



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 28th Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee
on
Families and Communities

Ministry of Human Services
Consideration of Main Estimates

Wednesday, April 10, 2013
3:31 p.m.

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First Session**

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Forsyth, Heather, Calgary-Fish Creek (W), Deputy Chair

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Cusanelli, Christine, Calgary-Currie (PC)
DeLong, Alana, Calgary-Bow (PC)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)
Fritz, Yvonne, Calgary-Cross (PC)
Goudreau, Hector G., Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (PC)
Jablonski, Mary Anne, Red Deer-North (PC)
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Johnson, Linda, Calgary-Glenmore (PC)*
Leskiw, Genia, Bonnyville-Cold Lake (PC)
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Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Participants

Ministry of Human Services

Hon. Dave Hancock, QC, Minister

Hon. Frank Oberle, Associate Minister of Services for Persons with Disabilities

Brenda Lee Doyle, Assistant Deputy Minister, Disability Services

Steve MacDonald, Deputy Minister

3:31 p.m.

Wednesday, April 10, 2013

[Mr. Quest in the chair]

**Ministry of Human Services
Consideration of Main Estimates**

The Chair: All right. Well, good afternoon, everybody, and welcome back. I note that the committee has under consideration the estimates for the Ministry of Human Services for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014. I'll remind all members that the mikes are operated by *Hansard* and to keep the BlackBerrys off the desks or at least away from the mikes.

We will go around the table for introductions. Ministers, again, if I could get you to introduce your staff that are behind you there, and we'll just have them stand. For those folks that are going to come up and respond to questions at the podium, if you could state your name for the record before you give your answers or start your comments, that would be appreciated. We'll start with Mr. Strankman, to my right.

Mr. Strankman: Good afternoon. Rick Strankman, Drumheller-Stettler, subbing in for Heather Forsyth.

Mr. Fraser: Rick Fraser, Calgary-South East.

Mr. Goudreau: Hector Goudreau, Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley.

Ms DeLong: Alana DeLong, Calgary-Bow.

Ms L. Johnson: Linda Johnson, Calgary-Glenmore, subbing in for Matt Jeneroux, Edmonton-South West.

Mrs. Leskiw: Genia Leskiw, Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Ms Jansen: Sandra Jansen, Calgary-North West.

Ms Doyle: Brenda Lee Doyle, assistant deputy minister, disability services, Human Services.

Mr. Oberle: Frank Oberle, MLA for Peace River and associate minister, Human Services.

Mr. Hancock: Dave Hancock, Minister of Human Services, Edmonton-Whitemud.

We have with us today Brenda Lee Doyle with disability services, who has introduced herself; Donna Ludvigsen, ADM, employment and financial supports; Andrew Sharman, ADM, safe, fair and healthy workplaces; Mark Hattori, ADM, child and family services; Susan Taylor, ADM, family violence prevention and homeless supports; Karen Ferguson, ADM, early childhood and community supports division; Carol Ann Kushlyk, ADM, corporate services, and senior financial officer; Lana Lougheed, chief strategy officer; from my office Wendy Rodgers and Craig Loewen; and from Frank's office Mike Simpson.

Mr. MacDonald: Steve MacDonald, Deputy Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Bikman: Gary Bikman, Calgary, Taber, Warner.

Mr. Donovan: Ian Donovan, Little Bow.

Mr. Wilson: Jeff Wilson, Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Pedersen: Blake Pedersen, Medicine Hat.

Dr. Swann: Good afternoon. David Swann, Calgary-Mountain View.

Mrs. Fritz: Yvonne Fritz, Calgary-Cross.

Dr. Brown: Neil Brown, Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms Rempel: Jody Rempel, committee clerk, Legislative Assembly Office.

The Chair: Dave Quest, MLA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park, and chair of this committee.

For the record I'd like to note that the Standing Committee on Families and Communities has already completed three hours of debate this morning on the main estimates of the Ministry of Human Services. As we're in our fourth hour of debate, I'll remind everyone that the speaking rotation for these meetings is provided for in Standing Order 59.01(6), and we're now at the point in the rotation where any member may be recognized and speaking times are limited to a maximum of five minutes. Members have the option of combining their speaking time with the minister for a maximum of 10 minutes. Please indicate to myself at the beginning of your speech if you wish to combine your time with the minister.

Six hours have been scheduled to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Human Services. With the concurrence of the committee I'll call a five-minute break near the midpoint of the meeting. Committee members, ministers, and other members who are not committee members may participate. Members' staff and ministry officials may be present, and at the direction of the ministers officials for the ministry may address the committee.

As noted in the Speaker's memorandum of March 22, I'd like to remind all members that during main estimates consideration members have seating priority at all times. Should members arrive at the meeting and there are no seats available at the table, any staff seated must relinquish their seat to the member.

If debate is exhausted prior to the six hours, the ministry's estimates are deemed to have been considered for the time allotted in the schedule, and we will adjourn; otherwise, we will adjourn at 6:30 p.m.

Points of order will be dealt with as they arise, and the clock will continue to run.

Any written materials that should be provided in response to questions raised during the main estimates would be tabled in the Assembly for the benefit of all members.

Vote on the estimates is deferred until the consideration of all ministry estimates has concluded and will occur in the Committee of Supply on April 22, 2013.

With that, Mr. Strankman, we'll just carry on with the speaker's list that we had started this morning.

Next up would be Mr. Goudreau. Did you wish to go back and forth with the minister?

Mr. Goudreau: Sure, if that's all right with the minister.

The Chair: Very good, then. Whenever you're ready.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, I just wanted to go back to some of the comments from this morning. I appreciated the responses, but I maybe just want to emphasize a few things. My questions will revolve around the AISH program and the AISH program wait-list. Of all the programs that are administered by your department, I would think that that's the one I'm getting the most questions on now, and I'm very, very pleased to see the \$45.6 million increase in the budget.

It is my understanding that you said this morning that that would allow you to add another 5 per cent to the client list.

Mr. Hancock: That's our anticipation, that the client list would grow by about 5 per cent this year.

Mr. Goudreau: Okay. Thank you.

I guess the issue, generally, is how long it takes for a person to get on AISH. Certainly, it's been a very, very difficult one in our part of the world, and I'm hearing that's not all that uncommon elsewhere across the province. I've got some young individuals that have come to me, and it's certainly very, very obvious that the individual capacity is not there for them to help themselves. Often they seem to be getting a terrible runaround. You know, on the reasons why they're not dealt with, they're quoted: well, you missed the particular deadline, or you did not return a call. The individuals that I'm talking about don't have the capacity to follow up on that, and that's probably why they should be on AISH in the first place or even on PDD for that.

The other one. Access to staff in my constituency is very, very difficult. Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley is a very remote area, and headquarters staff are often out of Peace River or out of Grande Prairie, which means, you know, a hundred or more kilometres away from services. We're getting all sorts of things. It seems that when a young adult – one in particular that I'm thinking about has not had an income for a couple of years. His parents are taking care of him for the time being, but they're wanting to retire. They're wanting to move away, and they're very concerned about what might happen to this particular individual. Every time the individual moves around, they say: "Well, you need yet another medical report" or "Our staff is away and they can't deal with that." The last one was under an appeal situation, and they said: "Well, because of the lack of board members we can't hear the appeal, and we don't know when that's going to be." Meanwhile, this young fellow is struggling. That seems to be repeating itself over and over again in the constituency. I would hope that the extra funding would help to move them along.

Mr. Hancock: There are a number of important questions in there. I guess the first piece is the important role of MLAs as, if you will, ombudsmen in terms of assisting constituents. Where there are issues with respect to access pieces, MLAs can help with that, and we do work with MLAs with respect to those sorts of situations.

I appreciate the fact that there are people who have perhaps limited capacity to actually navigate the system, and the Alberta Works office should be available to them to help with that. A person of the nature that you described shouldn't be going without income because they would qualify for income support through Alberta Works while they're waiting for their AISH application. Then once their AISH application is complete, even though it may take some time to process it after that, their income support would be backdated to the time their application was complete if they're successful. But they shouldn't be going without some support, even if they're not qualified for AISH, if they're in the position that you're talking about.

3:40

I would encourage you as an MLA in a situation like that to bring that to our attention so that we can take a look at the specific situation and learn from it and help the individual involved but also, generally speaking, encourage constituents to utilize their Alberta Works offices because we are collaborating. By bringing everybody together in Human Services, we have that cross-discussion to be able to assist.

The context for this. I'm not putting this out as an excuse, but we're getting about 60 applications per day. We're projected to receive more than 15,000 applications this year. I mean, this is a significant area. There's no question that there's been a significant increase since the significant increase in the benefit. We do have to process those applications very thoroughly. Once you're on AISH, you're on AISH, and it's a million dollars to the taxpayers over the lifetime of the client. That's not an insignificant investment in the individual.

I don't think any taxpayer begrudges that investment in the individuals, but they want to make sure that they're going to the right individuals. So we do a thorough process, and we don't apologize for doing the thorough process. However, we do need to improve our processes so that we don't give people the runaround, so that we treat them with respect and dignity in the process and the process is an effective one. There's a lot of work that's gone into improving that process and skilling the people and putting a province-wide queue in place so that if there's a surge in one particular area, it can be handled across the province. We are still at the 25-week instead of the 12-week time frame, and we're working very hard to get it back down to the 12-week time frame. All of that work is in progress.

The appeal piece I mentioned this morning. The question this morning about the time for them to be heard: typically they're heard in six to eight weeks. In the case of AISH appeals in Edmonton and Calgary they're now being scheduled into June and July, so a little bit longer time frame, three to four months. Part of the problem, as you pointed out, was with getting the appointments on those boards and repopulating those boards. That's pretty much in hand now. We've repopulated most of them, so it will get back up to speed. I admitted this morning that that one fell through the cracks a little bit in my hands simply because we were talking about looking at how to refine the appeal process overall because we have, I think, 39 different appeal bodies, and the training process and the population process for that is difficult. We're working on that end.

So three things. One, it's absolutely appropriate to act as an ombudsman, for any MLA to forward cases that seem to be inappropriately handled or out of the norm to our offices. We'll see, and we'll tell you. You know, if they're being handled appropriately, we'll respond to you in that way, but if there is a problem, we can assist with that. Secondly, Alberta Works can assist people with their applications and also with getting income in the interim if they fall into the category of the not expected to work or those sorts of areas. Then thirdly, we are working on our processes and improving our processes.

Mr. Goudreau: Well, thank you for that.

Mr. Hancock: Oh, 29 to the appeal panel. Sorry.

Mr. Goudreau: The one particular individual, Minister, that comes to mind: as I indicated, his aging parents have been taking care of him, so he hasn't really had to go to Alberta Works, but there's a huge issue about what may happen here with him in the future. Then it's also my understanding that he had applied over two years ago, and he's been getting bounced around ever since. So I'm happy to say that we can bring him forward and advocate a little stronger on his behalf. That's what I'll be doing.

Mr. Hancock: That's one of the reasons why we have the growth in the population. There are families where they actually have been taking care of their adult children, and now they're worrying about succession planning. We're getting more applications as a result of that as well.

Mr. Goudreau: You're saying as well about the board members that the PDD boards are basically full and they're operational?

Mr. Hancock: The appeal panels?

Mr. Goudreau: The appeal panels.

Mr. Hancock: I believe we've taken all of the populations of the panels through. Just in March, I think, I took the last appointments through to get them up to date, so they should be all populated and operating. We are still working on how to realign the appeal process, to streamline it, to make it more responsive on a timely basis and have a good strong capacity on the appeal panels to understand their role and function. The appeal panels serve a number of purposes: AISH, CFSA, PDD, seniors' assistance, aids to daily living.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you.
Do I still have some time?

The Chair: Twenty seconds.

Mr. Goudreau: Okay. I'll leave it at that, then. Thank you.

The Chair: All right. Well, thank you very much.
During that discussion we had a couple of arrivals. I'd like to welcome Ms Notley and Mrs. Jablonski to the meeting.

We'll now go to Mr. Wilson. You want to go back and forth with the minister?

Mr. Wilson: Yes, please. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Very good. Whenever you're ready.

Mr. Wilson: And thank you again, gentlemen, for being here. I'm going to start off where we kind of finished in the House earlier, and I apologize if those questions were somewhat out of order with the fact that we're here in estimates right now.

Let's talk about that \$10 million if we could. I know that you don't know that severances will be necessary, but if they are, will that money come out of the \$10 million pool?

Mr. Oberle: It will come out of the persons with developmental disabilities direct operations, which is budget line 6.9.

Mr. Wilson: Okay. Great. So the community living supports is where your \$10 million is from?

Mr. Oberle: No. That's capital from last year.

Mr. Wilson: Okay. If you need other facilities in the province to be upgraded or if you need to invest capital in other areas outside of just simply what you're going to require for Michener, will that money be coming out the \$10 million pot?

Mr. Oberle: Well, we won't. We need to house the residents from Michener this year, and that's going to be the focus of our needs for housing going forward for this year.

Mr. Wilson: Okay. So is it safe to say that the majority of that \$10 million, if not all of it, will be directly going to support residents of Michener?

Mr. Oberle: Yeah.

Mr. Wilson: Okay. Thank you.
I wanted to touch on some of the operational expenses in your minister's budget if I could.

Mr. Oberle: Can I just clarify that last answer a little bit?

Mr. Wilson: Sure.

Mr. Oberle: Sorry. I just got passed a note. We have \$10 million in the capital plan from last year, '12-13. We're estimating that about \$7 million of it will be required to address needs for Michener residents and \$3 million for complex needs. We also have some complex-needs residents that we have to move this year.

Mr. Wilson: Okay. Great. Thank you.

Moving into the line items in your budget, I'm wondering if the minister can explain to me just what exactly is done in line items 1.5, strategic services, and 1.6, corporate services.

Mr. Hancock: Sure. Strategic services is essentially the work that we do relative to planning, so our whole area of the Alberta social policy framework would have been operated out of the strategic services area, and the poverty reduction strategy piece will be their next major project. The strategic services area does sort of the planning work: what the long term will look like, what we are doing, how we are looking at it in terms of the change management process within the department, those sorts of things.

Corporate services is the operational budget side. That's the people who provided all of this stuff for you so that we could look at all of the numbers in detail. So it's the operational budget side, finance and IT.

Mr. Wilson: Okay. It is encouraging to see reductions in those numbers, but I'm wondering if you could comment on why it's still necessary for them to be higher than '11-12 actual numbers.

3:50

Mr. Hancock: Well, we have some major work that we're doing. You can't actually carry out an operation of this magnitude, with this diversity without some very thoughtful strategic planning and strategic processes. I'm never one to apologize for doing the policy work well, and that's critical to it. So there has to be strategic oversight. There has to be corporate oversight.

I think those numbers are actually modest in the context of the overall budget. I mean, corporate services is taking a 9.4 per cent decrease this year, and remember that that's over and above, if I remember correctly, significant adjustments last year as a result of bringing the pieces of up to five departments together, the changes that we made. We have had two years of fairly significant changes in operations, and we're continuing to drive a very significant change in corporate culture, in service delivery methodology, moving to this outcomes-based service delivery and new measures of success in terms of how you measure success on a social side and outcomes basis.

Mr. Wilson: Great. Well, let's move back there again. Has the ministry done studies or internal reports to evaluate what the expected savings and efficiencies would be as a result of moving towards outcomes-based service delivery, and what are the expected costs of the increased monitoring that you alluded to that would probably be necessary at this point?

Mr. Hancock: First of all, I guess we should say that we're doing a significant amount of work around results-based budgeting. We're leading a number of areas in that area. We are, I think it's fair to say, the lead ministry. We sort of led the whole process, and that required significant work both within the ministry but also across ministries. The results of that, I might say, have been seen already in terms of intersilo work, if you will, or taking down the silos.

I wouldn't say that there's any report out, but the results-based budgeting process will provide some reporting. There's certainly a significant body of knowledge to show that if we want to get better results with the same or less input in terms of resources, you have to focus on an outcomes basis rather than measuring activity and paying for activity, and that's what we're doing.

Mr. Wilson: Okay. Now, is there a fear, perhaps, that shifting to an outcomes-based model will prevent agencies from taking on higher risk clients, who may not be able to achieve outcomes in the same time frame as some of what may be considered lower hanging fruit?

Mr. Hancock: There are all sorts of challenges in moving to an outcomes-based service delivery model, including more difficult management. I mean, it's much easier to design a program with a set of rules and say: these are the rules; follow them in every circumstance. Human beings aren't built that way. Human beings are complex. It's much more effective if we engage skilled people, ask them to use their skills in dealing with the significant issues that clients bring, and then find appropriate ways in terms of that needs analysis to meet those needs. Yes, that's going to require a stronger management context and concept, but it provides better outcomes for the individuals. It provides for a better use of resources.

It is easier to do finite programming, but people fall between the cracks when you do that. You cannot write a rule for every circumstance, and you cannot write an answer from Edmonton for every question for every individual. You've got to empower the front end to do the work. You've got to make sure that they have the skills and the backup, and yes, you have to make sure you have the measures of success and the management.

Mr. Wilson: Okay. Moving back into PDD if I may. We see some adjustments to the PDD program such as a slight reduction in line items 6.1 and 6.2, totalling just shy of \$200,000 for program planning and delivery and program management, which are baby steps in the right direction in regard to the administration. Yet we also see large increases to other areas such as line item 6.7, supports to delivery system, for an increase of 3 and a half million dollars, and line item 6.9, direct operations, with an increase of \$7 million. Can you help me understand where that money is going and how much of it you anticipate being delivered to the front lines?

Mr. Oberle: Yeah. Supports to delivery is agency admin costs. Item 6.9, direct operations, we just talked about. Those costs are relative to my costs of closing the Michener Centre, be they salary costs, actual – it's not the capital.

Mr. Wilson: So that's where that specific \$7 million is, right there?

Mr. Oberle: Right.

Mr. Wilson: Okay. And then the 3 and a half million dollars in 6.7 is . . .

Mr. Hancock: Wage increases. We talked about the need to increase wages across the board. That's distributed right through a lot of the lines in here, and the significant part of that particular line is the wage increase for the PDD employees.

Mr. Wilson: Okay. We had left our last discussion around administrators, how many administrators PDD has in the system

right now, and we kind of got cut off, so I'm wondering if you could answer that question for me now.

Mr. Oberle: Again, it's a little bit of a difficult question to answer. I mean, the PDD boards: would you call a board member an administrator or not? We have a board in each region. Each of them has a CEO.

Mr. Wilson: I guess I'll rephrase it, then. How many people are employed by PDD that are paid before money goes to directly supporting an individual with needs?

Mr. Oberle: That's a good question.

I'll ask Brenda Lee to comment if you can. Brenda Lee?

Ms Doyle: So you're asking in terms of everyone who's not directly providing a service to the individual?

Mr. Wilson: Right.

Ms Doyle: Okay. So in PDD we have client services coordinators. Those are the individuals who actually do part of the planning with individuals. We would consider those a front-line support to people.

The Chair: Okay. Very good.

Mr. Wilson: I'll try and catch that one later.

The Chair: Ten minutes goes fast.

Mrs. Leskiw, followed by Dr. Swann.

Mrs. Leskiw: I'll go back and forth.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs. Leskiw: Thank you. Since you ended on PDD, I'm just going to give kudos to Brenda Lee Doyle. I had the privilege of working with her last year, travelling around Alberta, talking to clients and providers on exactly a lot of the topics that you have asked about. I'm very happy to say that a lot of the things we heard from clients are being implemented. That was one of the concerns they had, that implementation would not happen. I promised them over my dead body: those implementations are going to be taken care of. I'm happy to see that the department is doing what's best for the clients, so kudos to you and the department.

Now back to the social policy framework. It seemed like last summer that's all I was attending, social policy framework discussions. People were passionate and thankful that they were allowed to participate. Now, I can only talk about the ones that I attended, and it was great to see the involvement. Albertans in my area felt that they wanted to articulate the vision for the future: the goals, desires, outcomes for all Albertans. For that, for having that set forward, I thank you, Minister.

My question is: how did the social policy framework guide decision-making for this present budget? What you heard out there: was it a direct impact on the development of this year's budget?

Mr. Hancock: Well, I believe that it was. I believe that the social policy framework and the results-based budgeting process both helped focus on what was important, and that's the critical piece. I mean, there's always more ask than answer. I was on Treasury Board for 14 of the 15 years, and there's billions more ask than answer. By the time they get to that level, these are not stupid

ideas. They're things that people can be passionate about and will make a difference. You always have to set priorities.

How do you set priorities? Well, you need to understand where you're going. Social policy framework creates a context. We can say: is what we're doing achieving the outcomes and matching the directions we said we'd go in the social policy framework? Government adopted the social policy framework as a lens for all of the social agenda to understand that. So I think it has an impact. Now, a lot of the things we're running parallel, so it would have had more of an impact if the budget was six months later; no question. But I think it had a very significant impact certainly in terms of our budget because we were very closely and intimately involved in the discussions around the social policy framework and knew the direction it was going.

So as we look at our programs and our priorities, we have to keep in mind that those principles – dignity, people first, and healthy, strong relationships – that came out of the social policy framework guide the decision-making as we go forward in the budget.

Mrs. Leskiw: So, therefore, what would be some of the desired outcomes that were articulated in the policy framework that we're working on?

4:00

Mr. Hancock: Well, I'll take you through some. I mean, the homelessness strategy obviously existed prior to the social policy framework, but the way in which it was developed is entirely congruent with the principles of the social policy framework and the direction of it. We're going to do similar work on the poverty reduction strategy. I mean, if eliminating poverty was easy or something you could mandate or legislate, it would have been done by people already. There are lots of strategies across the country. We have 12 municipalities across the province who are working on strategies. But it's the process of how you develop it that engages community, engages a collaborative process, brings everybody together in terms of understanding, accepting, acknowledging, and dealing with the social issues of the community, that gives you success. That's the next outcome that we're looking for.

You know, there are a number of different areas. We're also working on the early childhood initiatives and a number of other areas. But those two areas I would show as examples. We've taken the homeless secretariat to an interagency council and are continuing to build on that good work. We're using the model from the social policy framework and the process that was engaged in on the Interagency Council on Homelessness to develop a poverty reduction strategy.

Mrs. Leskiw: Could you elaborate on some of the specific actions that you and your ministry are undertaking to ensure that these positive outcomes will become a reality?

Mr. Hancock: Well, first of all, policy alignment. Any time you're taking a look at what you're doing, you need to make sure your policy is aligned with the social policy framework.

Balanced between prevention and intervention. That's a very important piece. Typically social programs are invented to deal with specific issues, but the reality long term is that you have to actually figure out what the root causes of those issues are and how you can go to the source. So there needs to be a balance. Yes, you need to be able to deal with the problems that people have that are existent today, but in order to be successful, you have to go to the root causes.

Accessibility is important. Whether it's financial issues with

respect to daycare so that low-income families can have access to appropriate daycare so that they can improve their family income or whether it's an income support program or what we were just talking about in terms of AISH, accessibility is important so that when people do have a need, whether it's chronic, sporadic, or periodic, they can find the right place so that we can move them to success quickly. The biggest cost for society is not achieving a result on a timely basis, so that's a critical piece in this.

Accountable and sustainable. Obviously, we need to make sure that what we're doing is making a difference – that's that outcomes-based approach – and that what we're doing can be sustainable. You can't put something in place that you're just going to have to eliminate because you can't afford it the next year.

And complementary. I mean, in this area there is a lot of work being done by not-for-profit organizations, by community organizations, by churches, by businesses, and by governments at various levels, and we need to make sure that they are aligned. The social policy framework helps us with that alignment piece, not to diminish the passion of the many private organizations in the community but to make sure that we're not overlapping, we're not duplicating, that we're actually achieving more with the limited resources available.

Mrs. Leskiw: Well, finishing up on that alignment of specific initiatives for children and families, I've had students that when there are special needs, they are well taken care of in school, but then they turn 18, and all of a sudden the poor parent and that child are fighting through the system to get recognized. What specific initiatives are we doing for that smooth alignment or transition of the child who is 17.98 and then when they turn 18?

Mr. Hancock: Frank may want to enhance this, but this is an area that both of us are very keenly interested in, the transitions piece: early childhood to school, school to postsecondary or to adulthood. That's an issue in all aspects. Whether it's a person with a disability or whether it's a child in care, that transition piece has always been a difficult one. There's no magic about the age of 18 in many cases, yet most of our programs are designed around those time frames.

One of the things we need to do is redesign exactly in that area so that if you know what the needs are and understand the change in those needs, then you meet those on an ongoing and consistent basis rather than having an arbitrary line or arbitrary rules. It goes back to that piece I was talking about. Programs are designed with rules and requirements and don't allow the use of judgment, and we're changing that model.

Mrs. Leskiw: Or use of common sense.

Mr. Hancock: Yeah. And we have to change that model.

The front end of the service delivery piece wants that change because they've been having to in some cases skirt the rules to use their common sense to get the job done. Now what we're doing is empowering them to say that and tell us where the rules are getting in the way.

Mrs. Leskiw: What about specific initiatives to help people gain more independence so they're not always so dependent on their caseworker?

Mr. Hancock: That should be the objective of every caseworker in the process. When you go into an Alberta Works office, I would guess that most people would go in with a problem they have: "I can't pay my utility bills this month. Can you help me out?" The

job of the person that they engage with in that office is to look at their situation and say: “Okay. We can help you with your short-term issue. What’s your long-term plan? How are we going to move you to success? How are we going to assist your moving to success?” That’s the objective, to have people be independent, meet their own potential, do the things they can do for themselves and their families and not be supported. We want them to be able to live in dignity. Now, the reality is that some people have chronic situations that are going to require chronic care, and we have to be prepared to do that.

Mrs. Leskiw: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We’ll get Dr. Swann, followed by Ms DeLong.
Dr. Swann, do you want to go back and forth?

Dr. Swann: Yes. Thanks.

Just a few general comments. A rich discussion today. Thank you.

Analysis of spending per capita on social supports – and I’m thinking very specifically of SFI – in Alberta have shown little if any redress since the cuts of the ’90s. It’s small wonder, then, that in Alberta we face among the highest family violence rates, highest rates of depression and anxiety, alcohol use, and suicide outside of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Many of these are associated with poverty issues. How does that per capita funding compare to other provinces? And what are we going to do about the absolute deficit in basic resources that people in poverty need to actually meet their requirements?

Mr. Hancock: Well, I guess I’d start by saying that I disagree with your premise. I mean, it doesn’t really matter how we compare to the next jurisdiction because in order to make that a meaningful comparison, you have to compare the costs, you have to compare the opportunities, you have to compare all sorts of different things. Economists like to do the guns-or-butter thing and hold everything else constant, but in life you can’t hold everything constant.

The reality is that that comparison – I don’t know if we actually have it; maybe somebody will get it for me. I’m not a big person to believe in how we stack up against our neighbour with respect to how much we spend. The question is: if our objective is to ensure that every Alberta child has the opportunity to reach their potential, every Albertan has the opportunity to participate, then what does it take to help people deal with their barriers to success? That means helping them identify those, helping them overcome it. If it’s a mental health issue, if it’s a short-term fiscal challenge, a financial challenge, if it’s an educational challenge, what are the things that we need to do to help them succeed for themselves?

That’s a piece that you can’t sort of just say: well, it’s a per capita investment. We’re not going to spend our way out of poverty. We’re not going to buy our way out of poverty. We are going to get kids out of poverty and families out of poverty if we can assist them to meet their potential, which means early diagnosis of issues, dealing with those issues at their least cost point in the curve. You know, high school completion rates, for example. We have good high school completion at 25 to 35, but it’s more expensive at that stage.

Those are the pieces that go into it. It’s a very complex process.

Dr. Swann: Of course it is.

I guess there is a bottom line at which people can’t survive well. And I’m asking you to what extent we are meeting the basic bottom line for quality of life and security in families, and how

that compares to how other provinces assess the basic bottom line for quality of life and basic needs?

Mr. Hancock: Well, if you’re looking at the numbers, I guess for a single adult, employable, childless the combined support in Alberta could be \$627 compared to B.C.’s \$610 and Saskatchewan’s \$671. To me that doesn’t tell you very much, but those are the comparative numbers.

Dr. Swann: Okay. Thank you.

4:10

Mr. Hancock: A temporarily unemployable, childless person would get \$713 in Alberta on the combined benefit, \$610 in B.C., and \$831 in Saskatchewan. If they had one child four years of age, they would get \$1,408 in Alberta, \$1,344 in B.C., and \$1,462 in Saskatchewan. With two children 10 and 13 years of age they would get \$1,702. I can give you a table to show you that stuff.

Dr. Swann: I would like to see that. I think that would be helpful.

Mr. Hancock: Those are the benefit rates that have developed over time in various areas. Again, to me the real critical piece is not to – you know, we do have to design an appropriate income support program.

Dr. Swann: It’s one indicator only. Of course.

What evidence do you have for the statement that, quote, caseloads are expected to decline with increasing employment opportunities as the justification for a \$98 million cut to employment programs? Is this another penny-wise, pound-foolish decision?

Mr. Hancock: Well, I guess the devil will be in the details in terms of how it goes forward, but what we’re seeing now is a decrease in the caseloads and a decrease in the time for each case. So the answer is that we’re already trending in that direction. “Trend” might be too strong a word, but we’re already moving in that direction. We’re fairly hopeful. The economic signs suggest that there are jobs available, and there are job shortages. We can do a better and faster job of matching people to job opportunities. There is a lower take-up, or utilization, of our educational support pieces at that end because people can get into jobs faster.

Also, a significant part of that result is in the health benefit cost going down. Two reasons for that. One is fewer clients for a shorter period of time and, secondly, the significant savings on the generic drug program.

Dr. Swann: Thank you. I’d like to go back to some of the staff well-being issues and the staff survey. What’s the rate of staff turnover, especially child care workers, and staff disability? Do we have any comparators to other jurisdictions around staff satisfaction and staff turnover and staff disability rates?

Mr. Hancock: That kind of detailed stuff I don’t have at hand. I will check to see if there’s an easy way to answer the question.

Mark, can you give us generically what we’re experiencing at the front end of the child welfare system in terms of turnover? No?

We’ll have to get back to you on that.

Dr. Swann: Thank you. I’ve heard from parents of children with PDD – and I think it was alluded to earlier by one of the other members – that these cuts to PDD are going to make it very difficult for them to go to work during the day and leave their child unaccommodated, unprotected, alone at home in some cases.

It's going to have a significant impact on their ability to earn a living. How do you respond to that?

Mr. Oberle: Well, to begin with, we haven't actually outlined any particular cuts that are going to hit the ground that anybody could identify that would say: that impacts me in this way. I said this morning that we're extending the contracts until June 1, and we're going to work with service providers and individuals to develop appropriate plans going forward.

As always I would urge you, if you have individual parents or persons in care that have concerns, to identify them to us, and we'll work through them. That's what we do, work with individuals.

Mr. Hancock: Perhaps I could just add to that generically. If you're going to an outcomes-based system and we're using technology well – and we got back to some of the questions this morning on ISIS in terms of the amount of time that it takes to document things – the critical piece is that this is more complex management, and we're working more at the individual needs level than we ever have.

So instead of assuming that everybody operates generically, has the same needs, has the same requirements, it is going to be much more individually needs based, not just in PDD but right across the system.

Dr. Swann: That sounds good.

Mr. Oberle: Could I just add one more thing to that? Sorry; I misspoke. The contracts are actually extended to July 1.

I wanted to add to that that in the case of a child at home they're not covered by the persons with developmental disabilities program. They're receiving supports under family services for children with disabilities.

Dr. Swann: No. This would be an adult. If I said "child," I misspoke.

Child poverty has been talked about by this government for over 40 years. How does the government define poverty?

Now that we have a five-year commitment to ending this travesty for 90,000 children – actually it's now four years left – are we actually talking about action, or are we talking about a plan to end poverty in five years?

Mr. Hancock: Well, both, but you're not going to take significant action until you have a plan. I mean, that doesn't mean we're going to stop doing things or we're not going to move ahead on things, but the critical piece to be successful is to understand what it is you're trying to accomplish and how you're going to accomplish it.

Dr. Swann: So how do you define poverty?

Mr. Hancock: Well, that's one of the things that we need to get to common cause on. I mean, there are a number of different ways in the spectrum. It can be defined on a continuum from absolute and focused items, lacking income to meet basic needs, to broader terms of inclusion and access. So I'm not convinced that the first and best definition is a low income cut-off or a market-basket measure. I think you have to actually have a broader definition of poverty. That's the first piece of the discussion about how we're going to measure success and what success is going to look like.

To understand that, you have to have a commonly held definition of poverty. As I said, we've got 12 community groups working on poverty. Calgary is going to publish its report, I think,

sometime in the next two weeks or so. But one of the pieces is to come to a common definition of what we understand together to be poverty in our community. My personal bias is that it's more complex than simply an income measure.

Dr. Swann: Well, I must say – and I think I speak on behalf of a lot of people – that if after 40 years you still haven't defined poverty, we're in trouble.

Mr. Hancock: Well, there are many definitions of poverty.

Dr. Swann: Well, why not pick one and then work with it?

Mr. Hancock: We're going to, but I'm not going to do it unilaterally. I'm going to engage Albertans.

Dr. Swann: We expect that after 40 years of talking about poverty, you would have come to a common decision. That's a disappointment; that's what I'm saying.

Mr. Hancock: Well, I've only had one year in this portfolio, but we're going to continue to work very hard on the poverty reduction strategy. Nothing that we do, if we're going to do it successfully, is done unilaterally and from the top. It all involves community inclusion and community involvement so that we can all agree when we've achieved success.

Dr. Swann: Absolutely. I'm fully with you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

We'll go to Ms DeLong, followed by Ms Notley.

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much.

The Chair: And you're going to go back and forth, Ms DeLong?

Ms DeLong: Yes, I will. Thank you.

I'm very lucky that I have an assistant who has experience with people with some disabilities. We've got a PDD client, a wonderful lady, who comes into the office once a week and does tasks. Sometimes she does copying; sometimes she does stapling or whatever needs to be done. My assistant, Colleen, is very, very good at working with her, and she's a real pleasure to have there. You know, people appreciate having her around. She's a volunteer, and every once in a while we'll find a way of thanking her. Because my assistant is really good at working with her, she can come on her own. Her mom usually drives her.

My question around the budget is line 6.3 versus line 6.5 because one is going up and one is going down. Could you explain to me what the difference between those two is?

Mr. Oberle: Well, we talked about line 6.5 this morning and what community access supports are: workshops, community visits, coffee trips, those sorts of things. Community living supports are much more around inclusion: employment supports, those kind of things. A big part of the increase in that is taken up with the agency wages. That is the actual money that we pay agencies to provide services out there in the communities. Some of that is housing and all those things and the things that the agencies do. A large part of that is agency wages.

Ms DeLong: A third of the budget for community access supports has been cut. I do remember that this morning you were talking about how you've just found that this is not effective. So does this mean that there's going to be more of the community living supports and less of the community access supports? Is that what's happening here?

4:20

Mr. Oberle: Let me clarify that. Community living supports is money that we pay to service providers to provide services in the community. The vast majority of that is housing, group homes, and people who are paid to provide care on a contract basis with us. The big increase there is mostly the wage increase for disability service workers in that sector. We're expecting some program growth there. There will be additional need out there in the community. That's what that covers.

We're cutting community access supports in favour of supports that give us better outcomes, better inclusions: employment supports and those sorts of things. Some of that's in here. Some of that's in Mr. Hancock's budget. We'll be doing more supports designed at increasing our inclusion measures, our outcomes, including employment levels, and fewer supports that don't provide the outcomes that we want.

Ms DeLong: I've been talking to some people who are very, very keen on really increasing the number of the disabled that are in the workforce. All of the social benefits that come not just to the person who is disabled but also to the organization essentially change the tone of an organization in a very positive way. I'm really keen that we are successful with that. Is there any money in here that is essentially for advertising, just to get across the idea: hey, if you want a really healthy workplace, a place where people respect each other, inclusion is very much a positive experience for the whole organization. Is there any of this money that you're looking at putting into advertising?

Mr. Oberle: We could do that. We could find funds to do that. But I'll tell you that we're already being leapfrogged by service providers out there. I'll give you an example: the Edmonton Gateway Association. They've got a program called We Belong that puts a big sticker in your window if you employ a disabled person. But you have to pay them at least minimum wage. They have to actually be your employee and not an agency worker that shows up and sweeps your sidewalks. They have to be a valued member of your workforce, and they have to belong. Company Christmas parties. They're a valued member of the staff.

They started this program in St. Albert simply by identifying how many people in St. Albert are in the disabled community and what the spending power of their immediate family would be – never mind the grandmas and the uncles and aunts, just their immediate family – just a rough pic from Statistics Canada. They estimated that immediate families have a spending power of about \$20 million in St. Albert, so they thought: well, maybe we can influence spending decisions by identifying which employers are hiring and working with disabled persons. So they've developed this We Belong program. Those kinds of programs are hugely effective, and they're having a big impact in St. Albert.

They're now looking at expanding. They want to expand in the urban environment; I'm trying to urge them to expand to the rural environment, of course, because of my interests, at least into a smaller centre like Grande Prairie or someplace like that. But there are different challenges. They're keen, and other services providers are keen to do this.

Mr. Hancock: The other side of it is in the employment side of the budget, where we have, for example, labour market agreements for persons with disabilities. The federal government is providing some funds under those agreements, where we work to create employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. The DRES program hasn't increased this year, but there's a net increase, in effect, because it was only half used in the past. That's

to provide modifiers that might be needed in the workplace to make adaptations necessary for a person to go to work.

On the employment side our Alberta Works people through job fairs and others are also working on creating that relationship with employers and the opportunity for employers and persons with disabilities to connect.

Mr. Oberle: That was also a focus of our results-based budgeting exercise. We're hosting a forum of providers in May exactly around those kinds of programs and best practices.

Ms DeLong: Excellent.

I still have some time, I would think. Just two minutes? Well, I'll just do a little bit here.

There are a number of Albertans with disabilities who don't meet the current eligibility requirements for the supports and services they need. Is the ministry taking any action towards addressing the needs of these Albertans?

Mr. Oberle: Yeah. There was a question earlier about the transition from childhood to adulthood. The transition that happens there: all of a sudden services are provided on a different basis, based on a diagnosis rather than based on need. I want to get rid of that line at 18. Obviously there's a legal reason for having the line at 18 years old. That's when you legally achieve the age of adulthood. But in terms of service provision I want to provide a continuum of service based on need.

I recognize that at the adult level we have very large populations with unmet needs. You know, when you look at, for example, some of the autistic community or FASD community, with a minimum of either supportive living or employment supports we could have a lot more people out there leading productive, inclusive, contributing lifestyles. That's what we want to achieve. So I want to get rid of some of those rules and start providing services based on need. That's what this year is for PDD for our budget, a transformational year for us.

Ms DeLong: Excellent. Thank you very much.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

We'll go now to Ms Notley, followed by Ms Jansen.

Ms Notley: Thank you.

The Chair: You want to go back and forth, right?

Ms Notley: Sure. Yeah.

I want to focus on poverty, although before I do that, I do just have to very briefly question the associate minister. You talk about Gateway community association. Are you aware that their executive director had to take a four-month unpaid leave of absence because of the delay in completing their contract and the uncertainty around the community access cuts? As of April 1 she's on an unpaid leave of absence until at least September because of the chaos that's currently existing in PDD. So there's your poster child for what it should look like, and the board, unfortunately, had to ask the ED to take a leave of absence.

Mr. Oberle: Well, let me just comment on that. I've met with her twice in my office and twice downtown, and you're not going to find an individual anywhere in Alberta that's more enthusiastic about what we're doing, including transformations at the Michener Centre. She is a great supporter of what we're doing and an absolutely critical partner for us going forward, and she's never expressed anything but support to me, so I think you're a little off base there.

Ms Notley: I'm just saying that I've been told that her board had to ask her to take an unpaid leave of absence for four months.

Mr. Oberle: I'm guessing you weren't told by her because she's told me a different story.

Ms Notley: I'm just saying. I'm just putting it out there. There's chaos. Organizations don't know what they're dealing with. That's all I'm saying.

Anyway, one of the things I want to talk about is poverty. I found the discussion between the minister and the Member for Calgary-Mountain View kind of interesting as we started to talk about this whole idea of: well, we need to define what we mean by poverty. Of course, my spidey sense went up on that one. Heaven forbid that we get into a lawyerly discussion about a word so that we can then manoeuvre our way out of an election promise. Nonetheless, in the last election the Premier promised to eliminate child poverty in five years. She actually promised that in her leadership run, but let's just give her March 2012 as the start time. So that's what she promised.

Now, in this budget we've seen \$30 million come out of employment supports for people on income. This is not the reduction related to the predicted number of applications. This is employment support efforts. We've seen \$40 million from community access programs. We've seen about \$20 million from safe communities cut. We've seen money come out of community mental health and addictions. We've seen money come out of affordable living. We've seen money come out of rent supplement programs. We've seen cuts to K to 12 education, which most people say are going to translate into problems for kids at risk. I'm just quoting people within the school boards. I could probably spend quite a bit of time talking about more cuts, but that's just a summary or a brief survey, shall we say.

So my question to you, Minister, is this. Regardless of definition – because I can't believe that you could possibly come up with a definition of poverty that would not make this a meaningful question – this budget takes us two years into that five-year mandate. Are you going to eliminate child poverty by the end of five years?

4:30

Mr. Hancock: That's the objective. I'm certainly cognizant of a phrase that I've always held close to my heart: what interests the boss fascinates the heck out of me. It's in my mandate letter. It's my measure of success. That's my job, and I'm going to work very hard to achieve that. We have talented people who are working with us. I've met with a number of people, including, as late as last week, the group that's working in Calgary to do their poverty reduction strategy. A lot of good work has happened. There's a lot of good planning work. We're not starting from the very beginning. There's a good body of knowledge across the country and in Alberta to build on, so there are some good things happening.

Ms Notley: Okay. You're planning. I get that, and I respect that. Kudos to you. I love that: what interests the boss fascinates me. Very amusing.

The boss also promised, and I quote: to limit funding for Human Services to the current funding envelope for existing services indexed to inflation and population growth. Now, of course, when she said that, I thought her plan to eliminate poverty was already somewhat delusional. Nonetheless, that was the plan.

Now, instead, what we've got in your ministry is about a .3 per cent cut, and in most of the items that deal with poverty – and we can probably debate the line items – I think we can say that we've

seen a cut. Notwithstanding the tremendous effort that I know you are going to make to eliminate child poverty in the next four years, I'm asking you again: are you going to eliminate child poverty in the next four years?

Mr. Hancock: Well, the proof will be in the pudding, but we're going to make every effort to do it. That's the objective. It's a very laudable objective. It's going to be a very difficult objective. Regardless of what time frame you put on it, it would be a difficult objective. It's a very multifaceted problem. One would say that it's an intergenerational problem. You know, the long-term solution to poverty is early childhood supports and early childhood development. We're working very strongly on that, but that's only going to go some way toward the short-term objective, if I can put the five years in a short-term objective category. The real answer is in building the right foundations, and we're going to do that.

We're working hard with Health and Education on things like early birth screening programs, those sorts of things, which can be helpful. Obviously, education is at the root. Despite what you're saying about cuts, Education has actually had a slight increase in its budget, and we have a comparatively well-funded Education budget and one of the strongest education systems, so we're doing some good things on that side.

On the homeless side – and there are families, unfortunately, that are homeless – it's important that we work on that side to make sure that we deal with that.

Then you come back to the income supports programs and the work support programs, and, yes, that's going to be a challenge. It's important to devote the resources to where they're going to have the impact on the results we want to have.

Ms Notley: I agree with you completely. I actually think, as the Member for Calgary-Mountain View outlined, you know, that there's quite a lot of consensus there about how you effectively reduce poverty. It typically starts with early childhood, both in terms of a comprehensive and fulsome child care policy, which we don't have yet in Alberta, and also in early education, starting with full-day kindergarten and full-day junior kindergarten, neither of which we have. Of course, I believe we're one of the few provinces that still doesn't have full-day kindergarten.

Now, the Premier also promised full-day kindergarten. We're not there yet either. I know this is a bit of a . . .

An Hon. Member: Downer?

Ms Notley: No, not a downer. I hate having no vocabulary at this age. It drives me nuts.

Anyway, a bit of a pointed question to you: do you really think that in the absence of failing to follow through on full-day kindergarten, on child care, on income supports, on the various and sundry antipoverty initiatives that I've discussed that one can really talk about eliminating child poverty in five years in good faith?

Mr. Hancock: Yes. I'm quite serious about it. There's very good work happening across the province. There is very good collaboration. We've built an incredible sense of team . . .

Ms Notley: Yes or no was good. I appreciate that. I've heard about collaboration so many times. I'm pretty sure there was a workshop on collaboration in cabinet recently, just on the use of the word.

Mr. Hancock: I was probably leading it.

Ms Notley: There you go. Nonetheless. Okay.

Mr. Oberle: He was not alone. I was collaborating with him.

Ms Notley: There's a drinking game online in terms of how many times you people have said "collaboration" in the last week. Anyway, it's clearly a new thing.

Mr. Hancock: Work gets done when people work together. You should try it sometime.

Ms Notley: Yeah. Yeah.

Let me go back, then, to items 2.11, 2.12, 2.13, and 2.15. Those are the items that are all geared towards getting folks who are at risk, low-income families, back into employment, the different programs. That's how I read them. We've got a total cut of \$30 million, or effectively 20 per cent. So we've got this cut of 20 per cent. This is the pot from which you're going to pay for getting the roughly 60 per cent of the 10,000 PDD clients also employed?

Mr. Hancock: Partially.

Ms Notley: You know, I'm not an accountant, but it seems to me that the demands are increasing and the pot is decreasing. Is it realistic to believe that simply by collaboration and doing things a new way, you can do that?

Mr. Hancock: As realistic as it is to assume that simply by putting more money in the pot, you're going to accomplish something. Neither will work by itself. The question is how you make the most effective use of the resources you have, how you plan for the right outcomes and then work towards achieving those outcomes. That's what we're going to do.

The Chair: Great. Thank you.

Mr. Oberle: If I could add on to the disability services side.

The Chair: A very short add, please.

Mr. Oberle: Okay. We did say that we have a current employment rate of just over 20 per cent, and Washington state has 70 per cent. We're not going to achieve that target in one year. They didn't achieve that target in one year. There's a lot of work to do just as there is in solving child poverty.

The Chair: All right. Very good. Thank you.

We'll go to Ms Jansen, followed by Mr. Bikman.

Ms Jansen: I'm happy to go back and forth.

I want to start out really by talking, I think, more about the homelessness issue. I find it a really interesting issue because, clearly, you can certainly tie so many aspects in Human Services to the homeless issue, and it has its own ripple effect: child poverty, mental health, poverty reduction strategies, aboriginal supports, domestic violence, and, of course, early childhood, as we've just been talking about. And I'm going to use the term "collaboration," or maybe we'll call it the C-word.

Ms Notley: Well, we already have "conversation."

Ms Jansen: Oh. Okay.

Clearly, that's something you have to do in order to tackle all of these problems. I remember having a conversation recently with the folks from Vibrant Communities in Calgary, and they talked about the kinds of programs that are important to focus on to reduce homelessness in the sense that you can take a program that

gives a person a meal versus a program that teaches a person to earn a living, get job skills, live on their own, and provide for themselves. The real way to combat homelessness and poverty and all of those issues is to put the majority of your focus on those programs that give people the skills to end the cycle of poverty.

One of the names that came up a number of times was the Louise Dean school and the program they have going on. One of the things that I really like about that program is that it takes in very young women who are pregnant and clearly in very tenuous circumstances. Some of them were, in fact, homeless once their condition became known to their families. It not only took them in and gave them an education but taught them well baby care and gave them a whole host of skills. They do get provincial funding. They get funding from Catholic Family Service. They've graduated, I think, somewhere in the neighbourhood of 650 young women now who actually are going on to postsecondary education. So when you talk about child poverty, you're looking at a program right there that is tackling that issue head-on.

I'm wondering. When you sit down and you look at the programs that are real models of efficacy, where do you make the judgment? Are there lots of those programs in the province?

4:40

Mr. Hancock: Well, you've probably unknowingly tapped into one of my proudest moments.

Mr. Oberle: Brace yourself.

Mr. Hancock: Yeah, brace yourself for this.

About six years ago I was approached by the Terra foundation in Edmonton. The Terra foundation works with Braemar school in the same way as Catholic Family Service works with Louise Dean. The problem was unwed young teens who were failing. They were attempting to go to Braemar school or Louise Dean school, and they were not succeeding because the challenges were too high in terms of getting appropriate daycare and child care, getting transportation to and from, finding a place to live, all those things. Our programs didn't help them because they couldn't come into a lot of our programs until they'd had their babies, so they couldn't plan while they were pregnant. There were gaps.

I went to the three ministers involved because there were three departments involved at the time and as an MLA, because Terra came to me as an Edmonton MLA, I said, "We should be able to fix this." Everybody said, "Yes, that would be a great idea," and we set up a crossministerial committee. Three years later I became Minister of Education, and I said: "Great. I'm one of the ministers involved now." On the day we got our initial briefing, I said, "I've got this project that's near and dear to me, and we ought to be able to do something." "Yes. Yes, minister. We have a committee." I said, "I want reports about how we're doing on that." Three years and eight months later I left Education to come to Human Services, and six weeks later we had funded – well, we hadn't funded; we had the agreement to fund – both Louise Dean, through Catholic Family Services, and Braemar, through Terra foundation.

It was very simple. Instead of us making those girls come to five different doors to get help, we gave the money to the foundations and said: your outcome is to work with the school and the girls and to get the support they need to be successful. They went from a 40 per cent success rate to an 80 per cent success rate in six months. For the first time Braemar had school over the summer. Now, you can imagine at the end of June Braemar school or Louise Dean school saying to a young mom, a 15- or 16-year-old with a child: "Have a good summer. See you in the fall." What are they going to do for the two months?

With the funding that we gave Terra and Catholic Family Services, which is the same funding we were prepared to give them if they found the right door, they moved the success rate from 40 per cent. That's what we're talking about in terms of outcome-based services instead of having all of our little programs that say: "If you need some funding for this, come in this door. If you need some funding for that, come in that door. Go and see employment and immigration for that. Go and see children and youth services for that. Maybe Education can help you with that." We put it together, gave it to one group who we had faith in and a track record with, some outcomes based – that's how we measure success – and said: go to it. They did, and they're being successful.

I was out there about a month ago. The kids that I talked to have aspirations. They're not all planning to go to postsecondary, but they all have an idea of where they're going. Most importantly, their children have some hope.

Sorry for that, but I get excited about it. That's what we're trying to do.

Ms Jansen: On that note, if I may make a shameless plug for them. For the girls who have just had their babies, they're not equipped at the school right now to deal with newborns. If they had an extra \$450,000, they could actually put in a newborn nursery, and those girls could come back to that safe environment, learn the well baby care for newborns, immediately take up the camaraderie that helps keep them on the right track, and be back in that learning environment with their friends and in a safe situation.

Mr. Hancock: That's the second lesson in this business. As soon as you achieve one success, there's another opportunity.

Ms Jansen: Do I have a little time left?

The Chair: Three minutes.

Ms Jansen: I just wanted to ask you about, in the budget, the homeless support program that has only increased by just over a million dollars. When I say only, I'm looking at all of the other programs that have had significant increases, which is fantastic news. I am getting calls from people who are wondering, who have the perception there are so many cuts out there. But is that \$1 million increase sufficient to get the work done that you need to get done?

Mr. Hancock: No. It's never sufficient. I mean, there is always more that you can do, and you could move farther faster with more resources. I would argue that if we could get another million dollars, where would you put it? Well, you know, you'd have to make those priority decisions. But it's progress, and it's working with our agencies and co-ordinating our efforts and getting more results for the resources we do have.

The other thing I'd just point out to you is that this is program money. This is not the housing money, which comes out of the Municipal Affairs budget, so there is more money going into the area. This is an area where the payoff of the social return on investment is high; the economic return on investment is high. If we could invest more money in here faster – I'm not saying you could throw a lot of money at it and do good things with everything, but there's a good structure in place, a good opportunity in place. We know that what we're doing with our partners is successful, not by ourselves, so more investment in that would be a good thing.

Ms Jansen: When you look at the homeless issue, are you really specifically dividing it up between the kind of homeless who are out on the street with a mental illness and the kind of people who are the working homeless, who are clearly in situations where they can't afford accommodation, but they have families, and they're in a slightly different situation?

Mr. Hancock: Well, I'm not sure if we're segregating that out. I think there's a continuum. The ideal piece would be that whoever comes into contact with them, whether it's because they're attending at a homeless shelter or coming into contact with the system in another way, somebody who needs some financial assistance to get over a short-term barrier will be helped by Alberta Works if that's possible. So there are a number of different ways that we can provide programming. The key is to do that – sorry, Rachel – in a collaborative way, to make sure that you're bringing it together.

That's what we're asking with the Interagency Council on Homelessness, for example, that as they interact with people coming through for various pieces, whether it's mental health issues or whether they're actually homeless on the street, we can have the right kinds of services in the right places to assist. Departmental services through Alberta Works income supports, those sorts of pieces, are absolutely a part of that puzzle. If it's a long-term debilitating piece, you know, moving them towards income-support programs and AISH or PDD if that's the circumstance. But it needs to work more collaboratively together rather than in each of its silos, and that's the magic of Human Services that's really working.

Ms Jansen: Thank you.

The Chair: Great. Thank you.

All right. We'll go to Mr. Bikman, followed by Ms Johnson. Would you like to go back and forth?

Mr. Bikman: Back and forth.

The Chair: Very good.

Mr. Bikman: I just want to correct the record. When I introduced myself, I said Calgary, Taber, Warner. I realized subconsciously that with a Coke sitting in front of me, I wasn't able to say Cardston.

It's a pleasure to be here. Being a Wildrosier I'm naturally pleased by cost reductions, but there seems to be an inordinate number of cuts to the employment programs, and I'm wondering how you square that with some of the goals and priority initiatives that are in your business plan; for example, priority initiative 2.3, implementing targeted workforce strategies and initiatives to increase labour force participation of underrepresented groups. There appears to be a disconnect when you look at the budget and see cuts pretty much across the board, as noted in line item 2.2, which is cut by \$13 million, 2.3 by \$32 million, 2.11 by \$10 million, and line item 2.12 cut by \$9 million. How do you explain such an apparent fundamental disconnect?

Mr. Hancock: I think the key is to have a more targeted and focused approach to what we're trying to accomplish as opposed to having generic programs that are available across the board. We're seeing, I think it's fair to say, people who can get into the workforce. I mean, there are jobs available, and the turnaround time is faster. Sometimes people need a little bit of help getting there, but we can do that with fewer resources. Most of our time, energy, and money I think are going to be devoted towards the

areas that you're talking about, helping with the under-representation of aboriginal people in the workforce, working with persons with disabilities who can move into the workforce.

And you can link it to the child poverty reduction strategy. One of our biggest issues, if you take a look at the numbers of people who are in poverty, is single women with kids. So the process is to help them, whether it's supporting organizations like Women Building Futures or other organizations that actually focus and are successful in helping people move into that area. The Trade Winds program with the plumbers and pipefitters, which is specifically addressed to aboriginal tradespeople, that's how we're going to take these resources, use them more directed and more effectively with those target audiences. We can do it because the economy generally is helping us on the other side.

Mr. Bikman: Okay. Thank you.

Federally there was a program that was discontinued that worked with – it was an introduction to the trades program that I actually participated in and taught on reserves as well as at the Lethbridge College. Has your department considered anything like that that could assist people that are interested in pursuing trades to find out what the trades are?

4:50

Mr. Hancock: Yes. There's an across-the-board piece. I mean, there's the RAP program at the high school level, which is designed to help kids find some success in that area. Certainly, I mentioned the Trade Winds program, which is an opportunity to introduce people on a pretrade basis, again, particularly aimed at aboriginal people. We have the Job Corps, which is out in some areas, which helps people to sort of get over a rough patch but also, while they're doing that, get introduced to certain trades. For example, I think it's fair to say that we're still working with Habitat for Humanity on housing projects with Métis settlements and First Nations, and that will have the opportunity of introducing people as they're working with Habitat for Humanity on the house-building project to find out if that's an area and then translate them in.

That's exactly what we're trying to do, to find ways to be effective at it. The corollary of that is that we're looking at the programs that have been in place and haven't been effective and taking the resources out of them.

Mr. Oberle: If I could just supplement that.

Mr. Bikman: Yes, please.

Mr. Oberle: Recognize as well that we have integrated programs into education and postsecondary education where colleges and high schools are working together now, and we're introducing trades streams earlier. We have portable trades trailers in the Northland school division, for example. So we're doing a better job of introducing students even as early as the grade 9 level into trades streaming and other postsecondary course work. And we have a dual crediting system now that allows them access into postsecondary earlier.

Mr. Bikman: Thanks.

Is part of the benefit you anticipate as a result of results-based budgeting that you now are more focused, that you're clearer on what the desired result is?

Mr. Hancock: That's certainly sharpened the focus a lot. It's been a very useful way to bring it across departments as well to look at where we're all utilizing resources and to see if we can streamline that better.

I would point out that in 2.17 and 2.18, workforce partnerships and aboriginal development partnerships, those budgets have been sustained. They're the same. They're effective.

I'd also point out that the federal government – and there's a lot of work for us to do now in this new job. What's it called? Anyway, they've got a new program which focuses on two things: first of all, an emphasis on the trades; but secondly, an emphasis on bringing employers more into taking up part of the training program, taking more responsibility and putting more skin in the game. While there are still some details to work out for us, obviously, I think that we're going to be able to work with them to make that a good priority because one of the key things is to bring the employers to the table as part of it.

Historically – and I'll just use a different department – when I was minister of advanced education, we had some very good employers in the province who were doing a lot of work with trades and bringing a lot of tradespeople up, but there were some employers who would then hire them away and leave these guys who were investing in the workforce to invest more in the workforce. We need to have a broader take-up across employers in terms of that, and I think the federal job grant program might help us with that.

Mr. Bikman: Have you considered the issue that in spite of how well the students get trained and how effective we are with employers helping with that, there still always seems to be an issue with a significant portion of youth today learning life skills and employability so that they can remain employed and they can understand the need to show up every day and be a team player and respect private property and rules and things like that?

Mr. Hancock: Absolutely, and that's a critical piece. That's something that historically a lot of job programs didn't address, so what you ended up with was a brittle workforce. I mean, the first incident that came along, they lost their job or they didn't show up or whatever. That's why I'm such a big fan of outfits like Women Building Futures or those types of programs because they bring the life skills piece into it, as our Job Corps program similarly does. EmployAbilities as a not-for-profit agency does some good work in that area and others, and that's a critical piece to it. You've got to map that. I have a lot of respect for Bow Valley College and NorQuest in terms of the work that they do to bring people along who haven't had a lot of success in their life and to equip them for success. That's critical to this whole thing.

Mr. Bikman: I agree. As well, on a similar note to my initial question, we see the funding for line item 2.15 cut by \$11 million, and I know some organizations that are receiving funding to provide training to underrepresented groups to get them into the workforce, as per your priority initiative 2.3. Why are you cutting the funding to those organizations while expecting them to do more? Are there efficiencies being made, or will there be fewer people helped?

Mr. Hancock: Well, my hope is, first of all, that part of that is reflected – and my officials can correct me if I'm wrong on this – in the lower take-up because people are moving past that right into work, which is good. Part of that is in identifying the programs that are really successful and continuing to support them and identifying the ones that are not so successful and saying: if you want to participate in this, you'd better be successful.

Mr. Bikman: Results again.

Mr. Hancock: Yeah.

Mr. Bikman: Yeah. Okay. In the area of PDD cuts – this is going to be a little bit personal, but it's relevant. It's an opportunity to visit it. I have a friend who runs a program, Support, Hope, Opportunity & Progress, in Stirling, where I live, has for many years, and the contract is being ended. I know some of their clients – it's just a small organization – and those clients really aren't capable of doing much more employmentwise than the work that they're doing with the caregivers that are working with them, and that contract is now being terminated.

I would appeal on her behalf. This isn't the forum, obviously. But how is the assessment being made? The work being performed in this little organization and organizations like them all across the province – not everybody is employable in the traditional sense of the word. They're given employment that gives them self-esteem, but they need somebody almost to hold their hand while they do that work. That's the situation with these people. How is that being addressed, Minister?

Mr. Oberle: We haven't actually informed any of our care providers that their program is ending or that there's not going to be any more work. I understand that a lot of them that traditionally resided in one corner, if you will, of our budget have some concerns. What we've done is indicated that we're going to extend contracts and then work to develop new outcomes-based contracts. So we're talking with that particular provider right now – I'm not familiar with them but Brenda Lee is – about what role they have going forward.

Mr. Bikman: Good. Thank you.

The Chair: All right. Thank you very much.

We'll go to Ms Johnson, followed by Dr. Swann. You want to go back and forth?

Ms L. Johnson: Yes, please, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Associate Minister, and thank you, staff, as well. We touched a bit on our aboriginal community, and I'd like to spend some time talking about aboriginal children in care. Believe it or not, in my constituency of Calgary-Glenmore we actually have a very high aboriginal population. In terms of Calgary I think it's the second or third highest. So we need to have the programs there; we need to have the programs working and effective. It's my understanding that about 68 per cent of our children in care are from the aboriginal community. Is that percentage growing or leveling off?

Mr. Hancock: I addressed this briefly this morning, but I would be happy to revisit it because it is a very important topic. We've actually turned the corner on it. I think we're 3 per cent down this year, year over year, December to December numbers.

Ms L. Johnson: Oh, good.

Mr. Hancock: The percentage numbers are a bit deceiving in that the number of nonaboriginal persons in care is going down faster. So the percentage of aboriginal children in care as a part of the overall percentage remains at 68 per cent, but the actual success is in there.

That is attributable to a number of things. One is building better relationships and really bringing the First Nations into the equation in a better way. One of the real barriers to success in terms of the numbers of aboriginal kids in care is that, first of all, you have to reduce the number of kids that you bring into care, and that's always our objective. So that's working with families on that sort of piece. But for kids that do come into care, it's also

getting them back out of care, and that's finding permanent homes. Of course, there's been a considerable move to try not to find permanent homes outside of the cultural group, outside of the First Nations, if you will. The First Nations are not all the same across this province. There are 48 First Nations in this province, and there are probably seven or eight different cultural groups within that. We need to work with them.

5:00

We have now 32 band designates which are working very well to help build those relations, but the critical piece is to be able to move a child out of care and into a permanent home. That's where we've been having difficulty. We're doing better work on that. There have got to be a couple of things firmed up in terms of working with the First Nations; that is, that we find those kids permanent homes and we make every effort to find those permanent homes within that First Nation, but if we can't do it, if we can't build the relationship, if we can't find the place, then we need to find those kids a permanent home elsewhere. We've got too many kids sitting in limbo for way, way too long. That is worse than not having a culturally appropriate home.

Ms L. Johnson: Okay. Thank you.

What programs are you considering to increase the number of permanent homes, and where does that show up in our budget?

Mr. Hancock: Well, first of all, we have DFNAs, the delegated First Nation agencies, who help with that connection with the community. We have, as I said, the band designate program, which is now getting legs, and people are understanding the value of the band designate in terms of working with the bands to create that linkage. But we have more work to do.

I had a recent interchange with a gentleman from one of the northern First Nations who said, "You know, you're taking our kids to foster families, and they should be with us," and I said: "Well, you know your community. You're on your council. You know your community better than I do. Identify the families. Identify the people. Help us recruit the foster care and the kinship care."

Now, kinship care is an extremely important part of this. If we can't put a child back or leave a child with their family and help that family to grow strong, then the next best thing is to find other family connections. That's work that we're working on as well.

Ms L. Johnson: Okay. Thank you.

Within Calgary-Glenmore we have an organization called the southwest resource centre, and they've been asking about improving parent link centres. Now, some of that gets into FCSS. Could you help me understand how I can help them strengthen the services and options that they can offer in the community?

Mr. Hancock: Sure. Parent link centres have been a very good part of our programming. One of the keys to ending poverty, having successful families, all of those things, is strong parenting. We have a number of tools that are available, the triple-P program. That's not a public-private partnership. It's the positive parenting program. There are a number of tools there, and we can certainly work with them. The parent link centres that are in place are doing very good work. There are a number of resources. I would be happy to work with them if they have some aspirations and we can help.

That's one of the critical pieces, how you connect so that parents can have access to the resources they need. We don't want to take over their parenting role, but we certainly do want to assist them if they need assistance in developing and understanding what

really works well, what the research says, all of those good things. Translating the knowledge into action is a very important piece of our work.

Ms L. Johnson: Okay. Thank you very much.

I'd like to move to Alberta Works and some of the situations we've become aware of at our constituency office. I was very encouraged by your comments about how the offices operate. At the same time we've had some experiences with constituents that to go and see someone at the Alberta Works office, you have to show up at 7:30 in the morning. You have to line up, and if you're not in the first 10 . . .

An Hon. Member: You're SOL.

Ms L. Johnson: I was trying to think of a C-word, but it wasn't coming.

So if you're a single parent with no support in terms of child care, no one to collaborate with, it's that balance of being treated with respect, getting access to the program. We want to use the programs that are being offered by your ministry, but the difficulty of it is that if you're not number 10, you have to go back the next day, and we're dealing with people who don't have transportation.

Mr. Hancock: Yeah. I'm hearing that in a number of different places. In some cases we'd say that some of your people might be more fortunate than others because they're actually in an urban centre and they have access to transportation.

Ms L. Johnson: Well, that's right.

Mr. Hancock: If you're in a rural centre like Hector was describing, you might be – so that type of feedback is very helpful to be able to identify those sorts of issues and where they're happening. I mean, service delivery is extremely important. Access is important. Often we're dealing with people who do have barriers to success, challenges, so it makes it even more important to make the access point easier to access. We're trying to use technology to take people out of the line that don't need to be in the line, so the common service access point where you can call in, you can go online and get connected. I've used that myself with very good success. There are different ways of dealing with it, but we need the feedback so that we can address those issues.

Ms L. Johnson: Okay. All right. Further to Alberta Works, they have some local contracts with service agencies on resumé writing and programs like that. Now, I appreciate that we're in the budget process, but once the budget is passed, what's the sort of time frame for local agencies on the ground to know whether the impact – I was with the Community Learning Network people yesterday. They work with NorQuest and Bow Valley and individuals in the community to improve job skills, interviewing skills.

Mr. Hancock: We anticipate that a lot of that stuff will be worked out with providers by the end of the month. We're working very quickly on that piece. You know, there's not a one size fits all on this, so I can't speak to a specific agency and a specific time frame, but our aim is to not have a high degree of sort of agitation in the system for a long period of time. We want people out there doing their work. So that work is happening as we speak.

Ms L. Johnson: Okay. Well, I think there were comments today that, you know, decisions haven't been made, so there's uncertainty. We haven't passed the budget yet, so remember that. We have to work together to solve it.

Mr. Hancock: Yeah. We're doing the groundwork; we're laying the framework. In some cases, you know, if you talk to some of the areas that Frank is dealing with, for example, the announcement is the start of the planning process, not the end of the process. So we're going to collaborate with our service providers to achieve the right results, and that's not something, again, that we're going to sit here and dictate. We're going to work with our partners. That is the nature of doing business. I've had very positive feedback from partners saying that they've seen a significant change in the way we do business, and I for one am really pleased about that.

Ms L. Johnson: I'm hearing that as well with the people that I'm in contact with.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Very good.

We'll go to Dr. Swann next, but I think we'll take the opportunity to take about a seven-minute break here. All right?

[The committee adjourned from 5:08 p.m. to 5:17 p.m.]

The Chair: All right. If we could get everybody back to their seats, please. I think that was almost nine minutes. That sure goes fast.

Mr. Hancock: Chair, I'd like to be able to just put two things on the record. One is a correction, and one is a piece of information that was asked for.

The Chair: Of course.

Mr. Hancock: The correction. There was a question asked about training for persons working with aboriginal communities, and I think the answer that was given was about six hours. Actually, it's 18 hours over three days. It's not just six hours. If you match that with the earlier answer, it'll fit the context.*

The other was a question that was raised about the percentage of salaries that were in the process. I can tell you that total salaries in the department are \$610 million. That includes departments, CFSAs, and PDD boards, which is 14 per cent; 32 per cent of the budget goes to supply and services, which are the contracts for service providers, et cetera; and then grants are 54 per cent. So it's a lot different than what I had put, you know, when I suggested 70 per cent. That's sort of a normal number for most operations, but we do give grant programs and that sort of thing.

The Chair: Okay. Very good.

Then we'll move ahead with Dr. Swann. Would you like to go back and forth?

Dr. Swann: Thank you. Yes.

The Chair: Very good. Whenever you're ready.

Dr. Swann: I just want to revisit, with some concern, the outcome-based service model and raise concerns that the tail doesn't start wagging the dog. We have seen data from elsewhere, including the United Kingdom, where there is such a focus on the gathering of data that in one report they indicated that up to 86 per cent of the time of caregivers was spent either inputting data or focusing on data related to the outcome of interest. They raised questions about who set the outcome, about how much the professional was in conjunction with the client in a fair and balanced process of setting the goal or goals, and to what extent it was being dictated by perhaps an RFP, in which case it becomes

*See page FC-193, left column, paragraph 7

not only demoralizing for the worker but onerous in terms of the ability to create a relationship that is empowering and healthy and works towards well-being as opposed to a particular outcome.

So just a caution. I know you've looked at these issues, but it's so crucial how the goal is set, how much leeway there is in terms of understanding the client's real wishes and quality-of-life issues as opposed to achieving a particular outcome.

With respect to RFPs I guess the question for you in terms of individual and family services is that if the temptation is to take the lowest cost RFP, we add another variable in terms of what the outcome is.

I also have questions about how you verify the data that's being input in an outcome-based service by a contracted service and whether you then need to add another layer of bureaucracy to verify that the data being input by the contracted service is, in fact, valid, so some concerns about that whole process and taking it out of the department.

Mr. Hancock: I think we have to be clear on our language because you're talking about an outcomes-based delivery model that is based on RFPs and going out to private-sector delivery, to not-for-profit or for-profit delivery. I'm talking about outcomes based in terms of the other side of what you're talking about, and that is: are people sitting down with families, developing a plan, whether it's a care plan in PDD or a life plan, understanding what outcomes we want to achieve, and then finding the services that they need to achieve those outcomes? So it's a need-based model rather than a diagnostic model.

I think it would be fair to say that we want to shift away from program delivery that defines how our staff or our service delivery people have to do it to a program delivery model which empowers the staff to sit down and develop appropriate plans, working with the individuals involved to get a common goal. It's not just saying: "What do you want? We'll help you get it." It's about defining need and appropriate service delivery processes and then finding the most appropriate way to achieve that.

Of course, there are different pieces, depending on which part of the system you're talking about, but that's the overall objective. It's getting the right people, ensuring that they have the right technology and the right training or education, and then empowering them to act appropriately to define with the clients the needs piece and how we then meet those needs. So when I talk about outcomes-based service delivery, I'm not talking about picking up the British model and applying it here. I'm not talking about a particular RFP-type process. Yes, there certainly will be and is a lot of service delivery, whether it's in government or whether it's other service providers, and there's management that's involved in that. I hope that gets to the root of what you're talking about.

You talked about the data piece. Data is important. We have been working this ISIS process in terms of the platform with our staff, and we've been getting feedback and reworking the process. It's probably been heavier in the development process, but there's also a piece that's necessary. We want to have the right information available for the right people, and we want to eliminate the need for people to tell their story over and over again and have different recordings of it in different places. So it's important to have a good data set, good information collection.

I appreciate what you're saying about not putting so much emphasis on the records and putting more emphasis on the actual face-to-face service delivery piece, but the records are important as well. That's an iterative process that we've been working through, taking advice from our front-line workers and responding to that advice.

Mr. Oberle: If you could allow me a brief moment, I'd like to add to that. Where we need to get to in service provision here our service providers actually agree with. They're complaining now about the administrative overhead in our contracting system. We measure activities today: how many hours did you do this and minutes did you do that? You can build a whole system of measures around that that tells you absolutely nothing about how successful you were.

So on both sides we agree that we have to do something different. There's some trepidation on their side, absolutely. There is on our side, too. There is a tremendous amount of work to do here, but we're going to do it together. We'll develop contracts and measures together. I think we're getting a tremendous amount of support. We're not looking to the model you suggested, an RFP, where we'll lose our current contracting force because they do something different. We have the service providers and excellent staff, trained staff, out there. We want to work in a different fashion with them.

5:25

Dr. Swann: Okay. Again, I guess I would just have to reiterate concerns about contracting out and whether sufficient time is given to evaluate contractors not only in relation to the dollar figure that they're able to present but in their ability to deliver on a larger set of goals that the patient or the family has.

Mr. Oberle: On the PDD side I bristle just a bit at the term "contractor." Every single service provider out there that I've met so far and, I'll wager, the vast majority of them, in fact – obviously, I haven't met all of them – are in that business because they had a child or a loved one that was disabled or had a particular issue that they know something about managing. They are in there to contribute to the greater good, and every single one of them is dedicated, and every single one of them has something to teach us.

Obviously, we have to have contracts in place, and we have to have contract supervision and management and all those things, but you're talking about a group of intensely dedicated and knowledgeable people. They're a pleasure to work with. It's not a contracting force in that sense.

Mr. Hancock: This is not an RFP for a bundle of stuff. These are people that we're working with, and it's a complex process. If we go out to ask for service providers, we're looking for people who can deliver the outcomes. We're not looking for the lowest price for a bag of nails.

Dr. Swann: Well, we'll be following that because we'll be hearing from people, obviously, that feel that some other priority has been given in some cases.

Mr. Hancock: All I ask when you do that is that you delve into it. I'm happy to look into any place where somebody thinks the system is skewed, but, you know, just because somebody didn't get a contract doesn't mean that it was biased against them.

Dr. Swann: Sure. I appreciate that.

I want to switch briefly to WCB. I've heard recently that WCB has cut personal care services in the last few months for those on WCB that need home-care services. That now downloads these services to the health care system. This is a recurring pattern that I have seen, that the WCB is reneging on some of its responsibilities to workers. I hope the minister can look into that.

They're also, as a second concern, restricting the first level of appeal and have given incentives to caseworkers and to the health

staff to hold the line on 95 per cent rejection of first appeals. That, to me, is egregious if it's true, and perhaps you could confirm that in your department.

Mr. Oberle: Well, I do need to speak to that. First of all, the WCB budget is not in our budget. They're an independent, employer-funded insurance program. Their objective is to get employees back to work after an injury. In order to do that, they need to provide appropriate supports while they're off work – appropriate medical coverage and, if necessary, appropriate retraining to get them back into the workforce – and then to compensate for a difference in salary if indeed that's how it turns out.

I can assure you, first of all, that they're really good at that. I know you have particular issues with the WCB. You and I are going to have to sit down with the WCB one of these days and have a couple of conversations. But I would find it really distressing if anybody out there believed that we had a goal to reject 95 per cent of appeals. If 95 per cent of the appeals get rejected – and I don't have that figure in front of me – that, to me, would speak to how good a job those assessors are doing up front. I wouldn't conclude from that that we automatically just dump people out on the street.

The Chair: Minister, I'm going to get you to wrap up your comments.

Mr. Oberle: I know that you've said several times in the House that the WCB caseload is a major part of your workload. That would make you one MLA in the province. Everybody else says that it's dropping radically, and I tabled statistics in the House to show that. It's not in my budget. I can't speak to their estimates here, but I'm more than happy to follow up on issues that you may present to me with the WCB.

The Chair: Very good. All right. Thank you.

We will move on to Mrs. Jablonski, followed by Ms Notley. And you're going to go back and forth? Good.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Chair. Ministers, I'm very aware of the important work of disability workers and how difficult and frustrating this work can be. I have a great appreciation for all disability workers because many do this work because of the love in their hearts, not just for the pay.

We know that there is a gap between employees of contracted agencies and GOA AUPE employees doing the same work. GOA AUPE employees have benefits and make 15 to 20 per cent more than contracted agency staff. In February 2012 government announced a plan to increase funding to community agencies contracted by government to provide services to vulnerable Albertans. These funding increases were to occur over a three-year period. My question: is government still committed to increasing wages for these contracted agencies?

Mr. Oberle: Absolutely. In what is obviously a difficult budget year, we've said that we're going to extend our promise for one year, but we are going to deliver on it. I was able to offer a 10 per cent wage increase for disability workers in that service community this year. I'm proud of that, and I'm not going to back off from the overall promise either. You'll see that it continues in the out-years in the business plan.

Mr. Hancock: And it continues across the rest of our sector. When we brought PDD into Human Services, we had to align some of the stuff we're doing. We've got a workforce alliance

group that involves stakeholders that's working on ensuring that we do this in the best possible way because it's not simply about dumping money in to raise wages. It has an impact because many of the agencies have workers that are paid from government resources and other workers, and you can't raise half of the wages in an organization without impacting the organization, so the workforce alliance is working on that piece. The only thing we've done on that piece is to put it over four years instead of three, and that is advisable from a number of perspectives because moving too rapidly creates some problems as well.

Mrs. Jablonski: Okay. One of the things that I've heard from some workers is that you give the increases to the agencies, but not all of the amount that you may have targeted for wage increases trickles down to the employees. I just want to know if you're aware that this could be happening and what you do to ensure that whatever you have targeted for increases in wages actually gets right down to the front-line workers in PDD and the other groups.

Mr. Oberle: Okay. We made it crystal clear to the service provider community that that's exactly what that money is for. Now, whether that actually winds up in an hourly wage or it includes some benefit, it goes directly to the employee, and we want a report back. We get an audited statement back, in fact. We will track that money and make sure it goes to employees. That's what it's for.

I've got to say that whether it's our own employees in direct operations or that service provider community out there, you're talking about people that are incredibly dedicated and talented people, and I am deeply concerned about their compensation and their health and safety. We'll continue to work with the service provider community to address that gap and in our own employee community as well, a great bunch of people doing work that not everybody would want to do or be capable of doing. It's tough stuff.

Mrs. Jablonski: I know that.

Mr. Hancock: One of the other pieces that you need to know on that is that we do give agencies flexibility, so they don't have to apply the same wage increase to every level of employee. Somebody might say: well, I didn't get a 10 per cent raise. Well, maybe they didn't. Maybe it's somebody else who needed it more or an area of that particular agency that needed a different increase. We're putting it in there and saying that it has to go to that. They have some flexibility in how they apply it in their organization.

5:35

Mrs. Jablonski: Okay. Thank you.

Associate Minister Oberle, earlier you said that there are a very large number of people with unmet needs. You said a number of times that you will provide service based on needs and not on diagnosis. We know that there are hundreds of Albertans with autism and FASD who do require supports but are not accepted into the PDD program because of the strict rules and definitions that they had in place. There is a struggle at present for people to be granted PDD supports even when they meet the strict PDD definition today. So I'm really pleased to hear that your position has changed – this is fantastic, actually – about now providing supports based on needs.

What I'd like to know is: where in the budget does it show the increases in funding that are required to be able to provide supports for those who legitimately have needs for supports and services?

Mr. Hancock: Perhaps while he's addressing that specifically, I could do a broader context piece, which says that one of the things we struggle with is the number of different ways in which we categorize people. One of the overarching pieces of work that we have to look at is how we can do a better job of the income support and then the disability support funding process rather than saying: "Well, you've got an IQ of under 70 and meet these criteria, and therefore you're PDD. You're an acquired brain injury person, so you're a person who came in this direction, and you're in this different category." We've got a number of different ways of categorizing people, and we really have to look at that piece. But that's a larger, longer term, bigger project.

Mr. Oberle: We already work a little bit outside of the box in disability services. Yes, we have a PDD program that identifies whether people have a developmental disability or not, and that determines whether they get support or not. Already if people don't meet that definition but they present some sort of danger to themselves or their community or their family, we already fuzz those lines and work with those people. In addition, we have initiatives outside of PDD like the brain injury initiative, for example. Those reside in 6.10 in the budget, provincial disability supports initiatives, and you'll see that's gone up by \$2 million, a 12.1 per cent increase this year.

Mrs. Jablonski: I've been told in the past that there have been long waits for people to get into PDD programs, supports and services, I suppose just as there are waits for AISH as well along the line. Are we doing something about the long waits for people to get supports so that they don't have to wait as long?

Mr. Oberle: Yeah. We have some governance work to do there because there are differences between the regions both in the services they can provide and the waiting lists we have. We've got to do more work there. We're talking to the boards, and Minister Hancock mentioned earlier that we're talking about a governance structure that they're driving there. We're not telling them how it's going to work. They're recommending to us how it's going to work. That work will happen fairly early here. Yes, we have some waiting list issues in PDD, no doubt about it.

Mrs. Jablonski: Do you know the number of people that are waiting at this time?

Mr. Oberle: We have 124 individuals right now waiting for service. At the moment 81 of those are not receiving service and 43 are receiving some other services.

Mrs. Jablonski: So are these the people that meet the strict PDD requirements at this time, or are they some of the ones where you fuzzed the lines?

Mr. Oberle: No. They would be people that would meet the definition of PDD. They might be caught in some initial appeal, but in most cases they would be people that meet PDD, yeah.

Mrs. Jablonski: What is the hope for those who don't meet those strict requirements for PDD at this time but do have needs because of . . .

Mr. Oberle: Well, as I said, we already do a significant amount of work with communities outside of that PDD community, and I mentioned the brain injury initiative, for example. We are working already with the Autism Society and partnering in programs there. We're working through the FASD networks with FASD clients that very often wouldn't meet the definition of PDD. So we're doing a lot of work there already.

Are we going to solve everybody's problems in one year? Absolutely not. This is an aspirational budget and business plan that bites off some very large objectives. There's a lot of work to do, obviously, but we're getting a tremendous amount of support from the service providers there, both the ones that work inside our PDD system and the ones that exist outside like the Autism Society, for example. We're finding ways to partner with them. I'm not sure we're going to collaborate . . . [interjections] Obviously, we'll collaborate.

Mrs. Jablonski: Have we collaborated enough now?

I just want to say thank you very much sincerely for all the good work that you're doing. I just have to put a shameless plug in – I think one of my colleagues said that earlier – for the SBAR program, which was the social-based assistance review. There was a lot of work going on prior to Minister Hancock finally coming onto the scene and bringing it all together and making it work. So thank you both and all of your staff very, very much for the great work that you're doing in this area. It's difficult and challenging, but I think you're rising to the challenge.

Mr. Oberle: So I'll put a shameless plug in, and that is that you're absolutely right. SBAR was the start of what has now turned into the amalgamation of Human Services. But two former ministers sitting in the room – I hope I don't miss any – yourself, of course, and Minister Fritz, did a lot of service in this department long before I ever got here, and that won't be forgotten either. The staff remind me constantly that you were way better than I am.

The Chair: Okay. Nothing more to say there.

Ms Notley, followed by Dr. Brown, please. Do you wish to go back and forth, Ms Notley?

Ms Notley: All righty. I will refrain from getting into ministerial assessment discussions although it would be fun.

Mr. Hancock: You'd want somebody more knowledgeable about the actual work to do it.

Ms Notley: Nice try. Anyway, I will not debate that one.

I had mentioned to the minister when we took the break that I was just going to put on the record that I was quite pleased that the Member for Calgary-Glenmore raised the issue of access to income support services. Anyone who reads through estimates debate on a regular basis, which I'm sure the vast majority of the population does, will note that I raised that issue last year and at the time was told that it wasn't really a problem.

In fact, the issue of the policies and procedures that are used in the employment offices – I'm not exactly sure what they're called – is a problem. Access is a problem. It was a problem last year. It continues to be a problem this year. Rather than assurances of sort of looking into it or, "Talk to me," what I would like the minister to do is to undertake to report back before this next committee but, you know, publicly on strategies that might be adopted to open up or change the policies and procedures as they currently exist because they are very effective at driving away particularly the most challenged of applicants.

That's the other thing. If you've got an income support applicant who's got, you know, a burr under their skin that they are going to get their income support come whatever, then they may get it. But if you've got someone with mental health issues, someone who's fleeing a violent domestic situation, whether that be a child or a spouse, then that extra barrier sometimes results in them just going back to an unhealthy situation because they can't go through the hoops. So that needs to be seriously looked at, and I'd like to see the minister actually proactively address that in a public setting.

That being said, I have some specific questions which I haven't had a chance to get to yet which relate to child protection, and it shouldn't surprise the minister or his staff because I do it every year. The annual report for '12-13 is not out yet, but certainly the period of time which it is geared to cover is, so I'm looking to receive a report on the number of fatalities, if any, of children in care due to serious injury and/or hospitalizations due to serious injury and other deaths not due to injury. You know the stats I'm looking at. I have the stats from the 2011-12 annual report, but I'd like for you to provide me with the '12-13 numbers.

Mr. Hancock: Okay. Between April 1, 2012, and March 1, 2013 – so it's not quite the full year – there were nine children and youth in care who died. One died due to natural causes or medical conditions. Three committed suicide by hanging. Two died due to accidents, one drowning and one motor vehicle accident. The cause of death for the three remaining is pending. Following the death of a child in care, of course, there are a number of things that go into effect, obviously, the reviews of the Child and Youth Advocate, and the quality review committee would have a look at it.

Over the same period 18 children and youth in care sustained an injury that required overnight hospitalization. One was injured by a motor vehicle. One sustained an accidental abdominal injury and required emergency surgery. One sustained a head injury due to a fight with a sibling. One sustained a head injury due to an assault in their community. One sustained a head injury related to a pre-existing medical condition. I'm not sure exactly what that means, but I could follow that up. One was hospitalized after a self-inflicted non-suicidal injury. Three were also hospitalized due to levels of intoxication. Four were hospitalized after attempting suicide. Five were hospitalized due to accidental bone fractures: one fell from a horse, one fell from a swing, one was injured in a sport, one jumped over a couch, and one was from an unknown cause at a house party. We will update those, of course, with the year-end numbers.

5:45

Whenever there's an injury or death of a child receiving services, an internal examination of the circumstances is conducted to determine if improvements can be made to the system. Of course, as I said, where there's a fatality, there's an automatic review. The Child and Youth Advocate is informed immediately and has the opportunity to do an in-depth review. As well, I think the quality review council is made aware of any serious incident and has the opportunity to investigate and provide advice.

Ms Notley: As far as you know, has either the children's advocate or your serious injury review council or quality council done any in-depth investigations of these injuries or fatalities?

Mr. Hancock: Okay. The quality council has not. The Child and Youth Advocate doesn't actually report to us.

Ms Notley: I know. But you can still tell us whether he's engaged in any. I'm sure he advises you.

Mr. Hancock: The advocate is currently conducting three investigations into the deaths of children in care: the suicide of a 16-year-old placed in a kinship home in Edmonton, the suicide of a 16-year-old placed in a kinship home in Peace River, and the pool drowning, that you're probably aware of, of a seven-year-old in Edmonton. Those are the ones we're aware of. That's the information I have.

Ms Notley: Is it your intention to have your internal quality assurance group engage in a review of any of the injuries arising from – I believe there were two assaults and a couple of intoxications and a couple of suicide attempts. Will there be any in-depth reviews of those?

Mr. Hancock: We actually have set them up as a quasi-independent body, so we provide them with the information, and they determine from the information whether or not to call a panel of experts to assist in identifying the circumstances around a particular review. Really, we give them the information, and then they determine how far they go with it. Obviously, that's something that they do in conjunction with the Child and Youth Advocate, who's also a member of that committee. They work together from that perspective so that they're not duplicating their efforts. But that's not something we tell them. That's something we give them, and they tell us what we need to know.

We also do our own internal reviews, of course, to learn from every incident.

Ms Notley: Right. So my understanding is that of that group the only one that the public was informed of was the pool one. That, of course, was not through the government but, rather, through people in the public becoming aware of it and the media becoming aware of it. What's the current policy for either your quality group or the ministry in terms of informing the public when a child in your care either passes away or requires hospitalization due to injury?

Mr. Hancock: That is a good question. This is often, obviously, a very sensitive issue with respect to families, not only the care family but the biological family. Obviously, we don't put out news releases with respect to things. I mean, we certainly want to make as much information as is appropriate available in appropriate ways, but the statistics are published on an annual basis. I don't know if we publish them more often than that. No? Certainly, the Child and Youth Advocate can do what he thinks is appropriate relative to the information that's provided to him, and we don't have any control of or desire to control that. But we don't proactively put out information with respect to incidents, and a lot of that has to do with the sensitivity around family.

Ms Notley: Well, I don't want to get into a whole debate about this. I mean, we've had this debate over the last four or five years. I think there's a balancing act. You know, we've had that debate. It's unfortunate because I thought that at a certain point there had been a consensus established that there was some public interest in having minimal amounts of information made available so that people could keep track of these things.

I am concerned that at this point we seem to have fallen backwards into the government not having a regular practice and

now being able to say oh so conveniently, “The independent children’s advocate has his own set of rules,” and of course he’s also not making these things public. It seems like, if anything, we’ve gone backwards. There was a time when the ministry had practically developed a practice of advising in terms of very general circumstances, and that appears to have faded.

Mr. Hancock: I’m happy to review that process again, but I would not agree that we’ve stepped back. In fact, I think we’ve gone forward. Creating the role of the Child and Youth Advocate as an officer of the Legislature, which you and others as well have advocated very strongly for in the past, was I think a very major step forward. Having somebody who is independent of government, who can make some judgment calls with respect to what’s appropriate to be put out publicly is, I think, a very good step forward. But I’m happy to review the policy in that area and have a look to see what we should be making public and how you make it public. It’s sensitive, obviously, you know, but we don’t have anything to hide in this area. I mean, I think it’s important that there is appropriate public scrutiny of processes and what’s happening and the understanding of it, and I’m pleased that my colleague has very clearly done that in the instance that he’s had.

The Chair: All right. Thank you, Minister.

We’ll have Dr. Brown, followed by Mr. Wilson. Dr. Brown, you’re going back and forth?

Dr. Brown: Yes, please.

The Chair: We’ve had no exceptions. Whenever you’re ready.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I’ve got a couple of questions, Mr. Minister, about the employment and training programs. I just did a little bit of research online here this afternoon, and our workforce in Alberta is approximately 2.2 million people. With roughly a 4 and a half per cent unemployment rate that means there are roughly a hundred thousand people out there that are unemployed.

Recently in the news we’ve had a lot of coverage about the temporary foreign worker program. That is, of course, a federal program, and it’s administered by the federal government, but we do have some input into those labour market opinions and so on. I guess the question I’d start off with is: how is your ministry working to displace the need for those temporary foreign workers, which are going into largely unskilled areas? If we’ve got a hundred thousand people out there, it would seem logical that some of those people could fit into the 25,500 temporary foreign workers that came into Alberta last year and have those jobs taken by Albertans rather than having them send the vast majority of their paycheques offshore, where it’s not going to be circulating, generating taxes and jobs here in Alberta.

Mr. Hancock: The temporary foreign worker program and the provincial nominee program from a provincial perspective actually moved over to Enterprise and Advanced Education after the election. It was in this portfolio prior to that. We have the settlement services side. But I can say that the focus from an Alberta perspective has tended to be more on skilled workers even in that area although there certainly have been temporary foreign workers in the broad categories, no question about it. We’ve tried to work with the federal government on moving temporary foreign workers into a provincial nominee program on a skills basis. Alberta does need more workers. But you’re right in terms of the piece that we need to actually focus on, making sure that underemployed Albertans who want to work have access to those

jobs and that there’s not a default to the temporary foreign worker because it’s easier to do.

Dr. Brown: Yeah. I understand, and I didn’t mean to get into the merits of the temporary foreign worker program. I think that certainly there’s a need in certain of the skilled areas for those workers. I guess my question was more directed to: how can we get some of those folks that you referred to, who have been less successful, things like the underrepresented groups that you mentioned, the aboriginals, the people with perhaps some measure of disability into the workforce? It would seem that they would be a perfect fit to get into those largely unskilled jobs, things like domestic help, things like, you know, working in our health care system in a cleaning field or perhaps in the food services and hospitality industry and so on.

5:55

Mr. Hancock: I’m not sure it’s as simple as that, to be frank. I think if you take a look at an aboriginal population, you want to have them aspirational. You want to take a look at talents and ability and see how you can help people achieve their best fit. I don’t think it’s fair to say that any of those categories of people should be delegated to the service industry or to that end of the spectrum or that everybody starts at the entry-level jobs, if you will, on that side. We certainly want to work to help people find what their skills are and to help them develop those skills and take jobs that will fit those skills. That’s a much more comprehensive approach. I understand what you’re basically saying, that there are jobs available and we’re bringing people in to do those jobs and we have people here who don’t have jobs, but there’s not always just a direct match.

Dr. Brown: So are you saying that your program amendment going forward would be more directed towards those that are more skilled, then, and less towards integrating that part of the workforce into the labour market per se?

Mr. Hancock: I think that I would say that rather than having a program and trying to fit people into the program, what we’re really focusing our whole effort on is understanding the individuals and how we can best assist the individual to move to the place that will work for them. Some of them need life skills stuff so that they can actually operate in a workforce, but some of them need to find what it is that they might be good at. We have the partnerships with, for example, the pipefitters and the Trade Winds program. If you can find a good match, then you can help people get skills in the area.

To assume that the first order of business is to get them a job in the cleaning industry or the fast food industry or the service industry wouldn’t necessarily be the objective. The objective is to identify the skill sets that an individual has the capacity to do and help them to find the best possible opportunity to do that.

Dr. Brown: I know there have been some successful partnerships with some of the not-for-profit sectors down in Calgary where they put folks into warehouses, for example, and teach them how to operate a forklift or a front-end loader or something like that. I think there have been some notable successes there that have been sponsored by your department. I wondered if you have any other opportunities to work with the not-for-profit sector, you know, to integrate and give some of those job skills to those folks that may need a hand up into the workforce.

Mr. Hancock: Well, absolutely, and it’s not just the not-for-profit sector. I mean, Frank talked earlier about employers who

recognize the value of bringing people into their businesses. An employer that I worked with in Edmonton here, who runs an auto dealership, recognized that there were some jobs in their organization that were quite suitable for persons with certain disabilities who could do repetitive tasks well and could actually do them better than many of the other employees that he might have, and he was prepared to hire people to do that. He happened to have a child of his own who had some disabilities, so he perhaps had a better understanding of that.

What we need to do is to work with employers to find the right way. Yes, there are jobs that people can do in the service industry, and that's a good fit for some people, but I guess my point is that that's not the end of it. We have to recruit employers who are prepared to understand that persons with disabilities or other people can be good employees and that they have some role to play in bringing them in and accommodating them in the workplace in appropriate ways and then taking advantage of that opportunity to have a very strong, stable workforce. That's across the spectrum, not just in one particular area.

Mr. Oberle: On the disability side, you know, I look at my community of High Level, for example. There are 500 temporary foreign workers in the town of High Level, which is about 4,400 people right now. That's quite a population. Working alongside them are a number of people with disabilities, FASD and others, and doing well. We do provide sort of entry level. We contract with schools. We provide, you know, how to write a resumé, basic life skills training, those sorts of things. Their success in the workplace, like anybody's, actually – at some point you get matched with a mentor and somebody that brings you along, at least through your early development.

We provide supports to the employee to put them in that workplace, and we provide supports to the employer as well. I would hate to characterize the objective of getting disabled people employment as putting them in a cleaning job someplace at minimum wage and, there, we're all happy. No. The purpose of that is for them to contribute to the best of their abilities and to live a meaningful, inclusive life. You know, we'll provide whatever supports we need to to make that happen.

Dr. Brown: Thank you.

I'm going to change direction just a little bit here. I would like to ask you a question about the widows' pension budget. As I understand, it's dropped fairly substantially. From somewhere around a million and a half dollars in 2011-12, it's down around \$600,000 now. I wonder if you could explain: why that substantial drop in the widows' pension budget?

Mr. Hancock: Very simply, it's a program that was closed in 2004, and it's timing out. In other words, the people who were on it remain on it until they graduate out at age 65. It was closed in 2004. We're in the last year of the program now by my math. Each year, as people graduate out and nobody else is coming in, the budget goes down.

Dr. Brown: Okay. Thank you.
Those are my questions.

The Chair: Well timed. All right.

Mr. Wilson, followed by Mr. Fraser. You'd like to go back and forth, correct?

Mr. Wilson: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Let's start with the administration for our persons with developmental disabilities. All right? You're ready?

Mr. Oberle: Yes, and sorry for the earlier confusion.

In the PDD program we have six regional CEOs for the six boards, right? We have management teams, approximately 30 people for 1,200 staff out there. We have in our branch nine staff that work on policy and finance, and we have an internal audit strategic policy function of about 15 people. That would be roughly 60 persons that would be pure administrative overhead, and the rest of the people in this department provide front-line services. Not all of them are actually, you know, physically lifting somebody into a bath. We have caseworkers. We have training staff that provide training to those workers.

From a staffing point of view, I'd say that we have a very low overhead. Our high overhead costs come from the infrastructure of this. For every six people supported in a group home, there's a group home with operating costs and maintenance and all of those things. That's where our overhead costs come from.

Mr. Wilson: Okay. Those 1,200 full-time employees: the majority of them are actually front-line workers?

Mr. Oberle: Yeah.

Mr. Wilson: So that's above and beyond your community partners as well?

Mr. Oberle: Those are our staff plus the service providers.

Mr. Wilson: Okay. How many individuals are currently on PDD?

Mr. Oberle: I think 9,830 right at the moment.

Mr. Wilson: Okay. So you're at about a 1 to 10 staff ratio. Is that a goal, or is that pretty standard?

Mr. Oberle: I don't know that it's a particular goal, but it's something like that, 1,200 workers for 10,000. Yeah, 1 to 10, 1 to 9 perhaps.

Mr. Wilson: What is the amount of the budget that goes into PDD that is allocated to those 1,200 staff plus your 60 administrators above them?

6:05

Ms Doyle: Thank you for the question. In PDD there are roughly 1,200 staff in terms of our direct operations, which is where we're operating group homes and Michener Centre. The total number of staff who are in those various places is close to about 900, so that's direct delivery for the individuals in direct operations. The vast majority of our services to the 9,700 are carried out through our contracts with 190 community agencies. That workforce in the community agencies is about 12,000 people.

Mr. Wilson: Gotcha. Okay. That's helpful. Thank you.

I want to jump into different line items here right from the budget, please, line items 10.3 and 13.2. I'm asking this in relation to some of the cuts that were made in the Justice budget, specifically the safe communities innovation fund. I'm wondering if increases in these line items will be allocated to fill the funding gap that previously came from the Ministry of Justice to offer intervention and support to, perhaps, women fleeing sexual exploitation when that fund was cut.

Mr. Hancock: Line item 10.3, the emergency/transitional support line, is part of our agency wage increase process, so that's the increase that's there.

Line item 13.2, the shelter support, is programming requirement funding. I think that's a 3.1 per cent increase on that. That's agency wage as well.

Mr. Wilson: Okay. Have you been in discussions with the Ministry of Justice at the DM level or others to try and find ways to fill the gaps that have been left by the end of the SCIF funding?

Mr. Hancock: Well, you have to sort of put that into context. The safe communities funding was grant funding.

Mr. Wilson: I fully understand the timing, the three years, all of that. I'm just asking a high-level question. Have there been discussions?

Mr. Hancock: Essentially, what was supposed to happen with those programs was that where they were having an impact, there should be sustainability built in. The answer to your question is that, yes, we are working with Justice and our partners through the results-based budgeting process to look at those things to say: where there is success, we want to build them into our ongoing operations; where they haven't been as successful, we won't.

If I can go one step further just to quickly answer a question you asked me earlier about AISH employment earnings, very quickly, 17 per cent of AISH clients or their cohabiting partner have employment earnings. The number of working clients has not increased as a result of that wage piece, but the average reported earnings last year were just under \$532 per month. This year it's gone up to \$590 per month, about a \$60 dollar increase so far. That's the data we have to date relative to that piece.

Mr. Wilson: Gotcha. Thank you for the follow-up. I do appreciate it.

Can you outline what performance bonuses or at-risk pay is available to senior bureaucrats or middle managers within the ministry?

Mr. Hancock: None.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you. Perfect answer. Exactly what I wanted to hear.

Mr. Chairman, I would at this time like to propose an amendment to the budget, please. I have the requisite number of copies here.

Mr. Wilson to move that the 2013-14 main estimates of the Ministry of Human Services be reduced as follows:

- (a) for the associate minister's office under reference 1.2 at page 126 by \$256,000,
 - (b) for strategic services under reference 1.5 at page 126 by \$1,732,000, and
 - (c) for corporate services under reference 1.6 at page 126 by \$1,164,000
- so that the amount to be voted at page 125 for operational is \$4,236,493,000.

Mr. Hancock: Do you want to put bonuses in?

Mr. Wilson: No. Unfortunately, we're not allowed to actually add money to any of your line items, so we have only one direction to go here.

Quite simply, to sum this up for the committee, all we're looking to do is, I guess, take line items 1.1 and 1.2 and reduce the combination of them to what you spent in your 2011-2012 actual, which essentially is taking the associate minister's office budget down by \$256,000, which I'm sure would eliminate, probably, your well-deserved communications team.

Mr. Oberle: We don't have a communications team.

Mr. Wilson: Oh, you don't have a press secretary?

Mr. Oberle: No. You're talking about the epitome of front-line service in my office.

Mr. Wilson: Then the same thing in line items 1.5, 1.6. I'm sure this will be given thorough consideration in Committee of Supply.

Mr. Hancock: You want to put us back up to what we had? You can't put us back up to what we had.

Mr. Wilson: We're moving down.

The Chair: It can be reduced. It just can't be reduced to zero.

Mr. Wilson: Anyway, we don't need to spend a lot of debating the merits of the amendment.

Mr. Hancock: I'd certainly agree with that, yeah.

Mr. Wilson: We have very little time left, and I do want to on the record thank all of you and your staff for the thorough discussion that we've had today. I think it's been very valuable for everybody here and, I know, for myself personally.

A couple of more questions about PDD, around the performance of the community agency partners that you have. What measures are in place to measure the value that they're bringing? Are there measures in place to ensure that they're meeting expectations?

Mr. Oberle: Well, the contracts that we have with community service providers today are based around activities – we expect so many hours of that and so many minutes of that – and of course it's very easy to measure but with relatively little information about the outcome. So we do surveys. We measure our clients. Brenda Lee alluded earlier to a survey we had done about inclusive measures relative to the community access supports that we're providing, right? We're just now at the stage of measuring outcomes. We need to design contracts to produce outcomes. As I said earlier, there's a little bit of trepidation in the service community and on our part, too. We have some work to do to get there. But measuring hours, while easy to do, is useless. We're confident we can come up with a better system than that.

Mr. Wilson: Great.

A couple of quick questions I'll just read into the record. If you could provide it back in writing afterwards, it would be much appreciated.

How many AISH recipients are living independently, how many are in group homes, how many are in assisted living facilities, and how many are in long-term care? How many administrators do you have for the AISH program currently, and what are you planning to move to with the increase in funding there?

Other than that, I think we're at about 10 seconds left. Again, thank you.

Mr. Hancock: Sorry. I missed that.

Mr. Wilson: That's okay. You can read it back afterwards. It was just with the intent of getting responses back with regard to some stats around AISH.

Mr. Hancock: If you let me know what you'd like to know about AISH, I will certainly see what I can do about getting you some statistics.

In the interests of not debating the amendment you put forward, I'd just note that the actuals for ministry support services in 2011-2012 were \$40,791,000, and the estimate is \$39,016,000, so if you wanted to be totally consistent in your amendment, you'd actually increase us back to the \$40 million that we had.

Mr. Wilson: It's just within those specific line items, though, but I thank you for the quick math.

The Chair: All right. We've got time for about two more, and that will be it for tonight.

Mr. Oberle: We'll just see if my staff answer another one of your concerns.

The Chair: Thanks for putting that on the record, Minister.

We'll go with Mr. Fraser and then Dr. Swann with the time remaining. You want to go back and forth?

Mr. Fraser: Sure.

The Chair: Okay. Very good. Whenever you're ready.

Mr. Fraser: Thanks, Chair. I've had the opportunity, including my colleagues in the Calgary caucus, to meet a number of times with family and community support services, that program, and I note that over the last year, 2012-2013, in the forecast nothing has really changed. In fact, the funding has remained flat for the past three years, and there's much dialogue currently around the budget and some of the challenges and opportunities that we face as a government and a province. We do recognize there are a hundred thousand people migrating to come benefit in Alberta.

I guess the first question is: how is your budget going to address the preventative social needs in the community?

Mr. Hancock: Well, as I mentioned earlier, in terms of the social policy framework piece one of the principles there is the balance between the preventative services piece and dealing with the acute needs. Everything we look at has got to be looked at from that perspective. How are we dealing not just with the issue in the community today, but how do we look at the long term to deal with the issue on a long-term basis?

FCSS has certainly played a significant role, a different role in various communities across the province. I think it's well supported across the province, but as I indicated this morning, it's not immune to the results-based budgeting process. We do need to look at what we're doing and how we're doing it. I certainly have a very strong predilection toward looking at how we do prevention as opposed to putting all of our money into acute care. That's a significant part of how we're doing business, looking at how we get ahead of the game over the longer term. FCSS may well be a part of that, but it'll have to stand up to the scrutiny of the results-based budgeting process.

6:15

We have held it constant for three or four years. That has created pressures, certainly, particularly as some communities have moved ahead to advance their programs in the areas that they think are important, and they certainly want us to get back to the 80/20 split that it was built on.

We've also made it very clear that we have challenges with the budget. That's not just this year. It's particularly aspirational this year. It's a tough budget for us. There's no question about that. There's no question that we are going to have to be successful in a number of the things that we're doing in order to meet the targets and deal with some of the issues, and we have some risk factors

that come at us if the economy doesn't perform the way we anticipate it performing.

The long and short of it is that we don't have extra resources in certain areas where it might be nice to have those extra resources or it could make a difference. FCSS is one of those. There are other programs that I could point to, you know, that have been doing good things, but we had to prioritize.

Mr. Fraser: I can appreciate that, Minister. I think it's important again to note your ministry's commitment to making sure that there are no sacred cows and to find the efficiencies and challenge people. I certainly do recognize that.

In your ministry you work with municipalities, Métis settlements, and First Nations groups. How are you assessing the outcomes of the programs, certainly FCSS and the programs and services that they deliver? Are you comparing that to some of the best practices in other jurisdictions in terms of finding those efficiencies? Certainly, when we think about First Nations and some of the Métis settlements, is there anything in collaboration with the federal government in terms of how we can meet their needs, you know, through perhaps dovetailing funding and those sorts of things?

Mr. Hancock: Well, one of the things we are working with on the FCSS side is the FCSS outcome measures initiative, where we are working with them to determine how we can look at what they're doing to determine what the outcomes should be and what the measures of success should be. That's an area of work that I want to spend a little bit of time on because it's extremely important.

Outcome measurement and success measurement have not been done well on the social service side of the spectrum. You know, we have often used numbers like "A dollar spent today will save \$7 down the road," but there's not always good data to back that up. We have done some good work through the homeless initiative to actually sort of measure some of those pieces and to bring that in. We are doing some work in that area to make sure that we have the right outcome measures and we can apply them. I just wanted to mention that.

The outcome measures initiative that we're working on with FCSS, directly to the point, specifically with Métis settlements, for example, is one of the ways that we're doing that. The on-reserve side, particularly, is a difficult one, but certainly with municipalities and the urban aboriginal population that would fit into what we're talking about.

Mr. Fraser: Okay. I'm not sure if heard you mention any collaboration with the federal government in terms of how we fund these programs. I guess from a front-line perspective it may not be applicable, particularly with some of our First Nations people off-reserve. Has there been any collaboration there in terms of how to maybe meet some of the funding challenges? They're kind of, I guess, a very transient community, you know, between provinces. I don't know if that's even been addressed as well.

Mr. Hancock: That's a difficult area. Certainly, on the child intervention side we do have work, and we're trying to build capacity. That's a way in for us because that is within our jurisdiction. With respect to community programs and that sort of thing, that falls squarely within the First Nations' area of jurisdiction, and they wouldn't necessarily be all that interested in us engaging in that area of jurisdiction. We certainly are doing a lot of work with First Nations and aboriginal communities: the work I mentioned before with the Tamarack Institute and the community conversations we're having, understanding the capacities of communities and how we bring those communities

into the social policy framework discussion and what that means for what we can do together.

Our objective is to make sure that all Albertans, whether they're First Nation or not, have the opportunity to build the capacities that they need to achieve success. We're conscious of the jurisdictional issues, but we don't want the jurisdiction to get in the way of success.

Mr. Fraser: Just a quick question. I might have mentioned it before. Particularly with persons with disabilities, I know that in my community – and we all recognize that people with disabilities in some of our institutions aren't just older people. They're some of our younger people. In terms of this budget and ongoing is there some conversation, you know, along with other community groups on how we can provide more activities outside of the institutions, i.e. swimming and some of the activities that can complete their quality of life? Are there any initiatives around that?

Mr. Oberle: Yeah. Absolutely. For example, we didn't entirely cut the community access supports budget. We recognize that those kinds of activities have an impact on quality of life. There are a number of programs and service providers out there that work in that area. Absolutely.

Mr. Fraser: Okay. Thank you.
That's all, Chair.

The Chair: All right. That's it? Okay. That worked out really well. Then the last nine minutes are yours, Dr. Swann. Back and forth?

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Chairman?

The Chair: I'm sorry?

Mr. Oberle: If I could have a very brief moment to read something into the record.

The Chair: Yep.

Mr. Oberle: I just want to draw the attention of the committee to two documents. One is called Michener Centre Transition Planning Framework and Work Plan. We've had a number of questions about the Michener Centre. This is online on our departmental website.

The other one is about assessment. It's called PDD My Life: Personal Outcomes Index. This is how we do outcomes assessment with PDD. This is also available online, but we have copies here if you want to pick it up. It's just a one-pager with a reference of how to get additional information.

Thank you.

The Chair: All right. Very good.
Dr. Swann, go ahead.

Dr. Swann: Thanks. Just a few wrap-up comments. Very helpful discussions today and a stronger sense on my part that you have at least a process-based direction. The resources, obviously, are a big issue that I think the government in general has to look at if we're serious about making real inroads into some of these most disadvantaged populations.

To focus back on employee satisfaction and the staff survey, that leaves a lot to be desired, I wonder what level of professional development is being envisioned and what kind of investment is being made in professional development, how you recognize excellence in the program areas. If outcomes are really what

you're focused on, what is the planning for best practices workshops, and how are we going to get to some of those outcomes?

Mr. Hancock: I'll ask Steve MacDonald to respond.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Minister. Yeah, the investment in staff is a high priority in the ministry, and I share your . . .

Dr. Swann: What kind of investment?

Mr. MacDonald: In terms of development alone, for example, we've created an employee engagement pool of money, \$2 million, and that allows each area to develop the appropriate response based on the needs in terms of competencies development and culture changes and leadership. That's one source of funds.

In addition, there's ongoing training offered to staff in their specific areas of expertise such as on the child welfare side or the PDD side. That's continuing, too.

The government as a whole has an initiative called reaching our full potential. It's sort of a recalibration of how we invest in staff and encourage the sort of public service we want, focusing on issues like bullying, on leadership development. Across the whole ministry that's my commitment and the minister's commitment, that we can't get the work done without investing in staff. And that's in the budget.

Dr. Swann: The best practices workshops: how is that connecting to the outcomes-based service focus?

Mr. MacDonald: Just like the ministers have talked about, we need to work with our providers about being clear on what those outcomes are and how we measure them and the changes in behaviour and attitude. Our staff need that same sort of training, so we are doing that development with our staff.

Best practices. We look around the world, to be very candid with you, and bring in experts to talk about leadership style not just within the Ministry of Human Services but across government. Corporate human resources: there's lots of work done on that. The corporate survey results are a matrix that all deputy ministers are held accountable for. We're a large part of the government, so we sway the averages in many ways. There's a great interest. What we do in Human Services affects what happens in all of government, so we do a lot of benchmarking and calibration to see where the best practices are and then push those within the ministry.

6:25

Dr. Swann: So you're going to be holding yourselves accountable to the outcomes-based measures as well?

Mr. MacDonald: Absolutely.

Mr. Hancock: Absolutely.

There are two pieces that I'd like to add to that. One is that sharing success stories is an important part of that within the ministry. It's important for morale, but it's also important for learning. The second piece is that we're very conscious of the fact that managing to outcomes and managing to staff having the ability to use their discretion, their experience, their expertise at the front end is a much more difficult management model than managing to program delivery based on rules. We're asking more of our mid-management and our front-end management as well, so we have to be conscious of making sure that they have the skills necessary to carry that off.

Mr. Oberle: And if I could draw your attention – I mentioned it early. We have a forum on complex needs in February that brings staff and other service providers together. That's about best practices around employment.

We are also sponsoring seminars on FASD. One is around legal issues where we have consensus building, a kind of unique idea where we have a legal panel that gets presentations on legal issues around FASD prevention and treatment and has to develop by the end of the conference a consensus legal document on ways to go forward.

We also have an international best practices conference. It brings providers from around the world. We also sponsor a learning series in the fall that we webcast out. We actually webcast out to British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and the Territories, and we provide the cost for that as well.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much.

Just a random question: MLA salaries are indexed. When are we going to see AISH benefits indexed?

Mr. Hancock: Well, they're indexed, except that we don't utilize the index ever.

We have the opposite problem in AISH in that we haven't indexed. We have the same result for both, however, and that is the static . . .

Dr. Swann: We have received increases in the past.

Mr. Hancock: I don't think we've ever used the index. Maybe we used it once.

Dr. Swann: Yes. Since I've been elected we have.

Mr. Hancock: In any event, your point is not so much what's happening with MLAs. It's: when are we going to index AISH?

Dr. Swann: Which is the most vulnerable population.

Mr. Hancock: Yeah. The key is that we've moved that population to a much better base level now. I absolutely agree with the

context that in each case we should be looking at indexing. It's a resource issue, and we have some other issues that we need to deal with as well. We've moved that particular income support level up. We haven't done that with other income support levels. You know, it's a question of when we can put it into the priorities. It is one of the things we need to look at. I think it was raised earlier that it doesn't make a lot of sense to leave it static for a long period of time and then have to do another major bump. That's on our radar. I can't tell you when it'll happen. I can tell you that it's one of the things that's in the package of things that I'd really love to do if I had the resources to do them.

Dr. Swann: Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: All right. Well, that takes us down to about the last two minutes. I'd like to thank everybody. Thank you, ministers Hancock and Oberle and all of your staff. It's been great spending the last six hours together.

Mr. Hancock: Might I ask, Mr. Chair, if I could take one more minute to add a thank you to the staff, not just the people who are here but through them to the 7,600 people who work in various areas to help vulnerable Albertans. We don't often enough tell the story about what a good job they're doing. You know, mistakes are made, absolutely. Errors are made, absolutely, but we have some really dedicated people helping Albertans. I want to end this by putting that on the record and saying thank you.

The Chair: All right. I think we would all agree.

All right. That's all the time allocated for this business. We're concluded.

I would like to remind the committee members that we're scheduled to meet on April 16 to consider the estimates for the Ministry of Health.

Thanks again. We're adjourned.

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

