I actually appreciate the opportunity to meet with groups that represent numbers of people. It helps me give better breadth with less time. I'd be happy to meet with them.

How are the Alberta media grant decisions made? There's a process within the department where the grant parameters are clearly spelled out, so they would be reviewed based on those parameters. The department would go through them and basically rate them in terms of how they comply with the grant request, and then based on the amount of money that's available from that priority list, they would be selected and then sent to me for final sign-off on those.

For the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, yes, the pandemic was very challenging – very, very challenging – in many ways, but I'm happy to be able to say that, you know, all of the grant funding for the Alberta foundation continued without interruption. There were no scale backs, there were no cutbacks in the dollar amount of what was budgeted. I think the Alberta foundation did a really great job of trying to discern and decide where that money should go.

I also will say that there was a considerable amount of consultation done when we put together the act last fall. Oh, my brain goes dead sometimes. The Arts Professions Recognition Act. Sorry. There was a lot of consultation done with both individual artists, who were able to make their contribution, and with a large number of the arts organizations that represent artists. I think we have some good connections there. I think we learned a lot from them. Their input was invaluable in creating that act and moving forward with it, and we took a lot of their advice on that.

4:40

Let me talk about FIFA. I know that's an important issue, and I truly would like to respond to it. I've actually been expecting it in question period. I'm surprised you haven't raised it yet, but I know there are other things, so let me address it now. Yes, there will be value to the Edmonton region; to the hospitality industry, to tourism. I think there will be spinoff value, you know, even as far away as Jasper, Banff, hopefully, Drumheller, other places. There will clearly be some sector value. Part of my concern is that we find ways to make it valuable to all Albertans as broadly as we possibly can.

We are partnering with the city of Edmonton. I have an amazing team here that has been working with the city of Edmonton's team, with Explore Edmonton, discussing all of the details, working through it, talking about the budget numbers, talking about the guarantees. How do we address the concerns and the needs there? The federal government has been involved in that. I had a call way back in November with the federal Minister of Sport to have conversations about this and raised some of the issues that were of concern to us. Quite frankly, they did respond to us with good answers to some of those.

The one that we're still waiting for and I think the city's waiting for, too, is that they've given us some general numbers in terms of what their financial contribution would be. We would like to see something more specific in that. Their program says 30 to 50 per cent contribution. We'd like to see that at 50 per cent for Alberta, quite frankly. You know, it's just equalization for Alberta. We would like to see that at 50 per cent, and we're still waiting for those specific numbers. I'm sure the mayor can use some of his past connections to help that happen as well.

We are on schedule. The schedule was delayed once a little bit, but we're not behind. We're not holding anything up at this stage. When everything's appropriately in order and all of the players have resolved the things that they need to resolve, then it will move, potentially, into a sort of very detailed negotiation piece. I can't give any kind of an answer of which way it lands today, but I can tell you that we're working on it, we're actively involved with it, and I can't give enough praise to my team that's been working on it with the various players to try and make sure that we land in the right place for everyone, for Alberta.

I also want to address the arts – where am I at here? – donation program for AFA. I meant to do that earlier, and I missed it. Let me be clear. Don't assume there's something nefarious here. We are not trying to reduce funding to the arts. As I said before, my goal is to actually see the arts flourish in this province. Let me try and put it this way. The floor for funding is the budget money. It won't go down. It won't decrease. What we've said is that we're giving AFA an opportunity to actually increase the budget amount and actually generate more revenue through the donation program and funding that they can raise on their behalf. If we can help them do that, we're happy to do that. I'd be happy to see them raise that much more above what we put in the budget. It is truly an attempt to try and diversify their revenue streams, to strengthen their ability to generate revenue and be self-sustaining and self-sufficient in some small part. Anything that we can do to make them grow and prosper and flourish is my real goal within the realities of budgets and fiscal accountability and all those kinds of hard things that government has to deal with.

I think I'm out of time.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister. That does conclude the first portion of questions from the Official Opposition.

There are no independent members here or online at this time, so we will now move to the government caucus for 20 minutes of questions from members. Members, would you like to combine your time with the minister?

Mr. Walker: What would you like, Minister?

Mr. Orr: Blocks.

Mr. Walker: Block. Okay. We're going to do block, Chair.

The Chair: It will then be block time, and you have up to 10 minutes, MLA Walker. Please feel free to talk more about FIFA.

Mr. Walker: Thank you so much, Chair and to all the committee members and everyone here, especially Minister Orr and Associate Minister Issik. It's wonderful to be part of estimates here today and discuss the estimates for this ministry. Lots of great dialogue so far. I would say, Chair, that back and forth I've really taken it in and learned a lot. Of course, no, I'd love to talk FIFA, too. I grew up playing soccer, and I quite enjoy the sport.

I guess where I would begin, just where I'm sort of going, Minister Orr and Associate Minister Issik, is on cultural identity sort of in general. Also a movie buff. We've been speaking about movies in this committee last week as well, and I'm just really excited about all the fantastic announcements we have, Minister Orr, in part due to the competitiveness of our film and tax credit and the great work you guys are doing. *The Last of Us* is big, a huge HBO production, a billion-dollar investment over 10 years, I believe. We're really excited about that.

Also, Minister, thank you so much for your clarification on the multiculturalism, a very important file, moving to Labour and Immigration. I can tell you, just as positive feedback as someone representing an amazing riding, as we all do, in Sherwood Park and part of the capital region of over a million people – we have a thriving multicultural community here, and I can tell you how excited Albertans are when they go through the CIP and the CFEP process for getting grants, applying. Sometimes they get them; sometimes they don't. There is a clear meritocratic process, as you've laid out here on *Hansard* today, but I just wanted to let you know how much people appreciate that. Now with, hopefully, COVID becoming an endemic, fingers crossed, we can get back to wonderful community events that enrich Alberta and our wonderful communities, including multicultural communities, Minister.

Also, very exciting – you were including in your comments, I believe, in the opening, I would say, through the chair, an increase in the budget overall of 17 per cent, \$38 million. This is awesome. I'm just really excited about this. Furthermore, just so generous – I'm happy in my own riding and community of Sherwood Park. For example, through the CFEP grant, over \$100,000 for Mills Haven elementary school playground. It's so important to the children and, of course, the parents and the families that go there. We also had a recent and wonderful announcement on design funding for a replacement school for Sherwood Heights and école Campbelltown, and everyone is so excited. These CFEP grants and CIP really, really matter. They make a difference.

Speaking about culture and identity, Minister Orr, I know you're an avid reader, including on Alberta culture and identity, and I would turn you to Howard Palmer's – passed on now; a former University of Calgary professor – *Alberta: A New History*, 1990. He was a fifth-generation Albertan and wrote a very thorough history on Alberta's culture, demographic pattern, and settlement, and it's just really, really enriching. Also, on the political side, which is also part of culture, broadly speaking, you'd probably want to check out Nelson Wiseman, a U of T professor. He wrote an article on the intellectual – The American Imprint on Alberta Politics, due again to settlement patterns and the last best west period of the late 19th and early 20th century, when so many Americans came up and became Albertans. At one point in around the 1920 period 1 out of every 5 Albertans was also American. Quite an amazing and important part of our heritage.

Minister, on to culture and identity here. Now, it is clear that the Ministry of Culture and Status of Women works to improve the quality of life for Albertans. In your 2022-2025 business plan on page 26 key objective 1.1 says, "Promote Alberta as a place to live, invest and do business by attracting and presenting unique, world-class heritage and cultural experiences." Minister, how is your ministry promoting Alberta as a great place to live, invest, and do

business? As well, what are some of those unique, world-class heritage and cultural experiences you mention attracting and presenting?

4:50

We heard some great dialogue around FIFA and also the film industry. We'd love to bring in more superhero films. Of course, one of our favourites is Alberta's own, in terms of fiction, Wolverine. He has his origins in Alberta, which is really cool. Also, overall, Minister, how will this key objective 1.1 on page 26 of the business plan sort of in a nutshell benefit Albertans?

As well, Minister, the Fair Deal Panel we struck, which was very important and resonates deeply with Albertans, recommended that your ministry explore ways and means to affirm our cultural uniqueness. Again, the Wiseman article as well as Howard Palmer's great 1990 work talk about this as well. Also, going back to Peter Lougheed's era, where it was very much a golden age of Alberta culture. I know that you feel that as well, and you're promoting that here in 2022. We'll have a new great golden age period.

I am glad to see this key objective 2.1, Minister, on page 27 in your 2022-2025 business plan: "affirm Alberta's cultural identity . . . by giving communities and storytellers the ability to share Alberta's story and preserve its history." Now, what kinds of things are you doing to affirm Alberta's cultural identity, and how is this going to benefit all Albertans? I'm really looking for very much a fleshed out, expanded response from you on this one, as I know I'll receive, Minister.

Then, also, I see that key objective 1.3 on page 26 of the business plan says that your ministry intends to explore modern and innovative ways to celebrate our culture. This sounds like a good direction for your ministry to take things, but I'm just curious about some of the wording when it comes to this objective – I really am, Minister – and I'm hoping you can provide a bit of clarity when it comes to the terms "modern" and "innovative" in their use. If you could define that just for a 2022 context. Can you tell us some of the things that you were doing as regards key objective 1.3 on page 26? What kind of programs and initiatives is Culture putting forward to, quote, modernize Alberta's cultural scene? I'd really like to know that.

Your initiative supporting key objectives on page 26 of the business plan mentions \$25.6 million being allocated to the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. How will this money be used to achieve key objective 1.3 in particular? I'm being very specific there, Minister Orr.

Then, finally, my last question here. How much of this was the result of having to pivot to meet your clients' needs during the pandemic?

So overall, focused here on culture and identity. As I understand it, Minister – and I'm sure you'll explain in your response – this is a very important part of your ministry's direction, perhaps even your mandate. I have always subscribed to the belief within the Canadian context that Alberta has an exceptional culture, as so many Canadian provinces do, and I'm really curious to see how overall, including in the questions I've asked here, you will work towards and your ministry will work towards strengthening and solidifying Alberta's cultural uniqueness. I always say, you know, for example, on cultural traits, that the business of Alberta is business. We're an entrepreneurial people. That goes back well over – for a long, long time here. People come here. We're the opportunity society, where people seek upward socioeconomic mobility. We are the ultimate platform for individual self-realization, wealth creation, and opportunity generation, Minister.

Again, with our great multicultural component, that you had spoken of earlier, an amazing part of Alberta and, really, in that

modern context I'm really curious to hear as well how the cultural scene is modernizing, including under your ministry.

With that, you know, I'd be curious to hear what the chair says. I'll give the chair 16 seconds.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Member Walker. I appreciate that.

I will not indulge, because we're all looking forward to the break, but I will give the minister up to 10 minutes to respond.

Mr. Orr: Okay. Thank you very much. A great series of questions. Let me begin by saying that, you know, we've all been through COVID the last two years, and it's been a hard, tough time for everybody. It's divided people. It's divided communities. It's divided businesses. It's divided families. People are frustrated, and when I came into this ministry, one of my goals was to try and somehow work toward some social cohesion, to work toward somehow healing the soul of Alberta. Maybe it's too lofty, but that's where I'm at.

For me, cultural identity is an attempt to try and achieve that goal. It's not for me to define what culture is. Culture comes from people. Culture is people. My objective is not to define or try and give some sort of hard direction to what that means. It's about inviting Albertans to be able to understand who they are, to be able to celebrate who we are, to rejoice in what we are as a people, to find some social cohesion, some joy in life again, a sense of unity as a people.

Newcomers come, and they want to know who we are. We get questions all the time about – you know, people want to understand the history. I mean, I have heard it from numerous multicultural engagements with talking about this, and I ask them what's important to them, and they just want to understand what's made this province. What are the important things about it? It's true. We have a lot of really cool, unique things in this province. You've referenced a couple: our immigration patterns, our history, our influence. I would add to that that our geography is very unique, and it determines a lot of who and what we are. Our economy is quite unique.

The spirit of Alberta is unique. I mean, I've lived in a couple of other provinces. I've lived in a couple of other countries. The spirit of the west, the can-do attitude – I mean there are even companies named – in Red Deer there are a number of companies. The can-do girls: they do mortgage stuff. It's just the attitude of the place. It's unique and incredible and wonderful, and I think we should celebrate that. I think we should make that truly great. That's really what that is all about, to continue our support for everything that is Albertan, not as a way to be divisive but as a way to find our commonalities, the things that support us.

I think it's also important from the economic point of view. I mean, the Calgary Economic Development group – I forget the exact name – pointed out multiple years ago and have worked with as part of their goals that, you know, the key to attracting investment and employees is community amenities. It's culture. It's the things that people want to live and have access to. It isn't even necessarily salary. They know what the salary range is in their particular job. It's the amenities. It's the culture. It's the benefits that attract people. I think that's important in also helping us to grow this and move this.

What are some of the world-class experiences? Some of the major cultural and sporting events, some of the recent events include the Calgary hub city event to host the curling piece that happened there. In fact, the World Women's Curling Championship was supposed to be in Switzerland, but because Calgary had already done some others and had a COVID place in practice and was open,

it got moved to here. An incredible opportunity for us. The world triathlon series in August of last year. The World Junior Hockey Championship, that has been on and off again but will be on again, I understand, maybe even in August. The fact that we just heard the announcement yesterday or the day before – Member Rosin sitting right here. The biathlon at – oh, what do you call it?

Ms Rosin: The Nordic Centre.

An Hon. Member: In Canmore.

Mr. Orr: Thank you. Yes. Canmore. It'll be the only place in North America with a number one certification for a biathlon. Those are incredible things that would draw people to Alberta, that give Albertans something to be proud and excited about. I think just bringing some excitement to Albertans, quite honestly some good times, is good for mental health. I really believe that.

5:00

You asked about key objective 2.1, "affirm Alberta's cultural identity . . . by giving communities and storytellers the ability to share Alberta stories and preserve its history." You know, we need to think of storytellers in the broad sense. Storytellers are the music and song writers. They're the theatre people. They're the artists who are drawing the pictures. They're the writers who are writing books. All of that is part of it, and these are the kinds of things that through the ministry, through increased grants, we really are hoping to just create a framework. In fact, we have a framework, an action plan on Alberta's uniqueness to try and celebrate some of these things just, as I said, to create a sense of unity, a sense of oneness, a sense of common understanding about who we are. That's not for me to define. My job is to create an ecosystem where it can flourish, where it can happen, and it'll become what it should be.

Specifically, though, a couple of things that I think are really exciting. A few weeks ago I was down in Brooks and met with a Black man there, Ahmed, an incredible individual. He's been there for, like, 30 years, working with people, just a passion and a love for young people. We've partnered with him to create the John Ware youth empowerment program, which will work with young adults between 19 and 25 just after high school. You know, it's kind of: "What do I do now? Where do I go? They kicked me out of high school. There's a big, wild, scary world out there." He wants to work with them and, hopefully, create a model that can be used across the province.

The Alberta Heritage marker program is an initiative that we're working on.

I'm going to run out of time. Oh, my goodness.

I have to answer the technology piece. Technology is changing the world, things like providing the pivot online tool kit for artists and nonprofit organizations, looking at creative new ways to create projects, pushing the whole arts community, being open from the department to things like NFTs, nonfungible tokens. There's a lot of art starting to happen in the digital realm. Are we prepared to somehow understand that and enhance that? How do we market projects world-wide? I mean, the world is a marketplace now online. How do we help our artists take advantage of that? That's some of the things that I'm looking at and encouraging people to wrestle with.

What about the idea of digitalization of some of our heritage artefacts? That's something we should be exploring. Using QR codes for many of our heritage resources to be able to tell the story and provide information: the department is already working on that one. How do we research some of these concepts and ideas for totally new ways of doing things as technology changes us, changes our world, changes the reality that we don't want to be left behind

in? The crowdfunding platform is a perfect example. Working with the university on social finance is another example.

I've been asking the question: what about creating a mechanism for cryptodonations to nonprofits? There are vast amounts of money out there in cryptofunds. Can we come up with a mechanism that's fully compliant that would allow people that have huge capital gains in crypto to donate those to nonprofits? I think there are a lot of people who would be very willing to do that. It's already happening in some states in the U.S., a little bit in Europe. Those are the kinds of things that we need to be looking at and moving forward on and creating a world of art and social experience that takes into account all of those different kinds of things.

Let's see. What else did you ask me about? Oh, yeah, here's another. I'll just mention it because, I mean, it's already been in the House. Part of the reason for Bill 1, the Queen's Platinum Jubilee scholarship awards, is also to try and celebrate and bring to awareness and tell the stories of what Alberta is. Part of that is, you know, part of the Commonwealth of Nations, 150-some nations. We are a part of that. Many Albertans might not even realize that. The recognition of 7,000 Albertans across the province for the work they have done to make this place a better province is part of that as well.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister. That concludes the government members' first block of questions.

We will now take a five-minute break – the timer is on the wall – and we will resume precisely at that end. Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned from 5:05 p.m. to 5:10 p.m.]

The Chair: Thank you, everyone.

Now we will move to five minutes of questions from the Official Opposition, followed by five minutes of response from the minister. As mentioned, 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. Please remember that discussion should flow through the chair at all times regardless of whether or not speaking time is combined.

Again, Minister, are you going to continue on block time? There we go.

Ms Renaud, you have the mic.

Ms Renaud: Thank you very much. My questions are going to focus on key objectives 1.5 and 2.5. But before I get to those questions, I have one from a stakeholder, from ACFA, which I believe you referenced in your comments. That's the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta. This is a very specific question that they would like an answer to. Budget 2022 isn't specific on the amount the government plans to allocate to the Francophone Secretariat. As you know, the Francophone Secretariat is responsible for implementing the French policy across government but has limited human resources available to do so. Their team is still limited to six employees even though this policy will celebrate its fifth year. Did the government plan to increase the Francophone Secretariat funding to reflect the increased workload since the policy implementation in 2017? If not, an explanation why not would be most appreciated.

I'm going to go back to the two objectives that I mentioned. I have a series of questions, and I hope the minister will do his best to answer them. My first one is: at a time when government is looking to enhance funding for French language services and programs, why is the ministry literally cutting funds? It's not a big cut, but actually there is a reduction in the French language secretariat. I'd just like an explanation for that.

My next question is that the narrative contained in the most recent annual report, which was 2020-21, notes a significant increase in the demand for French language supports, yet this ministry's budget estimates do not reflect that. The reason I'm pointing this out is that there's a slight decrease in this particular area of the ministry, yet the annual report is talking about the increased workload. I just don't see how the two reconcile. If the minister could explain that, I would appreciate it.

My next question is: can the minister update the committee on the progress expected towards improved access for Franco-Albertans given the budget reductions?

My next question: other than the number of words translated, as noted in the ministry's annual report, which I would argue is a one-dimensional measure, what specifically is the ministry measuring in terms of furthering the inclusion of francophone Albertans, especially as it relates to objectives 1.2 and 2.5?

The 2020-21 Culture annual report notes the 2020-23 French policy action plan, listing approximately 100 initiatives and supporting the Francophonie across government. Will the ministry please table for this committee progress on these initiatives that are supported in Budget 2022?

My next question. Describe the role of the Culture ministry in relation to the cuts at Campus Saint-Jean. I would like to know: did the ministry play a role in any capacity to advocate for changes to Campus Saint-Jean?

My next question. The francophone community is quite disappointed with the lack of new French schools in Alberta. As we know, Budget 2022 essentially ignored them. So I would like to hear the ministry's role in supporting this decision.

The francophone community remains very concerned about the fact that the Franco-Albertan flag is still only flown for 24 hours during the Franco month. Now, we've heard lots of explanations: there's a new policy, we only do it for 24 hours, yada, yada, yada. My question is this. For a community that is so large and so important for Alberta, it's an entire month of time that we're supposed to be focused on Franco-Albertans, yet a 24-hour time period for a flag, you know, is somewhat disrespectful. I'm sure the ministry has heard that. I have heard that from constituents and from stakeholders right across the province. Other than it was a policy endorsed by this minister, I would like to know, really, just an explanation for the community. I think they would like to know why they are not important enough to have this flag, this really important flag. It's very symbolic. You know, you talk about the importance of culture in Alberta. Well, this flag is really important for the French culture in Alberta, so I would like to know the rationale for actually limiting the time period to fly this really important flag.

Now, finally, it was very nice to see the minister finally appoint a parliamentary secretary. I would like to know: what are the measurable, observable goals of that position and the total costs associated?

With that, I will stop because I've got about 25 seconds. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Minister, you have up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Orr: Okay. Thank you. With regard to the ACFA, yes, there is a slight decrease in the budget, but it's minimal. It's 1 per cent. But I would also argue that because of the increased budget capacity that I have for grants, both CIP and CFEP, and some of those francophone organizations are eligible to apply for those, there will be opportunities for increased funding for them through those grants. So the overhead operational, the main budget, is down 1 per cent, I admit. I would point out that it's down less each of the last

three years than it was before. In fact, if we go back to 2018, when the NDP were last in power, the budget is actually up 13 per cent over that time, so I don't think we're very far behind on our budget with regard to that. We've actually increased it from 2018 by 13 per cent.

I did meet with Sheila, the chair of the board of directors for ACFA, and Isabelle as well. I had a very positive, good conversation with them. They did raise some of these concerns and issues, but we had a good meeting, very conversational, very productive, I think, and I think we both felt in the end that it was a helpful meeting.

Let me talk about the initiatives, the 100 initiatives. That list of initiatives was something that will help us move forward in a very productive way, and they will be reported on in the next annual report that comes out. I don't know that it would be helpful to provide an interim report, but I can assure you that there will be a report on them.

I also know, from talking to the chair of the board, that the francophone community is putting together a sort of consultation report that she told me should be due this spring sometime, so I'm looking forward to seeing that, and I will certainly have further conversations with her when that happens. I think it'll be very useful and constructive to us in that regard.

Regarding funding for Campus Saint-Jean, you know, I really can't comment much on that for two reasons. While I completely support francophone education, the reality is, one, this is before the courts, so that'll have to be sorted out. Secondly, this really is a question for Advanced Education. I will work with the francophone community in terms of advancing their concerns and advocating with them and for them. Primarily, though, as I spoke with the chair of the board, the request for advocating that she raised is that we continue to work together to advocate with the federal government for the ongoing funding and fair and equal funding for the Alberta francophone community because we don't get that from the federal government. It's been an ongoing frustration. It hasn't been raised in quite a few years even though it's been promised and promised. That is a challenge that both they and I face, and we need to work together on that as much as we absolutely can.

In terms of the flag raising, we discussed that, too. I understand that that's a bit of a sore point, but at the moment the policy is what it is primarily because there are many other organizations, and I think we need to keep a fair and equal policy. I have to be honest; I'm not sure I see that being something that we're going to be able to change in the near future here.

5:20

In terms of the parliamentary secretary, though, before I run out of time, he does have a mandate letter. His job is to engage with as many francophone stakeholders as he possibly can, to go to as many events as he can, to keep me apprised of anything that he hears, learns, or feels like I should be aware of, and will proudly participate in the federal-provincial-territorial discussions that happen as well. In that regard I've been really pleased with his results. He's very active, very enthused, and I'm hearing back from members of the community that they're quite pleased with his presence and his engagement with them.

The Chair: I apologize for the interruption.

We will now go to government caucus for their five minutes. Who would be taking those questions? Ms Rosin, you have up to five minutes.

Ms Rosin: Wonderful. Thank you, Chair, and thank you so much to both ministers for being here with us tonight. I want to ask some

questions relating to the goals that have been set out by your department for growing the arts. As we know and as has been talked a lot about tonight, the arts play such an important role in defining Alberta's identity and our culture and in making so many people feel at home in their communities, I think, and bringing joy to so many people's lives, whether that's through theatre or through musical arts or performing arts. I think there's not a single person in this room or in all of Alberta who has not been touched by the arts in some way.

As an MLA who represents our major tourism communities, as well, I know how significantly the performing and musical artists can contribute to our tourism industry in Alberta. There's no denying that Alberta's tourism industries have been pretty brutally hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, but I think that if we put an even smaller lens on that, the arts, specifically the performing arts, has been another industry that has been really devastated by COVID-19 and the inability to host in-person concerts or shows or exhibits. So there's a lot of work to do, I think, on revitalizing Alberta's arts industry and bringing people back to those in-person shows and exhibits and bringing joy to people's homes once more.

I do see on page 26 of your business plan under key objective 1.2 that your ministry is committed to growing Alberta's creative and cultural industries by 25 per cent by 2029, so by the end of this decade, which is a pretty ambitious goal, especially given the negative impact on the arts from the COVID-19 pandemic. I think getting to that goal of 25 per cent – we're starting kind of behind the starting line as opposed to where we would have started on this goal two years ago, before the pandemic hit. I commend this goal. I think it's a tremendous objective to achieve and something that our government absolutely should pursue, but given that there has been such a devastation of the industry over the past couple of years, I know there's going to be a lot of work that needs to be undertaken to get us there. So I am just wondering if you can answer a few questions related to that goal, the first of which being: what planning has gone into this objective to grow these cultural industries by 25 per cent by the end of the decade, and can you please outline what the \$20.7 million in line 2.3 is being put towards? Oh, sorry. I skipped a page of my questions.

I would also like to know how your department plans to go about achieving this goal just because it is such a lofty one. Again, as excited as I am, I would like to know what plans you have in place to achieve that goal of 25 per cent by the end of 2029.

I'm also wondering if you can quantify the arts' current contribution to the Alberta economy. Maybe we want to quantify that number in supposed prepandemic terms, if that's possible, because, obviously, I think the amount that the arts contributes to Alberta's economy today is very different than it would be in a normal time. But if we have a number to show kind of what that contribution is to our overall Alberta economy, both maybe in the past and now and what that would look like in the future with our 25 per cent growth target. Yeah. Again, what that contribution would look like once we achieve the 25 per cent growth target.

I've got one minute and a half left, so I'll just read this one out as well. I know another priority of our government has been achieving a, quote, unquote, fair deal from the federal government. People tend to think of that in terms of equalization or market access for our resources, but there are actually many facets and funding streams that Alberta would not per se get a fair deal on from the federal government. I actually believe that the arts, culture, sports, and heritage sectors are one of those streams. I do note that in key objective 1.5 of your business plan you recognize a goal to advocate for equitable funding to those arts, culture, sports, heritage streams from the federal government. I'm just wondering if you could tell us how large the disparity currently is between the funding levels

for Alberta's arts versus the average funding level for other provinces or similar-sized provinces with similar arts industries and what your ministry plans to do to advocate for those equitable funding levels for our arts and culture sectors from the federal government.

It looks like I have got 26 seconds left, which I will cede back to the chair or to yourself.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Just for clarification, if you do end early, we can go to the minister for response, but then the time does shift back to the other party.

Minister, you have up to five minutes to respond, after which we'll go back to the Official Opposition.

Mr. Orr: Okay. Thank you very much. Yes. You started out a little bit talking about arts tourism, a great subject, an important place. Part of how we plan to grow the cultural industries does include that very idea, but there are a lot of other things that I really need to raise in terms of – I mean, the main focus of your questions were: how do we plan to grow the cultural industries?

First of all, by budget growth. I have lobbied very hard to see some gains this year. Hopefully, if our economy improves and the money is there, I can continue to do that, so budget growth in terms of their ability to contribute to the arts sector but also, quite frankly, partnerships. You know, nobody ever did anything well in this world alone. It takes partnerships. It takes people working together, all kinds of diverse people: the support organizations, the artists themselves, the other support industries. It's about partnerships and finding out how we can create synergies and create inspiration and growth. That's a big piece of it.

Quite frankly, it's also about innovation. I talked about that in the last session. We do need to find ways to innovate, to move the arts sector forward, to make sure we keep up with the world, where it's going, and where, quite frankly, some of the demand for art is. It's about innovation.

I'm also going to say that it's about legislation. We introduced a bill last fall. There may be more coming. I think we need to create a legislative environment that is supportive, that enhances, and that makes art a viable career for new people starting out, that makes it a viable business. We have a whole arts industry sector, which includes magazines, books, film and media, some of these other pieces, so creating an industry that really will be encouraged to grow in that way and help them, quite frankly, not only serve the Alberta market but be able to move into international and national markets.

For instance, last fall we were able to fund the Alberta book association magazine – yeah, did I say it right? "Book association" doesn't sound right. Anyway, it's publishers is what it is. Sorry. To be able to fund a part of their expenses to go to the largest book fair in the world, which is in Frankfurt, Germany. They were able to make a number of presentations. There are 300-some books currently that are translated into German for the German market. Helping us to expand some of those world markets as well is a key part of this.

Lastly, it's about building capacity. We need to help our arts organizations and our arts people understand how they can truly grow in capacity. We're working, just quickly, in terms of music, with Alberta Music and the West Anthem group to help build an ecosystem that will work for them. I think that's important.

You asked how we will measure these things. Much of the measurement comes from Statistics Canada reporting that we pick up. Unfortunately, that means some of the numbers are sometimes a bit delayed. The most recent numbers we can get today are from 2019, but that's certainly a part of it.

You asked me how we will quantify it. How much is it contributing? Currently the cultural industries contribute \$5.02 billion to Alberta's economy, and there are 51,077 jobs on last count. Again, 2019 numbers, so today it potentially could be larger than that. If we were to meet the 25 per cent growth mark from 2019 numbers, we would actually be at \$6.28 billion, and in terms of jobs it would come out to an additional 12,700 jobs, for a total of 63,846 jobs.

5:30

Lastly, you talked about federal equalization. Yes, this is definitely a challenge for us; for instance, let me give you some specifics. The recent federal emergency support fund for arts and culture organizations was not regionally balanced. Overall, Alberta received approximately 5.29 per cent of the fund. [Mr. Orr's speaking time expired] Whoa.

The Chair: [Remarks in German] They are good, Herr Orr.

Now we will introduce for the record the member to my right.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much. MLA Todd Loewen, Central Peace-Notley.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we will go to Member Irwin for up to five minutes of her questions.

Member Irwin: Thank you. What I'd like to do is probably address some of the questions that I asked earlier that we didn't have an opportunity to answer, so forgive me, for those watching at home. The first one I would like to ask is again just coming back to Status of Women. We don't get the breakdown on FTEs, and I'm just curious how many FTEs remain in Status of Women specifically, just in Status of Women. Okay.

I didn't get a lot of detail talking about – I mentioned a number of times just the lack of metrics and the lack of any sort of tracking. I used, well, multiple examples, but STEM was one of them. Well, let me talk about this. You spoke about the need for how if you get women higher-paying jobs, you reduce the pay gap, you reduce the gender imbalance, but it needs to go beyond just making sure that women enter the fields. They need to stay in the fields, and this means educating people and removing any stigmas that may exist, just like, you know, we talked about gender-based violence. It can't be on women and gender-diverse folks to do it alone. It requires so many more systemic changes.

Increasing women's participation in underrepresented fields requires this. For example, at the undergraduate level men and women, we know, enter the programs in roughly the same numbers, but as they move higher, as you noted, women tend to leave those programs, and the reasons are quite complex.

It was funny. I was talking to one of our staff about the women in STEM scholarships and her daughter had applied last year. One of the questions was something along the lines of: what have you done to address the issues? Interesting question. I mean, you know, when you're a student and all your professors are male and there are all these systemic barriers in place, it's interesting to put it on the student.

We know that when women enter these fields, there's something that causes them to leave. I think this is why, and I draw this example and give this context to come back to one of my other points, which was around the need for an intersectional approach and the need for GBA plus analysis. Again, this is something, it seems to me, that this government has fully abandoned.

I wasn't able to dig into all the specifics this year on the FPT meetings, but I know that last year in January at the previous

meeting of ministers for status of women across the country, that was a commitment that was made. That was looking at applying a gender-based lens, and obviously all provinces had to report on what they were doing. I would imagine, again, because of the emphasis, what I can read online about what went down at the latest FPT meeting was a discussion around gender-based violence and what each province and territory is doing to address it. So I just would love the minister or the associate minister to just talk to me a little bit about: is the government collecting any sort of data? Are they doing any sort of gender-based analysis? There used to be a robust program area in place in Status of Women and, again, it seems to me that it's been fully abandoned.

I would also like – you know, this is a topic that's important to me but to all of us, I'm sure, I hope, and that's commitments to the LGBTQ2S-plus community. Again, there aren't any metrics there, so I would just love to know from the associate minister – kind of a softball question – what kind of work she's engaged in to support the community and what, if any, specific funding is being provided to the community.

Maybe I'll end with the last one that I ended with prior, you know, women in leadership. I apologize for being a broken record here, but again this speaks to the need for a gender-based lens and an intersectional analysis when we see that we have no understanding of how women are faring when it comes to leadership positions, when it comes to their positions on agencies, boards, and commissions.

Ms Hoffman: Say it again.

Member Irwin: Yeah. Something that, again, the previous government, that I was not fortunate enough to be a part of but I watched from afar and saw the work that they were doing – they prioritized women's representation and representation of diverse populations. We've got a lot of work to do. I mean, you can look around this room and see the lack of diversity, so there's a lot of work that needs to be done in leadership for women.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Minister, you have up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Orr: I will give it all to the associate minister of women. Thank you.

Ms Issik: Thank you so very much. I'm glad that I have an opportunity to talk some more about the issues. I'm just going to go really quickly back to some of the previous issues with respect to women and economic recovery and mention the challenge grant that was announced in November, December. This is a grant where we've asked for applications from civil society and other groups in order to be able to have really great leading-edge solutions put forward, creative ones, to really push the envelope on women's entrepreneurship and various ideas on how to promote that. That grant closed, I believe, at the end of January, and I'm really looking forward to seeing the results of that.

With respect to FTEs in the Status of Women, we have 21, 16 of which are completely dedicated to Status of Women work. The other five, obviously, share duties between Culture, heritage, and Status of Women, et cetera.

I'd also like to just touch back on sexual violence, on gender-based violence. One of the most important issues that I think that I've heard since the summer has been the issue of sexual violence on campus. I've spent a number of hours meeting with CAUS and other groups, and I was really pleased to work with Minister Nicolaidis on the 2030 skills for jobs plan, where campus sexual

violence was made a priority. We recently announced 2 and a half million dollars towards that end, and, as I mentioned, I think, earlier, we will be doing a survey in the fall with students to really understand what their experience is on campus with sexual violence, what sorts of services need to be provided to support victims. The minister has asked for all campuses and boards of governors to review their policies with respect to it. So I'm pleased to say that we're making some good inroads on that front.

Also, with respect to sexual violence I'd like to talk about human trafficking. That is with the Department of Justice. That report will be coming soon, and I can tell you that the work that's been done on it is amazing and it's insightful and it will make a big difference. This is an issue that's personally very important to me. This work will actually also work very well with the missing and murdered Indigenous women of Alberta response to the national inquiry report. I'm very much looking forward to those recommendations coming forth. It will make a big difference. I think Alberta is leading on this front, and I'm very, very proud of the work that's been done.

That leads in to the national action plan. We had an FPT meeting in December. It was a very good meeting, and we are currently working on the various pillars. Specifically, one of the pillars is related to working to change the culture that leads to violence. This is working with men and boys. We have some exciting announcements coming forward soon with respect to partnership; \$450,000 of funding for a partnership that specifically addresses changing the culture in order to prevent sexual violence, in order to prevent gender-based violence, family violence. I'll leave it for the announcement, but I'm very, very excited about the organizations that will be involved in this, and I think it will make a big difference. We need to change the culture that leads to gender-based violence. The culture is very important.

5:40

I'll tell you that one of the organizations that we're very proud to support is VOICE, and that stands for valuable opportunities to inspire change through empowerment. This program, again, focuses on changing the paradigms that lead to violence, and, interestingly enough, when we have honest conversation peer to peer, what ends up happening is that it doesn't just address gender-based violence, but it also starts to address issues around racism, and I think this will make a profound difference. I'm very much looking forward to this program being proliferated.

In these next three years 30,000 students will be . . .

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister. Very much appreciate that.

We will now go to the independent for his five minutes of questions, and then back to government caucus after that is answered. Mr. Loewen.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, and thanks, Minister and Associate Minister, for being here today and all your staff. I appreciate your hard work and good work that you do. I just have a couple of questions. I'll keep it fairly simple. In the past here there have been allegations of sexual harassment in government offices, and I know that there was a commitment to do an independent review of human resources for political staff. I just wanted to get an update on where that process is on that independent review.

Then my second question is in regard to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. I know there was a joint working group set up and I know that there was a process, you know, there was a time period where input was collected and everything, and I think right now we're in the process where results are under review.

I'm just wondering when that project will be complete and when we'll be hearing something publicly put out on that.

Those are my two questions. Thank you very much.

The Chair: There you go. Minister, or ministers, you have up to five minutes to respond, and we will leave it with you.

Mr. Orr: Once again I think the Associate Minister of Status of Women will have the answers.

Ms Issik: Thank you very much. Well, first and foremost, I want to say that sexual harassment has no place in any workplace ever. The report that's been prepared by Jamie Pytel, I believe, is almost complete. I expect it to be produced soon, and, as mentioned previously in the Chamber, the recommendations from that report will be made public.

With respect to missing and murdered Indigenous women, the Alberta response, there was a great amount of work that went into that report, and I have to tell you that there were many, many stakeholders that presented. It was very in-depth, and the work of the committee was incredible. It was hours and hours and days and days and led by, also, incredible elders Elder Jackie Bromley and Elder Whiskeyjack, and I have to say that we're very fortunate to have had that kind of leadership. That report will be accepted in ceremony, I believe, next week, and I'm very much looking forward to it. It's going to be very meaningful, and it will change lives. I think the fact that we have spent that amount of time and effort on it really says something about how much Alberta cares, and we are going to make sure that Indigenous women are safe and healthy and able to fulfill their hopes and dreams.

Mr. Orr: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a few minutes left here, so – you know what? – I'm going to go back to some of the previous questions that I didn't have the answers for at the time. I'll try to fill in some more answers for folks.

The Alberta media fund, the allocation for the current year of the different grants that are out there: the cultural initiatives grant is \$287,000; the postproduction grant is \$920,000; the project script grant is \$510,000; the cultural industries operating grant is \$1,823,000; cultural industry support organizations is \$370,000; the cultural industries project grant is \$90,000, which totals up to \$4 million.

And then I can also share with you further details. There are some questions about how the Alberta-made production grant has actually been able to work. Solidarity Film Camp, produced by Abeça Productions, tells a story of a film camp for marginalized youth. It's a multiweekend camp. It was created by Andrea Beça and an incredible team of colleagues with a goal, really, of education and empowering marginalized youth to share their stories with the world through film. That's one of the pieces that is currently being supported by the Alberta-made production grant.

Another one that I think is fascinating: *True West: The John Scott Story*, a feature documentary film about western culture cowboy stuntpeople movie making. It's an Alberta-made film that showcases our award-winning backdrops, our geography, the incredible province we live in and that features some top-of-the-industry talent in feature films and television. John Scott is Alberta's grassroots cowboy. He's an Academy Award winning movie man bridging the gap between Alberta and Hollywood. The film premiered at and won the people's choice award at the 2020 Calgary International Film Festival and also won an award for best female producer at the Toronto International Film Festival. These are some of the exciting things that the Alberta-made production grant is doing.

I have time to squeeze in one more. *Connecting Flights* is a feature where, following the death of his mother, a man decides to search for his father, who was a visiting Canadian serviceman during World War II. This sets in motion an irreversible conflict when the two men do eventually meet each other but both are angry and unforgiving. The production has been an official festival selection at multiple festivals, including the Montreal Independent Film Festival, the Seattle film festival, and also a festival winner for best feature at both the Cannes indie cinema festival as well as the Great Lakes International Film Festival.

There's some really incredible work by Alberta production companies and artists who are telling some wonderful stories and doing it in a wonderful way, and that's what the Alberta-made production grant is all about.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister. I appreciate you accommodating that time.

We will now go back to the government caucus to keep in step with that rotation. MLA Rosin, you have up to five minutes.

Ms Rosin: Thank you. I'll be quick. I just wanted to re-ask my last question that we didn't quite get time to respond to last time. As I had said, oftentimes when Albertans or the government talks about getting a fair deal from the federal government, we think of that in terms of equalization or market access for our natural resources and commodities. Rarely, I think, do people think of the arts as an industry or sector that we don't receive a fair deal for from the federal government, but I do believe there is quite a disparity between the funding that Alberta receives from the federal government for the arts and what other similar provinces receive.

I do note that in key objective 1.5 of your business plan you do highlight this disparity and you outline a goal to advocate for equitable funding for Alberta's arts, culture, sports, and heritage sectors. I'm just wondering if you can elaborate on how large that disparity is, between the funding that Alberta receives for arts and culture sectors comparative to other provinces and territories in Canada, and what your ministry and department are doing to eliminate that disparity.

I will now pass the rest of my time to Member van Dijken.

Mr. van Dijken: Okay. Thank you.

Thank you, Minister Orr and Associate Minister Issik, for being with us today. I'd just like to revert back to the comment, Minister Orr, that you had made with regard to the work that we as government but also we as the leaders in our communities have to do coming out of the last two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. We all have a job to do to try and help our communities restore their normal, restore their ambition, restore their ability to feel like we can start building and progressing and moving forward again. I think it's an important part of your ministry to help in that.

5:50

I want to thank you for the work that's being done in my rural constituency. MLA Walker alluded to the facility enhancement program, the community initiatives program, and how upbuilding that is for nonprofit associations, societies. They're able to identify a need within their community, within their town, within their county, the association volunteers will work hard to build the whole scope of the project, and then the government comes along and matches their vision, and it helps them with a leg up with matching funding. It builds a lot of pride in communities when they're able to build new facilities, redevelop older facilities, and these societies have a lot to do with the pride of a community, that they feel that they're actually in control of their destiny.

Within that, I believe that we can talk more about nonprofits, volunteer organizations, and how you're focused on helping us to move beyond COVID-19. On page 26 of your business plan key objective 1.6 says that the ministry will "enhance the capacity of non-profit organizations through facilitation, capacity building services, eliminating red tape, and promoting the importance of volunteerism through volunteer recognition programs." If you could, Minister, just expand a little bit, tell us about some of the ways you will be building the capacity of this sector, the nonprofit organizations, in the coming year, particularly in view of how much rebuilding they have to do postpandemic. There have been a couple of years lost here of progress in some of that, so I think it's an important stage.

Also, I question: what is your ministry doing to reduce red tape and meet its obligation in this area? I guess the question would be: did you participate in the red tape reduction nonprofit industry panel, and if you did, what came of that? Were you able to identify areas where red tape could be reduced to help these organizations actually succeed?

The Chair: Thank you.

Ministers, you have up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Orr: Okay. I'll take Member Rosin's question quickly to start with. I was saying at the end of the last session that Alberta received 5.92 per cent of the federal emergency support for culture and heritage sectors, but that's in contrast to the reality that the province contributes 10 per cent of Canada's GDP, 8.1 per cent of Canada's culture jobs are in Alberta, 11.6 per cent of Canada's population is in Alberta, but we only get 5.9 per cent of the funding in that one particular case. Chronically, historically, in the long term we get a disproportionately lower amount of funding, and that includes all organizations, including, as I said earlier, the Francophonie as well. It's a long-term challenge we have. We pay more, we get less. That's just the reality that Alberta has had to struggle with for many years.

I'll move on, then, to Member van Dijken's questions. How are we helping local, community, on-the-ground nonprofits to be able to build their capacity to improve, to expand, and to grow? There are a whole bunch of things that the ministry does sort of behind the scenes that, quite frankly, don't show up in the budget, that people probably don't hear about very much. If you're a nonprofit, you may participate in these. For instance, yes, we offer financial capacity building, and I bring that up to say that you highlighted the question of: how do we help them move forward coming out of COVID? Well, we've strongly raised the grant capacity, particularly for CFEP, because many of our nonprofits have facilities, buildings that are in need of repair, that are in need of expansion, that are in need of growth. By sort of overfunding the allocation to that from what it's been, hopefully, it will help them to recover and move forward through that funding piece. But the other parts that are less known that I think are important are – one of the programs run is an enhanced capacity advancement program, supporting the sector's efforts to ensure nonprofit organizations have the capacity to meet their challenges for today and the future.

Addressing some of the complex social problems really does require a partnership approach that involves charities, nonprofit groups, as well as the government to see meaningful change. The department works with people. My goal is to try and create that partnership where we can provide information, where we can provide guidance to help them with that. The ministry continues to provide capacity development services to nonprofits. On average over 140 projects – these are educational projects, upgrading projects – are delivered every year, targeted to both local

community and provincial levels. For instance, the board development program delivers an average of 85 webinars a year, 3,500 attendees, so nonprofits that need help with their board to understand how to do these things: that's one of the programs. Creative partnership, quite frankly, is a direct effort to try and address that. Working with the University of Calgary to help – and I should also say not just the University of Calgary but the Calgary United Way as well – organizations increase their capacity.

One of the challenges that many nonprofits have is how to actually go about raising funding. I run into donors and corporate people who say: we have money to give, but where do we give it? So helping make those connections, helping nonprofits understand what it takes so that it becomes a win-win. There has to be a good match between the donor and the receiver. Not everybody is going to give to the same thing, for corporate reasons and ESG reasons and all that sort of stuff. So trying to help make those connections and create that environment where nonprofits understand what corporations need from their side in order for them to be able to give. I think in many cases they want to, but it's just a challenge of how to actually get there.

Red tape you asked about. Yes, we definitely were a part of that. We also enacted a piece of that into legislation, the Freedom to Care Act. I think we're actually ahead on the red tape minister's schedule in terms of percentage of nonprofits we're at. Maybe I can ask somebody from the team. What's our percentage now?

The Chair: Hopefully, we'll be able to get back to that. Thank you, Minister, and hopefully we'll be able to get back to that.

We now go to the opposition. Member Hoffman.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm going to start by talking about the operating expense, expense vote by program, page 63 in the estimates for Culture and Status of Women. Under previous ministers in this role there was one office that carried out the responsibility of both what is now the Ministry of Culture and a separate office for the associate minister. The line item, as one can probably assume was a result of adding an additional minister, has increased by about 25 per cent, which is a significant increase over the operation of a political office for what was formerly under one set of political staff and one minister, so I think we deserve some transparency around what's happened in terms of staffing.

Certainly, the minister's office allocation hasn't gone down; it's gone up as well, not to the same degree, but with the addition of line item 1.2 it's gone up significantly over previous years. For example, 2021: it was \$860,000 cumulatively, and now there's another \$315,000 added through an associate minister's office. What are the actual returns to the people of Alberta in terms of: what should they be able to see by this significant increase of more than 25 per cent to the budget of the Minister of Culture as well as the associate minister for Culture and now Status of Women as a separate entity? I think that many of the things that the minister has mentioned so far in the estimates have talked about accomplishments under the prior minister's tenure. This is a significant increased financial contribution that we're asking for the people of Alberta, and I think it would be only fair for them to know what the actual returns will be on that investment.

6:00

I do want to take a moment to talk about a couple of the capital projects that moved forward while we were in government and some of the pride I feel for those as they relate to measuring attendance at cultural events, which relates to key objective 1 and the performance metrics for those in the business plan.

Certainly, the Telus World of Science expansion and upgrade to the facilities there is a big one. Recently I was at the opening for the new health exhibit, and there was, you know, gratitude expressed to the city, who stepped up as financial partners; to the province, the former provincial government, who stepped up as financial partners; to the federal government, who matched those grants; and then a thank you to the current government for writing a letter of advocacy. I would say that I expect more than a letter of advocacy for one of the largest cultural venues in the province of Alberta when it comes to ticketed attendance. There are many nonticketed events that draw similar numbers, but in terms of ticketed attendance it is one of the highest grossing cultural opportunities that we have.

It happens to be here in the capital region, but I know, as a kid who grew up in a rural community in northern Alberta, that coming to the Telus World of Science – at that time it was Edmonton Space and Science Centre – was a big part of why we came to Edmonton. Farmfair was another one. Certainly, I have to say that those were two awesome sort of examples of different ways that my parents helped nurture my growth and development.

I'm very excited for the final opening of the Roxy Theatre. It's been something that I'm grateful we were able to fund in the time, again, when the NDP was in government, and I would like to see some more expansions of those types of community theatre spaces, nonprofit community theatre spaces, see any kind of financial support by this current government as we move forward. I know how crucial they are to support a strong arts and culture community but also the fact that the Roxy, for example, is on 124th Street, surrounded by many other galleries, restaurants, bars, places to purchase retail. It's good for the region as well. So I would like to see any kind of investment in community theatres in this province. If the minister could point to any of that in this budget, that would be helpful.

I also wanted to take a couple of moments to touch on – there was a piece of legislation that the minister referred to. One of the things that could actually make a tangible difference – and if this is in the budget, I would love to hear the minister talk about it. Municipally we have requirements for having art tied to capital projects, the procurement of local art and community art when a new building is being built. Is there anything that this minister is doing to ensure that we do that when it comes to provincial investments? This is one of the ways that we can support a diversified arts economy and actually help the minister meet some of his anticipated goals around performance metrics.

Lastly, I want to say that blaming women for not choosing higher grossing fields I think is completely out of touch with where women are and the contributions we make in society. I have a math degree. I also know many women who have chosen other paths for a variety of reasons. I think that it would be effective for the Associate Minister of Status of Women to advocate for increased pay for women who work in child care, to fight against the rollbacks for women who work in health care.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ministers, you have up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Orr: Great. Thank you. With regard to the operating expense details I'm going to ask, Carmen, if you can respond to that one, please.

Ms Vidaurri: Okay. Yeah. Basically, Chair, the member was right in that the increase is associated with the creation of a new associate minister's office in July 2021. With regard to FTEs and the

associated supplies and services to support that office, the main benefit is dedicated staff to the status of women program.

Mr. Orr: Thank you very much, Carmen.

With regard to some of the capital pieces I realize there are lots of really, really good causes out there. I would like to be able to fund them all, but the reality is that we have fiscal constraints, like everybody else. We have a whole bunch of projects already happening in Calgary. I'm not saying that at some point the Telus Centre won't be back on the capital list. I'd like to see it there. But I can say that we were able to also help make sure that Telus did receive – pardon me. I looked at the wrong thing there. Yeah, Telus did receive some funding through the federal infrastructure plan because we nominated them as one of the appropriate organizations. So there was some funding there. It's just one of the constraints of budgets. There are way too many choices for the amount of money that's available.

In terms of procuring art, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, actually, is charged with procuring Alberta art. They maintain a huge inventory of it, millions of dollars' worth, and they will continue to do that. There's budget money for that. I can assure you that that actually is happening.

I'd like to give the second half of the time to the Associate Minister of Status of Women.

Ms Issik: Thank you very much. I'm happy to respond to some of the questions. With respect to child care and early childhood educators the Alberta government introduced wage top-up funding, which provides licensed child care programs with a wage top-up for certified early childhood educators over and above the base wage paid by the employer. The staff must be paid at least the minimum wage before the wage top-up. This wage top-up is actually one of the highest in Canada, and the government is also providing funding to licensed child care programs to assist with the cost of approved postsecondary tuition and textbooks as well as approved conferences or workshops for their eligible educators.

With respect to blaming women for STEM participation, I think that was rather hyperbolic language, frankly. The bottom line is that we have a 25 per cent participation rate of women in some STEM fields, and that is not good enough. These are great fields to work in, and frankly they are fields that we need women working in. There is a lot of talent out there, and we don't want to leave any of it on the table. This is what our economy needs. This is what, also, women need, great-paying jobs in fields where they are underrepresented. I think that is incredibly important to remember.

Also, I'd like to just address the value-for-money proposition. There are questions that have not come to me yet today about the women's hub, for instance. This is a great information website that we are putting together that will be a one-stop shop for information for women, all things women, whether it be health care, employment, training, child care, you name it. Any service that the government of Alberta provides that pertains to and might be of interest to women will be housed in this online hub. That will be produced out of our department's existing budget, so that is some great value for money.

Also, additional work that we are taking on: the Premier's council on civil society report will be presented shortly, and that has amazing recommendations within it with respect to promoting women in economic recovery as we come out of the pandemic. As I mentioned earlier today, the many struggles that women have found during the pandemic: these recommendations will address many of them and also how civil society can work in tandem with government as partners to assist women in economic recovery as we come out of the pandemic.

Mr. Orr: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, I think we'll wrap that one there, and the time is yours.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

Now to government members. MLA Rowswell, for up to five minutes.

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you very much. Congratulations on your ministries. I'm glad you talked about the Premier's council on civil society. I was going to bring that up, because I know it's been transferred from Community and Social Services, so if you want to expand on that, feel free when you get the next chance.

Relative to sport, now that we're past the pandemic, your ministry is committing to "enhance Albertans' opportunities to participate in safe and quality sport, physical activity and recreation programs and encourage them to increase their participation through the 'Return to Play' promotional campaign," key objective 2.4, page 27. I was reading some of that information there, and it showed that in '20-21 the adult participation rate was at 14 per cent, and you want to get it up to 27 per cent by '25. Children were at 37, and you want to get that up to 62 by that date. I'm just wondering. Those numbers: did you get there because that's what it was before the pandemic? Like a lot of things, the pandemic reduced activities in some things. Or would that be a new high as far as participation goes?

Back to the Return to Play promotional program, if you could just explain kind of what that is and how it will enhance opportunities to participate and which sectors of our society will benefit from these efforts. Now, I know that MLA Turton is doing his best to make pickleball the national sport. You know, he's doing all he can to help you out on your thing. You may want to talk to him.

6:10

Sports are, without a doubt, one of the backbones of Alberta. We've got a lot of history here relative to that, and it prides itself on the prowess that we've had, be it professional or whatever. Sport also implements important health habits and brings our communities together. With that said, I'm very happy to see close to \$20 million in funding being put towards sport, physical activity, and recreation as outlined in line 7 on page 64 of the government estimates document. Can the minister please elaborate on what the expenditures marked in line 7.1, recreational and physical activity services, will be put towards? Can the minister please outline what the money in line 7.2, sport development services, will be put towards? I noticed there in 7.3 that it's for multisport events. Is that Summer and Winter Games? Is that what that kind of is, or is there something more to that? The biggest part of the budget is 7.4, with regard to support for sport, physical activity, and recreation. If you can elaborate on that a little bit, that would be great.

Following up on the previous question and with further reference to line 7 on page 64, I know that sports play an important role in the upbringing of Alberta's youth. Sports teach crucial life lessons like teamwork, respect, determination, and integrity as well as provide a vital opportunity for children and youth to be active, to socialize, and, most importantly, to have fun. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted many sports programs. I can recall that in one of my towns an individual had built a tae kwon do business and got it up to a certain level over several years. That got all closed down, and then his biggest concern was, "How am I going to get the kids back?" because they'll go on to other things. So it's been a huge disruption, and maybe that's part of the Return to Play program as well.

Sports offer valuable opportunities for Alberta's youth as we move onward from physical and social distancing requirements. I

anticipate that the benefits of sport programs will play a huge role in the mental and physical health of Albertan children and youth to heal from the effects of the pandemic. Can the minister please speak to some of the initiatives that the Ministry of Culture is implementing to get more kids involved in sports programs, and what types of sports are being put in place to teach lessons of fair play?

The Chair: Thank you.

Ministers, you have up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Orr: A great question, and I'm glad somebody addressed it. Thank you. Yeah, this really is an important question. Let me begin with the Return to Play promotional campaign. It was raised to us. I'll admit this wasn't my initiative. The sports stakeholders out there brought this to us, and we realized right away that these guys know more than I know, that we need to be listening to this. The challenge was that for many of the sport organizations, they were seeing such a decline in participation because people weren't sure of regulations and there was a certain amount of fear, protecting their health, all the rest of it. So they were saying that there's a real important need for a campaign to be able to encourage people to get back to play. The child and youth well-being report emphasized that as well; it came out after we were hearing it from the stakeholders. But it's an attempt to help people regain their physical and their emotional health through physical activity and sport, which, as you have already said, is an extremely important part of what has to happen there.

In regard to line 7.1 you asked about supports for recreational and physical activity services. This is support for staff activities, programming that has a specific recreational or physical activity outlook. From an operational perspective, it's about making sure that there are enough staff in place to deliver those sports programs. It's great to talk about the need to return to play, but numbers of the sport organizations were telling us: "We've lost all our volunteers. We don't have anybody. We can't get staff." So we need to try and solve that problem. That's part of what that is all about. As well, it's ongoing support. The RMA is going on right now. For a long time the department has maintained a municipal recreation engagement strategy, and municipalities own and maintain many of the sport facilities. It's working with them, sharing best practices, encouraging policy outcomes, helping them to move into quality recreation again so that there's physical and emotional mental health in Alberta.

It's back to what I said before about healing the soul of Alberta. It includes things like training municipal stakeholders, training some of their staff, how to deliver programs, how to have good management in all these different kinds of things. Costs associated with some of the civil society organizations include events like the Winter Walk Day, Participation community better challenge, Alberta Concussion Awareness Day, and for Indigenous people the Alberta future leaders program, which brings quality sport and recreation programming to First Nations and Métis communities.

Those are some of the things that are included in that. I'm running out of time. Vote 7.2, sport development services: again, some of that refers to staff and programming but more sport-specific development, not necessarily pickleball but maybe. As well, Alberta delivers the national coaching certification program. We also have professional athletes and Olympic athletes. In many cases they're young people, young adults moving up. In fact, down in the Calgary area with the professional sport association a lot of the training for Canada happens in the Calgary-Banff area. Some of the infrastructure there as well as the human infrastructure, the people and the organizations, makes that possible.

In terms of implementing more for kids to be involved, we will be announcing some programs shortly with sport, physical activity, and recreation organizations and specific deliverables about how they can reach out to many other organizations to encourage sport, physical activity, recreation programming, and all those different kinds of things.

We've heard from Alberta Recreation and Parks Association and the Steadward Centre for Personal & Physical Achievement with regard to handicapped folks. So all of these things are ongoing. There will be more announcements on it, but we're trying to reach out to every little community in the province through some of these initiatives that we're taking.

I think I will leave it at that with two seconds left.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We now go to the Official Opposition, MLA Hoffman, for five minutes.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you so much. I'm just going to take one minute of what is very likely our final time block here for the Official Opposition during the main estimates. I'm going to ask again the question around the minister's office and associate minister's offices. This isn't a question for department staff. It's about the ministers' offices, so line items 1.1 and 1.2. Last year the minister overspent the budget by 27 per cent. This year that budget is going up again, presumably because it's tied to the associate minister's office. How many staff were there in the office prior to the addition of an associate minister? How many staff are there now in those two offices, combined or separate? I'm fine with a disaggregated number. What are the tangible outcomes?

This is a political office. It's the minister's office and the associate minister's. I'm sure that there are political staff here who can answer those questions. How many staff are in both the minister's office and the associate minister's office? What are the actual benefits that Albertans see from overspending those line items by 25 per cent and now increasing it again by at least another 10 per cent under this minister's leadership?

Thank you.

Over to colleague Renaud.

Ms Renaud: Thank you. I listened intently to the opening statement by the minister, and I heard him reference disabled Albertans once. We call them disabled Albertans. You know, "handicapped folks" is kind of an old term that we don't use anymore. So I heard you mention disabled people, but then I look at the business plan, and there is no mention of this very large community. There are no metrics whatsoever to measure any kind of work or any kind of investment that is being done.

Now, I'm assuming that there's some investment in disabled sport because that is an area that is funded by this ministry. I would like to know: which line item is disabled sport funding? How much is directed towards disabled sport?

6:20

Now, there's also a disabled sport organization. There's an association development program eligibility checklist. I think there are about 15 items on this list. Organizations, I'm assuming, have to meet this criteria before they're eligible for funding. This doesn't guarantee funding. The 15 items that are the criteria: I would like to know – I think it was updated September 2021 – who created this list and who was consulted.

That leads me to my next question. There is a legislated body called the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities that exists to actually work with ministries to provide advice that is specific to people with disabilities. I would like to

hear about any of the consultation work that this ministry has done either with the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities or the disabled community at large.

Now, as you can imagine, disabled sport is huge, from Special Olympics all the way to elite athletes that we just saw compete at the Beijing Paralympic Games. I would also like to add that Canadian paralympic athletes earned 25 medals. Yay, Team Canada. I mean, this is a huge group of people, and in a ministry as large as this is, as complex as this is, I see absolutely no mention, and even beyond mention I actually see no metrics. I think that if we learned anything, inclusion, any kind of inclusion, requires effort. Sure, it looks nice in an objective when you say: "We're inclusive. We include all people. We're focused on that." That's all great. That's wonderful. But you need to have metrics so that every year when we assemble in activities like this, we can say: "What did you invest? What were the outcomes? What were the return for Albertans? How did you make this community more accessible?"

Again, I would like to hear about investments in disabled sport. I would like to hear about the criteria that were developed for sport organizations to qualify for funding. I would like to hear about specific consultation with the disability community, specifically with the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, and, you know, maybe just touch on why they were not included in this business plan.

Finally, I would like to just echo my colleague's comments on why a gender-based analysis, GBA plus analysis, is so important. It's because it includes disabled people. It includes that lens that requires you to look at things differently. It's incredibly sad that I didn't hear an answer to that really important question. If you'd like to take the time to answer that, that would be fabulous.

I will stop there.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ministers, you have up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Orr: Okay. Thank you. In terms of the minister's office expenditures, I wasn't there before I arrived. I can't really comment on a previous way that the ministry operated. I know how it operates now. I also know that when it gets divided into two ministries, it requires the addition of some staff. Quite frankly, there are separate staff for the two ministries, so the numbers have gone up. That's probably all I can say on that.

In terms of the more important question, the disabled support and funding, the reality is that the delivery of services for disabled Albertans is largely through many of the advocacy agencies, the nonprofits, the groups that work with them and for them and support them. They are all completely eligible for all of the grant process. We do give them grants. They are encouraged to apply for them. We also do fund and support the Paralympics. Yes, there were some great results there. In the events held in July 2020, Podium Alberta also supports Paralympics. To be a little bit more specific, the silver for cycling to Kate O'Brien, the bronze for swimming to Morgan Bird, and bronze for paratriathlon to Stefan Daniel – listen, this is something. They're part of Podium Alberta. They're part of the real deal here, part of the real game, and we are going to continue to support them.

I can also say that we were able to provide just in the last year the Alberta Sports and Recreation Association for the Blind a grant of \$54,000, Special Olympics Alberta a grant of \$83,275. I have met with and been to the Steadward society at the university here, that advocates for and speaks on behalf of and works with disabled Albertans in all kinds of sports. They have great ideas. They're part of the advice and the direction that we get. There are others. I just think that it's something we're going to continue to have to

advocate for and continue to support moving forward. Even just simple things as – well, not simple, but a grant of \$125,000 through community facility enhancement program for new and innovative equipment that will expand the function of play facilities to improve accessibility for those with mobility challenges went to Our Lady of Victories school association.

Another one: the recipient was Tennis Alberta; \$700,000 for a community facility enhancement program to the Tennis Club in Calgary to cover five existing outdoor tennis courts with a new air supported cover structure and a project that will benefit 30,000 Albertans by making tennis more accessible and affordable and will allow for the expansion of their programs, serve vulnerable at-risk youth, low-income families, seniors, and individuals in wheelchairs.

Another one: \$485,000 community facility enhancement program for renovations to the 50,000 square foot Centre for Newcomers in Calgary. Again, they're going to have 150 different partner agencies and community groups that will be serving all kinds of community groups. There are a lot of things going on to support them.

As well, the Alberta Summer and Winter Games are working with our federal, provincial, and territorial partners.

These are all things that we take very seriously. I'm very excited to be a part of it. I think it's something that you will see us continue to do as we move forward because it's a community that we need to support and we will support.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll leave it at that.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

For the final set of questions we go to MLA Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. I'll ask some questions here and let you wrap it up in as much time as we might have here. This is relative to heritage museums. Key objective 2.2 in your business plan, page 27, reiterates your ministry's commitment to "operate the network of provincial heritage facilities and lead the stewardship of Alberta's heritage resources." What role will museums and heritage

resources play in affirming our cultural identity? Are museum revenues expected to come back up to prepandemic levels this year?

A final question is that looking over page 63 of the government estimate documents, I'm intrigued by lines 6.2, 6.3, and 6.4, which show a significant expenditure going toward the Royal Alberta Museum and the Royal Tyrrell museum. Can the minister outline some of the programs and initiatives that the \$10.26 million that is being put towards the Royal Alberta Museum will be used for? Can the minister do the same for the nearly \$7 million going toward Royal Tyrrell museum?

The Chair: Minister, you have 51 seconds.

Mr. Orr: Yes, the Alberta historical heritage sites, all of them, contribute to Alberta's identity and our history and our heritage, absolutely without question. Do we expect the attendance to return? Gradually, it will, but I'm not sure it'll come back in an instant. People are rightfully hesitant and thoughtful. Everybody is going to choose a different pace of return. I do kind of think that eventually, though, we might see a repeat from 1918-19 that turned into the Roaring Twenties. I don't know if museums will be the Roaring Twenties, but I'm sure it will be somewhere in Alberta.

Some of the activities at the Royal Alberta Museum will be concentrating on trying to increase attendance and revenue. They will also be providing engaging educational experiences for visitors.

The Chair: I apologize for the interruption, but I must advise the committee that the time allotted for the consideration of the ministry's estimates has concluded.

I would like to remind committee members that we are scheduled to meet tomorrow, March 16, 2022, at 9 a.m. to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Advanced Education.

Thank you, everyone. This meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 6:30 p.m.]

