



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Second Session

Standing Committee
on
Families and Communities

Ministry of Status of Women
Consideration of Main Estimates

Tuesday, May 10, 2016
3:30 p.m.

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Second Session**

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Participants

Ministry of Status of Women

Hon. Stephanie V. McLean, Minister

Kimberly Armstrong, Deputy Minister

Lisa Tchir, Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Gender Policy, Strategy and Innovation

3:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 10, 2016

[Ms Goehring in the chair]

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

The Chair: Welcome. I'd like to call the meeting to order and welcome everyone today. The committee has under consideration the estimates of the Ministry of Status of Women for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017.

I'd ask that we go around the table and have all MLAs introduce themselves for the record, and, Minister, when we get to you, please introduce the staff that are joining you at the table. I'm Nicole Goehring, MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs and chair of this committee, and we'll continue starting to my right with the deputy chair.

Mr. Cyr: Hello. My name is Scott Cyr. I'm the MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. I am a substitute for Deputy Chair Mark Smith, MLA for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Orr: Ron Orr, MLA, Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mrs. Pitt: Angela Pitt, MLA, Airdrie.

Ms Jansen: Sandra Jansen, Calgary-North West, and my researcher, Thomas Ockley, from PC caucus.

Ms McLean: Stephanie McLean, MLA for Calgary-Varsity and Minister for Status of Women. At the table I have with me my deputy minister, Kim Armstrong, to my right; my acting assistant deputy minister of gender policy, strategy, and innovation, Lisa Tchir, to her right; and Senior Financial Officer Kevin Peterson to my left.

Mr. Dach: Lorne Dach, Edmonton-McClung, substituting for MLA McPherson.

Ms Drever: Deborah Drever, MLA for Calgary-Bow.

Ms Luff: Robyn Luff, MLA, Calgary-East.

Mr. Westhead: Cameron Westhead, MLA for Banff-Cochrane.

Ms McKittrick: Annie McKittrick, MLA for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Hinkley: Bruce Hinkley, MLA, Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Horne: Trevor Horne, MLA, Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Mr. Shepherd: David Shepherd, MLA, Edmonton-Centre.

The Chair: Thank you.

Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard*, and we'd ask that BlackBerrys, iPhones, et cetera, be turned off or set to silent or vibrate and not placed on the tables as they interfere with the audiofeed.

Hon. members, the standing orders set out the process for consideration of the main estimates. Before we proceed with consideration of the main estimates for the Ministry of Status of Women, I would like to review briefly the standing orders governing the speaking rotation. As provided for in Standing Order 59.01(6), the rotation is as follows. The minister or the member of Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf may make opening comments not to exceed 10 minutes. For the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes the

members of the third party, if any, and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes the members of any other party represented in the Assembly or any independent members and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes private members of the government caucus and the minister may speak. For the time remaining, we will follow the same rotation just outlined to the extent possible; however, the speaking times are reduced to five minutes as set out in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c).

Members may speak more than once; however, speaking times for the first rotation are limited to 10 minutes at any one time. A minister and a member may combine their time for a total of 20 minutes. For the final rotation, with speaking times of five minutes, once again a minister and a member may combine their speaking time for a maximum total of 10 minutes. Discussion should flow through the chair at all times regardless of whether or not speaking time is combined. Members are asked to advise the chair at the beginning of their speech if they wish to combine their time with the minister's time.

If members have any questions regarding the speaking times or the rotation, please feel free to send a note or speak directly with either the chair or committee clerk about this process.

Three hours have been scheduled to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Status of Women. With the concurrence of the committee I will call a five-minute break near the midpoint of the meeting; however, the three-hour clock will continue to run. Does anyone oppose having the break? As no one is opposed, we will have the break at the midway point.

Committee members, ministers, and other members who are not committee members may participate; however, only a committee member or an official substitute for a committee member may introduce an amendment during a committee's review of the estimates.

Ministry officials may be present, and at the direction of the minister officials from the ministry may address the committee. Ministry staff seated in the gallery, if called upon, have access to a microphone in the gallery area. Members' staff may be present and, space permitting, may sit at the table or behind their members along the committee room wall. Members have priority for seating at the table at all times.

If debate is exhausted prior to three hours, the ministry's estimates are deemed to have been considered for the time allotted in the schedule, and we will adjourn. Otherwise, we will adjourn this evening at 6:30.

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

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

Again I will remind all meeting participants to address their questions and responses through the chair and not directly to each other.

The vote on the estimates is deferred until consideration of all ministry estimates has concluded and will occur in Committee of Supply on May 17, 2016.

If there are amendments, an amendment to the estimates cannot seek to increase the amount of the estimates being considered, change the destination of a grant, or change the destination or purpose of a subsidy. An amendment may be proposed to reduce an estimate, but the amendment cannot propose to reduce the estimate by its full amount. The vote on amendments is deferred until Committee of Supply convenes on May 17, 2016. Amendments must be in writing and approved by Parliamentary Counsel prior to the meeting at which they are being moved. Twenty copies of amendments must be provided at the meeting for committee members and staff, with the original to the committee clerk.

I will now invite the Minister of Status of Women to begin with her opening remarks. You have 10 minutes.

Ms McLean: Thank you for this time. Before we begin discussion of this year's detailed estimates, I would like to take a few moments to address the ongoing situation in Fort McMurray. Our fire crews have worked hard to protect critical infrastructure, downtown Fort McMurray, and as much of the residential neighbourhood as possible. Government has dedicated every necessary resource to this effort, and I want to thank our firefighters and other first responders for their outstanding work battling this fire and keeping people safe. The outpouring of support from Albertans and Canadians has been tremendous. I want the people affected by this disaster to know that Albertans and Canadians stand with them. We are doing everything we can to keep Albertans safe and to support them as they rebuild their lives in the days and months ahead.

This holds true for the work of my ministry, Status of Women. This afternoon we are discussing Budget 2016, the Alberta jobs plan. I'm glad to have the opportunity to present Status of Women estimates for the 2016-17 fiscal year.

With me are some of my staff to help me provide specific information in answer to your questions. Again, seated beside me is my deputy minister, Kim Armstrong; my acting assistant deputy minister of gender policy, strategy, and innovation, Lisa Tchir; and Senior Financial Officer Kevin Peterson. Behind me are members of the department's executive team. We have Maryna Korchagina, the executive director of gender equality and advancement; Ed Dvornikov, director of corporate services; and Olga Michailides, communications director.

Status of Women exists to lead Alberta to greater gender equality. We work behind the scenes supporting government to develop mindful policies and programs. At its core this ministry's role is to see gender in our government's work by asking how policies, programs, and legislation can include the diverse voices of Alberta's women.

For some Albertans it was perplexing to have a ministry focused on gender equality, feeling that we have already achieved it. After all, women are represented in politics, business, academics, arts, and science. Many other Albertans realize that while we have made progress towards equality, there is still much more to do. There are factors still very much at work that keep hard-working women from reaching their goals. Premier Notley saw the need, and now Alberta has the country's only provincial or territorial ministry dedicated to gender equality. This ministry is an apt example of what we can create when more women are at the decision-making table.

Since Budget 2015 the ministry has clarified its mandate, which is to increase women's economic security; address the wage gap in Alberta; help secure good training, jobs, and steady income for women and their families; support women to achieve positions of leadership and increase their democratic participation; and to eliminate the violence that many Alberta women and girls in all walks of life now experience in their homes and places of work. We have heard directly from women across the province: we have more to do to achieve gender equality. There is no time for it that is perfect. There is only now.

I assure you that we are deeply aware of how this global collapse in the oil price has led to deep challenges in Alberta. With that, we appreciate Budget 2016, the Alberta jobs plan, as a way to move our province forward by supporting families and communities, diversifying our energy industry and markets, and supporting Alberta business. I am pleased to explain Status of Women's role in supporting Alberta's economic growth.

The place to start is with fiscal prudence. Our portion of the government's budget is smaller than many of the programs offered

by larger ministries. Proposals for the ministry's structure were always clear on one front: we would use only the resources we need and be smart about how we use those funds. Compared to Budget 2015, this year's budget is a true reflection of our ministry's work. Salaries for the staff who were seconded to the ministry last year to support its development and launch were reflected at that time in other ministries' budgets from 2015. That has now ended, and all staff are located within the Status of Women ministry.

3:40

Our ministry is focused on building strong relationships with government and among stakeholders, and it is the right size for us to be influential in our work. By having a dedicated ministry, we are accountable to Albertans and responsible for doing the same work all ministries do like producing annual reports and business plans. We will also be working with government to collect data on the ways our policies affect women, data that is important and at this time unfortunately lacking. We need data to support evidence-based decision-making. Having quality data that clarifies outcomes for women helps us create good policies that truly advance women's equality.

Equality is at the heart of this ministry's work, and it begins with gender analysis. We are dedicated to offering gender-based analysis, referred to as GBA plus training, to government staff. GBA plus is an internationally used analytical tool. It's designed to help staff consider how identity factors like gender, economic status, culture, education, geography, and many other aspects intersect to create disparate experiences for people.

Considering how people are differently affected helps us target our efforts to truly improve the lives of women and spend our money wisely to create effective policies with impact. Status of Women is strongly connected to the Alberta jobs plan pillar of supporting families and communities. Working to end violence against women and girls will help save families from generations of trauma. We cannot ignore the problem.

Alberta continues to have among the highest rates of intimate partner and sexual violence in all of Canada. By far the majority of survivors are women. They continue to face harassment, abuse, blame, and disbelief, and the consequences are devastating. A high number of indigenous women and girls have either been murdered or are missing from our province. In 2015 nearly a dozen women in Edmonton alone were murdered by current or former intimate partners. This is unacceptable. Acting now helps us to save generations of women and girls, and we have a moral imperative to ensure women and girls feel safe wherever they are. I am proud Status of Women is collating Alberta's first sexual violence prevention plan with Human Services. We are also present on crossgovernment committees that support this effort.

Another key focus in our ministry is improving women's economic security. We want more Alberta women to have good wages from jobs. In Alberta more than 60 per cent of minimum wage earners are women. That's why we took action early by introducing a phased and responsible increase to the minimum wage. This is real progress in closing the gendered wage gap.

The Alberta jobs plan will also diversify our energy industry and markets. For us this is about increasing opportunities for women to participate fully in the typically higher paying careers in the STEM sector: science, technology, engineering, and math. Canadian women are currently underrepresented in these careers. Less than 40 per cent of female university graduates younger than 34 years graduated with a STEM degree in 2011. Few women are engineering or math graduates. By comparison men with STEM degrees in the same age group tended to enter engineering careers with higher wages and lower unemployment. Not every woman

wants to be an engineer, but if there are reasons why qualified female applicants are not in this field, we need to explore those reasons and uncover why male-dominated careers tend to be the ones with higher wages.

Women in Alberta are strong and talented and make incredible contributions to our province. And for those that are entrepreneurial, I want to say that we are here to support you to start a business and create other good jobs. That's why in the Alberta jobs plan budget we've lowered the small-business tax and dedicated resources to helping entrepreneurs set up and grow their businesses.

Alberta is by many accounts a success story for women entrepreneurs. With more than 10 per cent of Canada's women entrepreneurs Alberta has more than any other province or territory. We have the most women entrepreneurs with businesses older than two and a half years and the second-highest rate of women entrepreneurs of newer businesses. It is an established market. Yet women entrepreneurs remain an underutilized resource for job creation and economic growth in the province. They tend to operate smaller enterprises in service-oriented industrial sectors rather than in high-growth areas like science, technology, engineering, and math, the STEM sector.

Female entrepreneurs are adopting technology to improve their business and are engaged in innovation, whether they're working in the service industry, in STEM, or in any other sector. When we help women entrepreneurs access the tools and resources they need, they will create good jobs and contribute to a sustainable, diversified economy in Alberta. National studies have shown that increasing the revenue of women-owned businesses by 20 per cent will lead to a \$2 billion annual increase to the national economy.

Women entrepreneurs, like all entrepreneurs, need mentors, networks, and funding, the same tools that are more easily accessible to male business owners. As a government and as people who are committed to gender equality, we need to understand the context for women and do our best to support them. We need women entrepreneurs for a healthy economy, and we need them as leaders in our province.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

For the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the minister may speak. Would you like the timer set for 20-minute intervals so that you're aware of time, or would you prefer to let the full hour flow without interruptions?

Mrs. Pitt: Full hour is fine.

The Chair: Full hour. Okay. Thank you.

Are you wanting to share your time with the minister?

Mrs. Pitt: Yeah. We'll go back and forth.

The Chair: Thank you. Go ahead.

Mrs. Pitt: Wonderful. Well, first of all, I would also like to acknowledge the tens of thousands of people displaced from the Fort McMurray area and the front-line workers, emergency workers that are currently trying to keep the fire under control or at least away from the city. Our prayers are certainly with them at this time.

Minister, congratulations on your new role, I guess, your first estimates as Minister of Status of Women, and also congratulations on being a new mother, here officially on the record from me to you.

Ms McLean: Thank you.

Mrs. Pitt: I'm just going to dive right in and see what happens here. On page 125 of your business plan you mention that the rates of intimate partner violence against women and girls is the highest in Canada. I couldn't agree more with you, and it's absolutely unacceptable. Can you provide us with figures?

Ms McLean: Yes. Thank you for the question. Alberta has Canada's third-highest rate of police-reported intimate-partner violence and the second-highest rate of self-reported spousal violence. More than 10,000 instances of spousal violence were reported to police. That stat is from 2013. Eighty per cent of those reporting were women. We also know that more than 83,000 women and girls older than 15 reported sexual assaults in 2014 in Alberta.

Mrs. Pitt: Sorry. I missed the first part. Where is that from?

Ms McLean: The first that I gave you is from Stats Canada. Actually, the name of the report that the portion was pulled from is Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile, 2013.

Mrs. Pitt: Wonderful. Thank you.

On the same page you state: "reducing the gender gap in Alberta to ensure that women in Alberta make the same wage as men for the same or substantially similar work." Can you tell me which areas of the economy you're going to be focusing on?

Ms McLean: It's been fairly well described by the minister of economic development that we're focusing a number of our efforts and resources in the budget on growing the innovation and tech sectors. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, the STEM sector, which includes technology and engineering-type fields, is certainly an area that we're focused on overall. This does affect women. I can certainly say that my entire caucus agrees that part of the way to address the wage gap is to focus on diversifying the economy.

3:50

In a traditional energy- or resource-based economy women tend to have jobs that make less money than their male counterparts. So by diversifying the economy to include innovation and more sort of science-streamed fields, we'll be able to diversify the economy overall, and by encouraging women to participate in that, we should ensure that women have higher paying jobs.

Mrs. Pitt: Do you have any more specifics on actually reducing the gender gap?

Ms McLean: We're working on multiple fronts here. Now, when it comes to addressing poverty initiatives, including the wage gap, which is certainly part of that, we need to consider that 62 per cent of the minimum wage earners in Alberta are women. This means that women have lower paying jobs and also signals that women's work is not compensated in the same way that traditionally male-dominated fields are. Of the minimum wage earners 67 per cent are 20 years of age or older, and this includes approximately 4,200 single parents, of which 2,400 are female and 1,800 are male.

As you know, Status of Women is deeply rooted in the community, and women's organizations have been calling on our government to address the wage gap. One of the ways that this can be done and that community organizations have suggested it ought to be done is in part by addressing minimum wage.

Another part of this that can assist women with attaining better workforce participation is by addressing the need for child care. The need for child care has been identified as one of the largest barriers to women gaining employment and full-time work. So I'm glad to say that our ministry is working closely with Human Services to

move the issue of child care forward. We're looking at a variety of ways to reduce the cost of child care as our finances permit.

Women, as we know, carry a disproportionate amount of unpaid work, including child care and care for elderly or sick family members, and on average every week Alberta women work 35 extra hours. So as you can imagine, it's quite difficult to hold a full-time job working 40 hours a week in addition to your 35 extra hours of unpaid work at home. Addressing some of those other conditions that can be barriers to women's participation in the workforce will certainly encourage more women to be able to have good-paying jobs.

Mrs. Pitt: It's actually an interesting area that you touched on. Probably the majority of people caring for aging parents are likely women, but men as well. It's just interesting that you touched on sort of that unpaid caregiver work in the end. Sorry; I had to point that out. I thought it was interesting because I do think that's an issue.

Okay. Moving on, on that same page you state that "the situation is more extreme for Indigenous women." We recognize that this is absolutely an area we must address as government, but can the minister explain exactly where you've identified the worst outcomes for indigenous women?

Ms McLean: Sorry; you said the worst outcomes?

Mrs. Pitt: Yeah. Just reading from the page, "The situation is more extreme for Indigenous women." Why is that? What have you identified there?

Ms McLean: When we held our initial consultations with the community, we heard a number of things from the indigenous community. Living on-reserve meant that a lot of indigenous women are living sort of more of a rural lifestyle, so there are a number of additional barriers that they face as opposed to urban residents. This includes more difficulty accessing online services, which certainly is a tool that provides information to women about services that are available.

We've also heard that violence against indigenous women and girls is an extreme barrier to the success of indigenous women in particular. We know that incidents of assault against indigenous women are much higher, with assault occurring three times more frequently with respect to indigenous women than nonindigenous women. We have been working on this file with the indigenous women's sector that exists within the Indigenous Relations ministry as it's important that any issue concerning indigenous peoples comes from a community perspective.

Mrs. Pitt: How will you address the situation of representation on boards for indigenous women?

Ms McLean: Sorry. Representation of?

Mrs. Pitt: Representation on boards and commissions for indigenous women.

Ms McLean: As you know, our government has committed to doing an overall review of agencies, boards, and commissions. We're working together with Indigenous Relations to ensure that there are additional opportunities for women on those agencies, boards, and commissions. Part of this is a crossministry strategy to be aware of the matrix profiles that are being developed to ensure that they're something that is appealing to women and that there are avenues that are clearly laid out for women to participate on those boards and commissions. The Minister of Indigenous Relations is

working on this file as well, I understand, to ensure that indigenous communities are aware of opportunities. Simply not even being aware of the opportunities has been a barrier to full participation from certain communities.

Mrs. Pitt: Sort of along the same line as "develop and implement a self-serve registry for women who are ready, willing and able to serve on . . . agencies, boards, and commissions," how does that work? Is there sort of one stream for men and one stream for women?

Ms McLean: No, it's not a matter of different streams. It's a matter of profiling the opportunities in ways that are targeted towards groups of women so that women are aware of the opportunities, so essentially a proliferation of advertising of the opportunities and ensuring that women know that they're desirable candidates for these positions.

Mrs. Pitt: So there's still a likely chance that 75 per cent will be held by men or vice versa?

Ms McLean: There is an effort across government, particularly driven by Status of Women, that all of the candidates that come across the cabinet table are considered with respect to a GBA plus lens, so that includes their gender, their sexual orientation, economic factors, and ethnicity amongst other factors. It's a consideration of those factors and ensuring that we have diversity and representation on those boards. Certainly, when applications come to the cabinet table for final consideration, that is a lens that we provide as there is certainly more than an appetite but also an effort across government ministries to ensure that there is diversity on those boards, which includes a higher percentage of women. If you've been following the board appointments to date that have been released, there has been a significant increase in women on those boards from prior history.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. All right. Let's just jump over to the budget. Your budget has had an increase from \$1.4 million to over \$7.5 million. How many new positions does this represent?

4:00

Ms McLean: I would say that it's a sort of increase. If you consider the value of positions that existed previously, it was functioning, really, at largely higher than the \$1.4 million. It was actually costing a little bit more, I think, even than the \$1.4 million that it was previously, but that's just because other ministries were carrying the weight of that budget. We're now operating with 34 FTEs. We were previously at 23 FTEs, but the level of position has changed with respect to some of those FTEs. We have more people at a different sort of classification level than we did previously, in the initial set-up.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Line 1.1, the minister's office: what's the increase for?

Ms McLean: The increase of \$0.1 million was to establish a full-time position for the minister's office for the entire duration of the fiscal year, as compared to the position which was previously shown as funded for only seven months during the initial set-up of the ministry in '15-16. There was an increase of \$0.2 million to establish three full-time positions within the deputy minister's office as well for the entire duration of the fiscal year, as compared to two positions which were included for only, again, a nine-month period in the '15-16 fiscal year during the initial set-up of the ministry. Largely the differences in the numbers that you're seeing

in those line items are as a result of the prior numbers only reflecting a portion of the year as opposed to a full year.

Mrs. Pitt: You answered my next question.

Line 1.3, communications, is a new line, with \$694,000 in the budget. How many positions is this?

Ms McLean: This is to establish the communications program with three full-time positions. It also includes a supplies and services budget provided to counsel, advice and services for all programs in the ministry as well as supporting public awareness and education for gender equality issues and initiatives.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. I understand the nature of this ministry relies heavily, very much on communications. This is a fairly large communications budget relative to the rest of the ministry since it's over 50 per cent of the size of the communications budget for Education.

Ms McLean: Sorry. What was your question?

Mrs. Pitt: Why is it 50 per cent relative to Education?

Ms McLean: I can't speak to Education. I'm not the minister for that, as you know, but I can speak to why 9 per cent of our budget goes to communications. First of all, as with other positions the director of communications, who has been with Status of Women since August, was funded by another department until April. As mentioned, this is for three positions here. It includes funding for her and two staff. It's responsible for the day-to-day operations. This is so that we can make sure that Albertans know what we're doing in Status of Women and to support my office in responding to the public as well as to stakeholders.

That public response is an extremely important part of any ministry and particularly of Status of Women as there are cross-ministry effects when it comes to women. We hear pretty much everything when it comes to women across ministries, so we have a heavy communications load to tackle on a daily basis. As I mentioned, that's a common function of all communications branches, but we do receive a large portion of communications in the Status of Women.

We're also taking on a public education role within our ministry – right? – and that's because we're focused on increasing gender equality in Alberta. This branch will establish tools to connect seeking individuals who are focused on equality to other organizations, government, and individuals interested in finding ways of collaborating and doing our collective work.

As far as what I can, for example, point to as what this branch has been responsible for, I know you participated in our 100 years of suffrage event. Part of what we do there is special-event planning, so we had an integral role in that particular event.

Mrs. Pitt: Yeah. That was a neat event.

Ms McLean: Only once every 100 years.

Mrs. Pitt: Yeah. Wow. It'll be my one and only.

Line 1.4, corporate services: what is included in here, and why the increase?

Ms McLean: There's an increase of \$1 million to establish the corporate services program. There are four full-time positions and supplies and services in this line to provide financial, legal, business planning, reporting, and administration support services for all programs in the ministry, including but not limited to information management and technology, shared services agreements, and contract funding. Our corporate services section is actually quite

lean, as lean we can possibly make it in order to have them still complete the day-to-day tasks of what they need to fulfill. This type of area in the organization of the ministry, corporate services, exists in all ministries.

In creating a stand-alone ministry, we're openly accountable to the public for what we do, which means that the ministry has estimates. That means that we have business planning, performance measures, annual reports, quarterly reports, business continuity planning, just like any other ministry. Having those responsibilities certainly makes the ministry an important stand-alone ministry. Without that we wouldn't be a ministry.

Mrs. Pitt: All right. Line 3, gender policy, strategy, and innovation, is a new line item. Do you have any details?

Ms McLean: There is a new line item here of \$2.3 million for the establishment of the gender policy, strategy, and innovation division. The division will employ 13 staff members to improve the conditions for women and girls in Alberta by enhancing understanding and removing systemic and structural barriers to women's equality through focusing on the priority policy streams. Much of this work is strengthening the ability of policy and programs to take into account the social, political, and legal status of all women and girls. Status of Women will advance the following priority policy streams: economic security, violence against women and girls, women in leadership and democratic participation, intergovernmental and international alignment.

Would you like to have some information on specific actions to be taken under this department?

Mrs. Pitt: I sure would. That would be great.

Ms McLean: This section – and I'll just sort of go through the high points here – will be responsible for reorganizing the women in leadership secretariat to improve supports and resources for women in the Alberta public service; will be facilitating stronger workplaces for flexible and alternative work; will be responsible for arrangements in departments to address any ongoing barriers or issues experienced by women; will be considering the possibility of a pilot administrative mobility program to increase upward mobility for administrative professionals in the Alberta public service.

4:10

Mrs. Pitt: What does that mean?

Ms McLean: An administrative mobility program?

Mrs. Pitt: Yeah.

Ms McLean: I can perhaps get my DM, Kim, to give you a bit more information, but essentially it's to provide information and enhance opportunities for women in the public service to move up the chain of command.

Ms Armstrong: Exactly, Minister. The pilot would see identified from a handful of departments individual women who are currently administrative professionals, who would then move into PS positions, outside of the administrative professional stream, for a period of time, where they would be supported by mentoring, developmental opportunities, and coaching, the intention being that we would provide them with an opportunity to potentially be more competitive at a PS level, a program services level. It has not rolled out yet. It is just in the process of being developed.

Mrs. Pitt: I like that.

Ms McLean: Would you like me to continue on some more points?

Mrs. Pitt: Sorry. Carry on. If you don't mind, I'll interrupt you when I want some clarification.

Ms McLean: Not at all. Please do.

We're also considering the development of a demographic survey for all Alberta public service employees to identify barriers that women are experiencing when they try to advance their careers.

We're also working on the diversity and inclusion framework for the Alberta public service with corporate human resources.

We also are assisting in bringing together thought leaders on women's democratic participation, with the intention of developing actions to encourage higher women's participation in the municipal elections.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Sorry. Go back to inclusion: will that sort of be a partnership, then, with Human Services? It's not just the inclusion of women but the inclusion of all persons?

Ms McLean: Sorry. I might have misspoken. Corporate human resources.

Mrs. Pitt: What did you say right before then?

Ms McLean: I believe what you're looking for, though I'm remembering to the next second, is that I had mentioned there that we were working on a diversity and inclusion framework for the Alberta public service.

Mrs. Pitt: Yeah. That's what I'm referring to. Would that be a partnership with another ministry, or is this just specifically for women?

Ms McLean: Corporate human resources is not contained within our ministry. It is contained within another. We believe that it may be Treasury Board and Finance. Though we haven't exactly hammered out which ministry it's under, my understanding is that it's not Human Services if that's what you're getting at.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Go ahead.

Ms McLean: Okay. We're also supporting the training, mentorship programs, and communities of practice to advance gender parity in democratic participation, and we're working with Executive Council – and we've touched on this earlier – to increase the number of ready, willing, and able women, to advance their names to participate in public agencies.

With respect to ending violence against women and girls, we are working alongside – now, yes – Human Services towards the development and implementation of a sexual violence plan. We are participating in the crossministry implementation of a family violence framework. This can be seen in our work, actually, in my other ministry, in the draft regulations for the Residential Tenancies Act, the safer spaces bill. We are also participating in the process of the national inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and supporting the development of a proposal within the city of Edmonton for the United Nations safe cities initiative.

Mrs. Pitt: Can you expand on that a little bit, actually, the United Nations safe cities initiative?

Ms McLean: Yeah, absolutely. This is actually quite a fascinating initiative. The goal of it is to build safe and inclusive public spaces where women and girls are free from sexual harassment, other forms of sexual violence and free from the fear of violence. To this

end, cities are asked to create a program that develops, implements, and evaluates comprehensive approaches to prevent and respond to sexual harassment of women and girls in public spaces. This initiative is rooted in human rights principles about freedom from violence and the right to bodily integrity and safety. It's globally understood that the threat and reality of sexual violence and other forms of violence in public spaces prevent women and girls from participating as full and equal citizens. I don't know about you, but I can't count the amount of times I have held my car keys between my fingers as I walk to my car late at night in a dark, poorly lit parking lot.

Alberta has one of the highest rates of sexual violence across the country. This also holds true for Edmonton, with the rate of police-reported sexual assault among the highest of the top-20 cities in Canada. Applicant cities are required to demonstrate that sexual violence is a serious issue across their communities and that they have both the capacity and social infrastructure to carry out the mandatory activities required by the United Nations. This includes the initial scoping study to provide specific data to ensure a deep understanding of local forms of sexual violence that women and girls face in public spaces.

Mrs. Pitt: So is this a directive from the UN?

Ms McLean: It's an opportunity provided by the UN, really. It would be better framed as an opportunity provided by the UN.

The initiative requires that key community organizations and other stakeholders also participate. As it stands, several Edmonton-based organizations, including the Edmonton Police Service, have formally expressed their interest in joining the initiative. We're working with the city of Edmonton to join so that they can join this group of cities and citizens who saw a problem here and want to stop sexual violence. Our work helps the city to create a proposal that shows innovation and sustainability. They have to go through an application and approval process.

Other cities have sparked innovative results through partnerships with mayors' offices, national governments, women's groups, and community partners, but what Edmonton developed here should become inspiration for other cities across the country and around the world. We will draw from the experiences of those that have already participated in this initiative.

Mrs. Pitt: Will this sort of be a province-wide initiative once you've put that framework together? Is that the goal?

Ms McLean: The city has to qualify, and that means that there has to be capacity for that. The city of Edmonton has undertaken a significant amount of work. The city, I understand, previously applied to be participants in this program and did not qualify. You have to establish to the UN that you do meet the standards. At this time only the city of Edmonton has undertaken the foundational work required and brought that to our attention.

Mrs. Pitt: Why wouldn't the ministry take that up as an initiative within the ministry for the entire province? I don't understand why we're kind of going through the city.

Ms McLean: The UN owns the program, essentially. It has to be a municipal-driven effort.

Mrs. Pitt: But why do we have to go through the program? That's what I don't get.

Ms McLean: So are you asking . . .

Mrs. Pitt: Why doesn't this ministry create its own framework?

Ms McLean: As I've previously mentioned in our discussions, the Status of Women ministry is not a programming-based ministry. But as far as what we can learn from Edmonton, the safer cities initiative, we'll certainly be drawing from what is learned through the program. Having it happen at least once and a first time in Alberta will certainly set a benchmark for the province and other cities and will show us what we can achieve through the initiatives that the UN program has developed.

4:20

Mrs. Pitt: If this were to be something that was successful, would the ministry then take on that initiative, or would Human Services? I'm trying to see the benefit for the province as a whole. I think this is great, and that's sort of why I'm saying: why are we only just participating in an initiative in one city?

Ms McLean: Well, I think an important part of the program and why Edmonton was not successful before is because they didn't have the community capacity with respect to at least the UN's point of view on how to build a safer city. It requires the community capacity as well. There are a number of things that exist only at the municipal level, such as city policing, that we need to ensure that the city really has their feet under them in order to be able to provide the same level of programming.

Did you want me to continue with the . . .

Mrs. Pitt: Yes.

Ms McLean: Okay.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you.

Ms McLean: With respect to intergovernmental and international alignment we are also co-ordinating Alberta's hosting of the 2016 FPT, federal-provincial-territorial, status of women forum.

Mrs. Pitt: When is that?

Ms McLean: The forum is built by consensus across all FPTs, so the date of it is something that has to be determined by consensus. Dates have been proposed but not quite cooked at the moment, but we expect before the fall.

Mrs. Pitt: Interesting.

Ms McLean: We are also co-leading and contributing to national FPT working committees, so there are cross-country status of women committees that we participate in. We are also leading the co-ordination of Alberta's national and international reporting on gender equality targets and with Indigenous Relations engaging with indigenous leaders and representative groups to explore how best to implement the principles and objectives of the UN declaration in a way that's consistent with the Canadian Constitution and Alberta's laws.

With respect to women's economic security we are working on the development of a child care strategy with Human Services as finances permit so that we can get to \$25-a-day child care.

Mrs. Pitt: Is there a way to address that in the meantime without finances? I mean, the road ahead doesn't look great, so perhaps in the meantime it would be prudent to have a different strategy.

Ms McLean: I'm always happy to discuss any ideas that you or other members of the Assembly have with respect to ways that we can contribute to this file. I agree with you that finances aren't the only factor to a child care strategy. We're certainly already working on tackling this from a variety of perspectives, but some of the

things that we've been working on have not yet made their way to cabinet. When those discussions are solidified, then we're happy to share them with you.

Mrs. Pitt: Excellent.

Ms McLean: We are also in Status of Women initiating efforts to increase women's economic resilience and support sustained economic growth for Alberta by supporting women entrepreneurs to grow their businesses and are participating in crossministry collaboration to develop targeted action plans to identify and reduce barriers that limit women's economic participation such as poverty reduction, new immigrant and refugee settlement, and the issue of minimum wage.

Mrs. Pitt: Excellent. Thank you.

I would like to talk about page 127, "Assist women across the province in building successful businesses."

Ms McLean: Sorry. Before you continue: are you back on the business plan?

Mrs. Pitt: Business plan, yeah. Sorry.

Ms McLean: Page 127?

Mrs. Pitt: Page 127, 2.2.

Ms McLean: Okay.

Mrs. Pitt: Tell me more. I am a business owner, and I'm curious to see how you would support women in business.

Ms McLean: I didn't know that you were a business owner. Congratulations. I was as well.

One of the reasons that we created this ministry is certainly to advance women's economic participation, and that very much includes women entrepreneurs. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, women-led businesses have the capacity to add an estimated \$2 billion to the economy each year. So that's certainly worthwhile to go after even if they can increase their revenue by just 20 per cent. We need to work towards creating the conditions necessary to help women entrepreneurs scale up and attract investment and let them build up Alberta's workforce.

In the budget there is investment that will allow – I just want to get the details right. Forgive me.

Mrs. Pitt: No problem.

Ms McLean: The budget certainly provides for investment into new business start-ups and, as you know, decreases the small-business tax. This will help, generally, more small businesses to be created, but this will also affect women.

We are working on a number of fronts in Status of Women to encourage additional efforts. We're considering the development of a mentorship program, including networking opportunities for entrepreneurial-oriented women and for their enterprises. I know from having my own small business that referral marketing is certainly one of the best ways to increase traffic to your business, so improving women networks in the business community would certainly assist with those efforts.

Mrs. Pitt: What does that actually look like? I mean, I have, like, seven different networking groups just in my community and surrounding area. I'm not really quite sure what you would achieve or how you would make that better. I get what you're trying to do,

and I think it's great to assist women in being entrepreneurs. In fact, sometimes a lot of those income stats are missing in analysis.

But, really specifically, beyond reducing the small-business tax and access to capital through the ATB loans, perhaps there's room to think of red tape reduction ideas. I mean, that wouldn't even be gender-specific. I think just right across the board it would be prudent. I'm just probably having a working conversation here now and trying to figure out, you know, what would make my life better as a business owner.

Ms McLean: Well, to that end I can assist you a little bit there. We're also considering conducting a survey to Alberta businesses to determine what gaps exist and identify additional needs to ensure that all entrepreneurs regardless of their gender have access to clear information to start, grow, and expand their business with clarity and what may be less costly pathways through government and regulations to address what you may be referring to as red tape.

But, certainly, if you or any of your constituents have identified any barriers, specifically women to their entrepreneurial advancement, we're always happy to hear them and discuss those issues crossministry.

4:30

There is funding in Economic Development and Trade as well for training of underrepresented groups. This certainly includes women, and I think that's part of the reason that we've been spending so much time crossministry. I know I've been there, Minister Ceci has, and, I believe, Minister Sabir. We've all been at the Women Building Futures location here in Edmonton. I understand that there will be some more details of how this training will affect women specifically and how these additional funds will work. The details of those will be coming soon.

Mrs. Pitt: I think an all-party Women Building Futures event would be a really good idea.

Ms McLean: I'm sure they would be happy to have you any time to tour their facilities. It's really quite fun.

Mrs. Pitt: You know what, actually? They let me put up some drywall a couple of weeks ago at Habitat for Humanity. It's mostly good. It was a blast. I highly recommend spending a day there.

Earlier you had mentioned "Develop strategies and programs to enhance the democratic participation of women." Let's maybe talk about that a little bit more. Do you have any specific ideas? I know, you know, certainly, the women in this room have first-hand experience in this area and possibly some insight, but I know you've been studying it. What's the plan?

Ms McLean: Absolutely. I think that our Premier's commitment to gender equality is no secret with respect to the fact that she has not only created a gender equal cabinet but a cabinet with actually more women in it than men. We've certainly made strong attempts to model women in leadership within our own government. The effect of this has been to open conversations in other organizations.

We have met and are always glad to meet with other organizations, like the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association. They have set up a status of women committee to help increase the number of women running for municipal office. We've also been working with nonpartisan groups like Equal Voice. They have chapters across Canada and have a mandate to increase women's democratic participation.

We are working to a full scope of actions to enhance democratic participation. Our starting point is to work with organizations that

are already making progress in that realm so that we can learn from the experts.

Mrs. Pitt: Excellent.

I want to talk a little bit about, again, in the business plan, page 127, "Collaborate with key partners, and governments at all levels, to address persistent and emerging issues, influence decisions and actions of key players, and seek and innovative strategies to prevent and end violence against women and girls." Do we have a full scope of the key players here in this area? I know you have mentioned some. Perhaps you could tell me more.

Ms McLean: We have been working with over 400 stakeholders when we refer to key players. It might take me the duration of the rest of estimates to go through that list.

Mrs. Pitt: You can table it. Okay. That's good.

Business plan 1(b), "Status of Women community interactions, in the role of enhancing community capacity for action, receiving a high satisfaction rating." Satisfaction surveys are often subjective measures to be making policy on. What does collaborative engagement mean?

Ms McLean: Under 1(b)? The words "collaborative engagement" are not there. I'm just trying to follow along so we're on the same number.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Hold on.

Ms McLean: I just want to make sure we are. Oh, you're looking at linking performance measures to outcomes?

Mrs. Pitt: Yes. Page 127, 1(b).

Ms McLean: Okay. There are two, the performance measure and then the linking.

Mrs. Pitt: Yup. The second one.

Ms McLean: Okay.

Mrs. Pitt: The second 1(b). Great.

Ms McLean: This measure "tracks the satisfaction of stakeholders and community with collaborative engagement facilitated by Status of Women" on enhancing community capacity for action on gender equality issues.

Mrs. Pitt: What does the "collaborative engagement" mean in that area?

Ms McLean: I can get my DM to elaborate a little bit more on this if you'd like, but essentially it just means that we work with community stakeholders and organizations together as opposed to sort of, you know, top down, no collaboration perspective. It's bringing them along through the entire process.

Mrs. Pitt: Stakeholder engagement and meeting groups and that type of thing.

Ms McLean: Yeah. Making sure that we're taking into account the perspectives of the community as we move forward.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Business plan 1(c), the second 1(c).

Ms McLean: "Tracks the positive outcomes resulting from the implementation of programs or projects funded in part or in whole by Status of Women"?

Mrs. Pitt: Yeah. That one is a little bit vague, and I know the ministry is new, but what actually constitutes a positive outcome in this area?

Ms McLean: This section really addresses the granting function of Status of Women. When we talk about positive outcomes, we're talking about the positive outcomes for the individuals that are affected by the granting. As with most if not all government granting, there are evaluative measures that are included when the grant is disbursed, essentially, and part of the application process includes the consideration of evaluative measures just to ensure that the granting aligns with our performance measures.

Mrs. Pitt: What are the performance measures?

Ms McLean: The granting arm has yet to be developed in its entirety, so there will be more to come.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. How are your satisfaction surveys conducted?

Ms McLean: In order to determine satisfaction, the unit will administer surveys using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The unit also tracks the number of interactions with stakeholders along with the type of interaction, the geographic location, the policy priority discussed, population group that it served, and the effectiveness and usefulness of connections made by the ministry. These factors are meant to assist in the determination of a stakeholder's level of satisfaction and the overall effectiveness of the ministry's interactions with the community.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Who's interpreting the results?

Ms McLean: Status of Women will be.

Mrs. Pitt: Within the ministry?

Ms McLean: That's right.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. I think we're nearing the end. On page 126, 1.3, "Design and support a catalytic granting function for projects that target ministry priority area specific issues." What are project catalytic granting functions?

4:40

Ms McLean: A catalytic granting function for projects is essentially money that's set aside for granting purposes that target ministry-specific priority areas. We want to be sure that community organizations who are doing great work can access funding through the Status of Women, thereby being a catalyst. At the same time, we recognize that we are in a difficult economic circumstance, so we need to ensure that those funds are targeted in the most effective way possible. Keeping in mind that we've been getting a new ministry off the ground, which is no small undertaking, we've have to do a lot of groundwork to this point, and we're budgeting very carefully. We're working out the fine details, but the point of it is to essentially be a catalyst through granting.

Mrs. Pitt: How is this different from other granting functions?

Ms McLean: Do you mean across government?

Mrs. Pitt: Within this ministry.

Ms McLean: There's only one granting function.

Mrs. Pitt: Like, they'll just be specific to Status of Women?

Ms McLean: It will address the three pillars of the mandate.

Mrs. Pitt: There aren't any right now. Am I correct?

Ms McLean: Grants?

Mrs. Pitt: Yeah.

Ms McLean: No. It's still being ironed out.

Mrs. Pitt: You're developing a granting . . .

Ms McLean: That's right.

Mrs. Pitt: All right. Line 1.4. Underneath it, "Facilitate collaboration among community organizations, local government and stakeholders to share information and leverage collective resources to improve social outcomes for women and girls." What specifically do you intend to do?

Ms McLean: What we're going to do is ensure that the experiences of women are heard and are able to inform policy and programming decisions through the use of qualitative methods, which I previously went into a bit. We will establish and maintain innovative, collaborative, and productive relationships between community organizations, private-sector corporations, and ministries across government to broaden the base of support for the community.

We will also facilitate two collective impact sessions each year. Each of these sessions will be focused on a priority issue and connect community organizations, local governments, and stakeholders in order to share information, leverage collective resources, and develop an action plan. Branch staff will then monitor the implementation of the plan and evaluate and report on progress.

We'll also collect structured and regular input and updates from community stakeholders through surveys, face-to-face meetings, small focus groups and that kind of thing, and on issues that are identified by the minister responsible, department officials, or community stakeholders.

Also, we'll develop information exchange sessions to enable stakeholders to exchange knowledge and expertise focusing on issues related to women's economic security, violence against women, and women and girls in leadership. There are three full-time employees in this unit.

Mrs. Pitt: What's the budget for this work?

Ms McLean: We will pull up the line item for you. It's contained within the gender equality and advancement line item, which is on page 228 of the estimates.

Mrs. Pitt: Sorry. Budget allocation for this work, facilitation of collaboration in the community.

Ms McLean: You're looking for a further breakdown of the line?

Mrs. Pitt: Yeah. Where would that fall into? How much specifically would this be? Is it the three staff members?

Ms McLean: Yes. And their supplies and operating expenses. My officials are telling me that it's \$1,059,000. Yeah.

Mrs. Pitt: Which line item would that be under?

Ms McLean: It's under operating expense, line 2, gender equality and advancement.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Line 1.2, on page 126 of the business plan, "Better align the Persons Case Scholarship eligibility criteria to the

ministry's key priority areas," which you have discussed. This scholarship is dedicated to postsecondary students . . .

The Chair: I apologize for the interruption, but the time allotted for this portion has concluded.

I would now like to invite the member from the third-party opposition and the minister to speak. Would you like me to set the timer at 10 minutes to indicate the halfway point?

Ms Jansen: That would be terrific. Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you. Are you wanting to share your time with the minister?

Ms Jansen: Yes. Back and forth is working just fine for me.

The Chair: Thank you. Go ahead.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister, for having this conversation. I just want to say that I was pleasantly surprised and delighted to sit down with you and have a conversation about some of the things that you're working on. I appreciate very much the collaborative approach that you are taking on these issues because, you know, as we all know, these should be bipartisan issues that we're discussing. Certainly, we all benefit from a good discussion that leads to some changes, some much-needed changes that we need to look at.

I'll get right to it because I have 20 minutes and apologize if I interrupt a bit because I do have quite a bit to get through here. You know, as the former associate minister of family and community safety, having women's issues in my portfolio, these are issues that are very close to my heart. Certainly, a lot of the folks you're working with are folks that I worked with in the past, and they all have amazing hearts and a lot of will to do some good change there. So I know that you have some good people working with you on that.

Let's jump in and talk right away about child care because I find that a particularly interesting area to talk about. I know there are challenges, certainly in the sense that the finances aren't in place to go ahead with the \$25-a-day child care plan. But in advance of that, you know, as you said and as many of us know, as a single mom child care for so many years was the first thing I thought of in the morning and the last thing I thought of when I went to bed at night. It really does overwhelm you when you have to face those issues.

My daughter turned 16 today – it's her birthday – so we're dealing with that less and less as time goes by, but certainly, you know, it is an issue in my mind.

I wonder how you see the accessibility issue, knowing that we may be a few years away from being able to devote the resources to an affordable child care plan, how you see that conversation going. One of the things I still hear, especially from women in my community who now are going back to work because their partner has been laid off, is that they're facing a job market for the first time and certainly trying to juggle some very stressful issues for them. In the absence of a \$25-a-day plan, you know, what are some of the conversations that we can have now about making at least child care more accessible for women who work shift work, for women who want to take advantage of opportunities that will take them away from home for any length of time? Is that a discussion that you are able to have now?

Ms McLean: I think you've accurately pointed out that this is a conversation that is multifaceted. One of the ways that accessibility, as you've mentioned, is affected touches crossministry. The GBA

plus analysis, that I know started under your leadership, is something that certainly works crossministry. We've expanded that so that, for example, the ministries of Transportation and Infrastructure, when they consider infrastructure projects and transportation, they'll be sure not to create food deserts, for example, so that women, you know, can access marketplaces through public transportation, right?

4:50

When we apply that lens to something like child care, it's certainly important that going forward, we look at how the building of our public spaces might affect child care. The transportation lines might affect access to child care. This is certainly a crossministry effort and also a consideration that needs to be undergone. I can talk a little bit more concretely about how we're still, even in this economic circumstance, attempting to move forward on this nevertheless.

As part of the Human Services budget as well there is an additional \$10 million in this year's budget for child care. Obviously, \$10 million is not a heck of a lot of money, so it's about looking at where other parts of the world have targeted public funds when tackling the issue of child care.

Ms Jansen: If you're looking at other parts of the world, give me a sense of maybe what is a country or a jurisdiction that you would look at in terms of best practices, you know, someplace that really has a good framework that you might want to follow in part at least if not in whole.

Ms McLean: I'm actually going to ask Lisa Tchir to speak to this a bit. She's been our front-line worker, spending countless hours on the child care file.

Ms Tchir: We have looked at other jurisdictions in Canada and across the world. I think, certainly, in northern Europe Finland and Sweden are some of the high-water marks, but we have wonderful lessons to learn even from other jurisdictions in Canada. One of the jurisdictions that has led the way is Quebec. We are learning lessons both from their successes and their failures, and what we will propose will hopefully take those into account.

Ms Jansen: All right. Very good.

I want to jump down now to the sexual violence plan you have. Now, I remember that we had come up with a sexual violence framework. I believe it may have even been printed out and then, you know, we had some turmoil and, of course, ministers changed, things changed, but we had done a significant amount of work on the sexual violence framework.

Knowing that we sat down with those stakeholders – and I remember back to the very first meetings. The first time it was Sheldon Kennedy and myself that got a round-table together of all the sexual violence service providers in the province. It was quite a moment. I mean, people sat at that table and cried because it was the first time their work was actually being recognized on a provincial level. It was very powerful. We had a number of those meetings, and it was their work that was informing the framework. Now, I know that, you know, there certainly were a lot of issues around that that you could improve on, but are there any pieces of that in the high level of consultation that had taken place that you can move forward and use in the new plan?

Ms McLean: Absolutely. I also had the opportunity to meet with Sheldon Kennedy and tour the centre. I'm actually proud of the fact that it's in my constituency. Those conversations with stakeholders have certainly more than informed the additional work that's been

done on the sexual violence framework. We've absolutely taken the initial work that was undergone under your leadership, but we've expanded that extensively. We want to make sure that the GBA plus lens is applied to all aspects of the framework and that women are certainly a focus of that framework going forward.

Ms Jansen: I agree, and using that GBA plus lens I think is important. There are a lot of areas that I would have liked to have seen that applied to that weren't, certainly hirings within ministry departments. It would have been really nice to have been able to do that. I'm looking forward to seeing, you know, all of the areas where you apply that lens. So that's good.

I'm remembering a conversation I had with Edmonton's police chief, and it still sticks with me because I found this startling. He told me that Edmonton was a gateway for the drug GHB, the date-rape drug, and he talked to me a little bit about how young people go to some of the large bars in Edmonton, and they're salting whole trays of drinks and looking to see which women fall down. These women, obviously very young women, are a lot less likely to report incidents where they end up in an alley or a strange room or the back of car because they feel like it may have been their fault. Chief Knecht talked about the fact that he had sort of implemented a policy in his own home with his daughters that, you know, if they went to the bathroom, they had to get a new drink or drink out of a long neck or something like that. I was thinking about that conversation, and it really left an impression on me because I'm wondering if we are having the right kinds of conversations right now about young women and the issues they face going out there and doing something as simple as going out for a couple of drinks at a bar. [A timer sounded]

Is that the 10-minute mark?

The Chair: It's only the halfway point.

Ms Jansen: Okay. Good. Perfect.

I'm wondering if there's an area that you're looking at having that conversation at a more fulsome level. We know that we have campuses having conversations about intimate partner violence. We know that there are initiatives out there. I just don't know that they're enough right now.

Ms McLean: I would absolutely agree. There could always be more conversations on this. I know that back in my bar-hopping days, when GHB was certainly an issue, there were some good public awareness campaigns about what to do with your drink and covering your drink and making sure it's not out of your sight and being accountable to your friends and looking after one another.

Ms Jansen: But not just that. I think bar owners have to accept some responsibility for looking out for the young women who go to those bars: first of all, maybe creating safer areas where drinks are mixed. Maybe it's creating, you know, a situation where there are at least staff in the bar that are cognizant that these are issues. Maybe that conversation needs to expand to more than just: if you're a young woman, it's up to you to keep yourself safe. I sort of feel like it takes a village to tackle some of these issues, and I don't feel that the onus should be completely on these young women.

Ms McLean: No. I absolutely agree. Our department has been working with the sexual health centre in Calgary. They are doing some fantastic work, including offering training for their staff on bystander intervention, for bar staff, actually, in particular.

Ms Jansen: Oh, good.

Ms McLean: Yeah. We're connected with this organization and learning from them. I know that Kim has had some lengthy conversations with them as well. When it comes to developing a province-wide communications initiative on safety for women, young women in particular, we look to the expertise that exists out in the field so that we have evidence-based decision-making with respect to what kind of messaging is effective. You're absolutely right; it's not one of victim blaming that's going to get us there.

Ms Jansen: You know, I had made this suggestion to the Education minister around comprehensive sexual health education and suggested that in the absence of big budgets to be able to get out there and to make that change to the curriculum right away, he might want to take advantage of offering tools online. There are certainly lots of places in the province where they don't have access to Calgary Sexual Health and their excellent programs or what have you.

I would think that in this area and certainly in a lot of areas when it comes to domestic violence, in order to be able to democratize the availability of that information, looking at the idea of making it available online, whether it's videos or discussions or something – you know, as long as a woman has access to a website, I think she has the ability to get all sorts of information without having to go to too many places.

5:00

I know when I've talked to some women who, unfortunately, had to use domestic violence services in the province, oftentimes their computer was the only way they had to communicate with the outside world and just sort of figure out where their resources might be. I'm wondering if you're looking at all at the idea of taking some initiatives, whether it's how to keep yourself safe in a bar or while walking home at night or things to remember if you start to date someone and their behaviour starts to become uncomfortable and what you should look out for. There are all sorts of areas where you could put that information online.

Ms McLean: We certainly provide as much information as we can online. As significant events come up across the province, we respond by putting information online. One of the most recent examples I can think of is with respect to evacuees, providing information about how they can access community with respect to LGBTQ-plus. Status of Women took an instrumental role there.

Our communications section has the specific intent to do public education awareness on a variety of issues, so sexual violence is certainly a very significant portion of our mandate.

Ms Jansen: I want to jump over to talk about indigenous women for a bit. You know, we knew and we saw – and I'm sure you're seeing it, too – how they're overrepresented in shelters and certainly in the numbers when it comes to domestic violence, intimate partner violence. I remember there was a push-pull with the feds about funding. What we heard from DV service providers was that oftentimes when they had an indigenous woman come in, there was a question, certainly in some jurisdictions in the province, over who was going to pay for the shelter stay. Are you still hearing that push-pull? Certainly, there are a number of shelters in the province that aren't being funded for stays of indigenous women. We have a new federal minister, Patty Hajdu. Is that a conversation you may have had with her already or would be willing to have with her to start to clear up some of these issues so that shelters get the funding they need? Then the valuable time they need to be spending with their clients they're not spending haggling over how to get funding for shelter stays.

Ms McLean: I know that a significant portion of our conversations with the feds have surrounded issues concerning indigenous women. There is certainly a large appetite now, I would say, more with this federal government than in the past, is my understanding, with respect to indigenous communities at all interprovincial tables. When we have had discussions at our meetings, that continually includes discussions about indigenous women.

With respect to shelters in particular the more direct answer would probably be found under Human Services for that particular question, but I'm happy to discuss that more fulsomely with the Minister of Human Services.

Ms Jansen: I think it's a great conversation to have. I know that we had for many years the push-pull of trying to make sure the feds took on their funding responsibilities and responded in a timely manner, you know, and it seemed to be a problem across ministries. Certainly, I would hope that with new people at the table and a chance to have that conversation in a new way, that would happen.

Then building on that, the MMIW inquiry for Alberta's role. I'm very interested to see what Alberta's role looks like in that because I think that is a hugely important conversation to be having coming out of this province and what you expect the government role to be in that.

Ms McLean: Yeah. I'm actually going to flip that over to Kim to discuss the steps that we've taken on the MMIW discussion.

Ms Armstrong: To date we've certainly expressed, or this government has expressed, its support for the inquiry. Our approach has been to support indigenous women and indigenous women's organizations in their interactions with the federal government and not to speak for them. I think it's fair to say that the general approach has been to bring them in and give them the opportunity to engage directly with the federal government on the issue of the process itself – what the inquiry is going to look like, how it's going to proceed, who should be heard – rather than providing our perspective on it. So that's where we're at right now.

Ms Jansen: When you say that you offer support, that means that if they're having meetings with the federal folks who are working on this, you accompany them?

Ms Armstrong: No. I should be clear. This falls under the Indigenous Relations department more specifically, which has a particular division with respect to the advancement of women within their department, so they are the lead on this. We are providing them support as needed. We have not accompanied indigenous women to meetings. Status of Women staff have not done so.

Ms Jansen: Right. So your support in this area would be mainly to support Indigenous Relations in their efforts on the file?

Ms Armstrong: That is correct to date, and where that will go from here, I'm not sure.

The Chair: I apologize for the interruption. The time allotted for this portion of the meeting has concluded.

At this point I would like to call a five-minute break, and the timer will be set.

[The committee adjourned from 5:07 p.m. to 5:14 p.m.]

The Chair: I'd like to call this meeting back to order.

As there is no independent or other member present, I will now invite members from government caucus to speak for the next 20

minutes. Would you like me to set the timer for 10 minutes to identify the halfway point?

Ms Luff: No. That's okay.

The Chair: Would you like to share your time with the minister?

Ms Luff: Yeah. I can go back and forth with the minister, and I'm going to be sharing my time with my colleague from Calgary-Bow.

The Chair: Thank you. Go ahead.

Ms Luff: Sure. I'm happy to be here today. I just want to take a minute, I guess, to acknowledge that it was recently Mother's Day, and we've got a lot of mothers around the table, so happy Mother's Day to everyone. It's a nice place. I'm happy to see that the baby is in the room because I know from experience that five minutes is not nearly enough time to feed a baby, not even remotely close. I'm happy that he's here.

Also, very quickly, just with regard to the remarks that Calgary-North West was making, when we're talking about violence against women and addressing violence against women, a shameless plug: my friend in Calgary has just recently put together a program called SASS, Society for the Advocacy of Safer Spaces. She's working with the Calgary Sexual Health Centre, and it's basically a program to certify bars and nightclubs and other venues as safe spaces. It goes through a list of criteria that staff could be trained on to be able to list that bar or nightclub as a place that's a safer space for women and LGBTQ-plus people as well. I just wanted to mention that, a shameless plug, but it's a cool thing that's happening.

I just want to talk about the ministry business plan, page 125. It states that a key policy area for Status of Women is women's economic security, and the hardship Alberta is currently facing has placed thousands of women in vulnerable financial circumstances. As former members have mentioned, they are sometimes going back to work and are sole supporters for their families. I'm just wondering if you can speak to how Budget 2016 supports women's labour force participation.

Ms McLean: Thank you. I'm very proud of our government's commitment to keep Albertans at the heart of our budget. This commitment includes providing for people who need a boost to keep themselves and their families in the black, so we've committed \$25 million over two years to support apprenticeship and training in Alberta. That funding includes \$10 million to provide workforce training opportunities. We know that women have typically been disenfranchised from high-paying careers in the trades, but we're hoping to help that change. Thanks to some of our stakeholder groups, more women, especially those in low-paying jobs, are getting the confidence and support to take on new careers that work for them and their families.

Let's also remember that the small-business corporate income tax rate decrease to 2 per cent this coming January will assist women entrepreneurs. They remain an underutilized resource for job creation and economic growth in the province. Women tend to operate smaller enterprises in service-oriented industries rather than in high-growth areas like science, technology, engineering, and math, which I previously referred to as the STEM sector. Despite being mostly clustered in service-oriented industries, women are adopting technology to improve their businesses and are very much engaged in innovation. Funders, however, still tend to view their businesses as only service oriented, but in reality they have become technology and innovation businesses and catalysts.

If we help women entrepreneurs access the tools and resources they need, then we'll find them creating jobs and a sustainable, diversified economy. In other words, women are part of our job-creation strategy. It's certainly quantifiable. Estimates project that a 20 per cent revenue growth by women-owned businesses would lead to a \$2 billion annual increase to the federal economy.

Ms Luff: Awesome. I appreciate the direction you're taking there.

One aspect, certainly, of women being involved in the workforce – and we've talked about this already – is child care. It's something that working women struggle with. I know women in my riding struggle with it due to its lack of availability and just expense overall. You have touched on some of the things that the government is doing despite this being difficult in the budget right now, that it's a crossministry effort and that we do have some extra money for it in Human Services. But I do notice that in your business plan key strategy 2.1 talks about a child care framework. Now, this is something that's badly needed in our province, and it's long overdue. I'm just wondering how your ministry will participate in the development of the government of Alberta's child care framework.

Ms McLean: As you mentioned, working women need access to quality, affordable child care, and it's a particular problem because working mothers earn 12 per cent less on average compared with other working women, and that pay gap increases with each child that she has, topping out at about a 20 per cent difference from other women. This puts such a burden on women, especially if they are single mothers. Status of Women understands that, and we are working closely with Human Services to develop a strategy on child care. I can't stress how important child care is to this ministry. Minister Sabir and I will continue to be vocal about it at the cabinet table and work with cabinet to find solutions as we attend to the business of helping Alberta recover.

5:20

Ms Luff: Awesome. I can't help but think that having a baby at the cabinet table probably helps with that discussion a little bit.

I do notice that on page 228 of the estimates there's line item 3, gender policy, strategy, and innovation. This is a new line item for the ministry, so I'm sort of curious: what sort of new initiatives can Albertans expect to see that are supported by this funding?

Ms McLean: This division particularly focuses on the ministry's three mandated priorities: working for fair pay and stable incomes for women, preventing and reducing violence against women and girls, and helping more women reach their leadership goals as well as run for office. I'm happy to go into detail with the member about specific actions related to each priority, but I've gone through it fairly extensively with the Member for Airdrie. Would you like me to go over it again?

Ms Luff: No. I think that's all right unless you really want to.

Ms McLean: I can't talk enough about what I'm doing.

Ms Luff: We can talk, I think, a little bit more about the GBA plus, the gender-based analysis plus. In your business plan on page 126 we talk about gender equality and the development and implementation of government policy and programs. When I talk to people in my community and they ask, you know, "What is the Status of Women ministry doing?" I talk about the GBA plus lens that we're applying to things. They often ask me: "Okay. Well, how is that going to help me as an everyday Albertan? Is that something that's just applying to the government?" I'm wondering if you can

speak a little bit about how using this lens can help to improve the lives of everyday Albertans.

Ms McLean: Yeah. I'm really happy to talk about the gender-based analysis plus part of our ministry, so thank you very much for the question. First, I'd like to help you explain to your constituents what GBA plus is and how it helps government and in turn all of our constituents. It's an internationally recognized policy and research tool that helps advance equal outcomes for women and girls. It does this by identifying who benefits and who is excluded. That's the lens we use to review our decision-making so we can better understand the outcomes of our work. From where we're sitting, it's the right perspective to apply.

The "plus" in GBA is noteworthy because it expands our scope beyond gender to include sexual orientation, ethnicity, geography, faith, income, gender identity and expression. That little plus sign stands for a heck of a lot. Basically, it helps us make sure that we can clearly see if any group benefits more than another from our policies, programs, and legislation.

Now, every member of our caucus is a feminist, and every minister expects gender equality to be one of the defining features of our government's work. I thank the former minister for introducing gender-based analysis plus. Introducing that training to our government in 2014 was certainly the right start. We are seeing the value it brings to considering how our policies, programs, and legislation affect Albertans differently. It's a tool that makes us do even better work.

GBA plus is an analytical tool used around the world, and it helps organizations and governments make more effective policies and programs. It can also help government make better financial decisions, especially when it comes to allocating the right funds in the right way to help the right populations at the right time. Given Albertans' diverse population and population needs GBA plus helps us respond effectively to the challenges of serving Albertans well.

We're ramping up this work and are making inroads in the public service, so we'll see the majority of policy frameworks and strategies using it by 2019. We have already used GBA plus to assess other ministries' strategies while they're in development. GBA plus is an important way to increase government's capacity to improve program and policy outcomes for more Albertans, and we're dedicated to making this happen. Our GBA plus team has been presenting to ministry executive teams to ensure they have a strong familiarity with the tool. The more intense training is happening with the policy advisers, and we have plans to extend that training to human resources and communications groups, too. Right now we're setting up an evaluation framework to help determine the best way to move forward.

Ms Luff: Awesome.

I think the Member for Calgary-Bow has some questions.

Ms Drever: Well, thank you. As someone who's been very active in my life to achieve gender equality, I'm just honoured to be here to talk to you, the only stand-alone Ministry of Status of Women in Canada. So congratulations on your role. I'm just honoured to be here to ask you some questions.

To start it off, I know that ending violence against women and girls is a key policy focus in your ministry. When I was doing consultation when I was working on my private member's bill, I met with many women who were in abusive relationships and who were desperate to find safety and security. Many were unfortunately turned away from women's shelters and homeless shelters because they were already over capacity.

Unfortunately, Alberta has some of the highest rates of domestic violence. If you don't mind, I would like to read a couple of stats around domestic violence and violence against women and girls. On average, every six days a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner. In 2011, of the 89 police-reported spousal homicides, 76 of the victims were women. More than 1 in 10 Canadian women say that they have been stalked by someone in a way that made them feel fearful for their lives. Women in Calgary, in particular, even though working full-time, only earn 65 per cent of what a man earns in the city. In Canada 90 per cent and 70 per cent of all incidents of sexual and domestic violence respectively go unreported.

As you can see, this is quite an issue here in Alberta, and it's something that I'm actually quite passionate about. I'm just curious. How does Budget 2016 support key strategy 2.4 on page 127 of the business plan, to collaborate with key partners to address emerging issues around sexual and family violence?

Ms McLean: As I'm sure you recall, our government invested \$50 million in new funding for women's emergency shelters and second-stage housing. There's also another \$10 million for 76 local projects to prevent family and sexual violence through the family and community safety program grants. What Budget 2016 did was commit to stable funding for these key public services like women's shelters and second-stage housing.

Ms Drever: Thank you.

We've seen the Alberta labour market hit hard these last few months, especially among men. Can you explain why it is also important to increase focus on women's employment at this time, as you noted in your ministry mandate?

Ms McLean: Well, we are always going to focus on women and on understanding the differences people experience based on their identities. Women are underrepresented in the labour market even in Alberta, and they are more likely to work in lower income positions to make ends meet. Our work is about getting rid of barriers so that women can make choices about their employment instead of feeling squeezed into corners because they're raising children or trying to keep things going while their partners are temporarily seeking employment.

The granting program is being developed, and on that particular aspect we'll provide more details soon.

Ms Drever: Okay. Thank you.

One of the priorities of the Alberta jobs plan is to invest in infrastructure. I was just wondering if you can explain what your ministry is doing to support this priority.

Ms McLean: Our work, as I mentioned to the Member for Calgary-North West, affects every ministry, and we will do our best to help improve outcomes through all ministries for more Albertans. Infrastructure matters as well from a gender perspective in a few different ways. One, it's part of the social system. It must work for the people who need it, and GBA plus can help us better understand how major infrastructure projects affect people differently. It's also significantly a male-dominated industry, so we'll continue to work with stakeholders on courses of action to improve women's participation in STEM-sector jobs. One such stakeholder we previously mentioned was Women Building Futures.

Ms Drever: Minister, performance measure 1(b) on page 127 of the ministry business plan speaks to "the satisfaction of stakeholders and community with collaborative engagement." Can you please explain what a collaborative engagement looks like to you and how your ministry intends to approach this?

5:30

Ms McLean: We began our work with the community, but that's only the beginning. We continue this work. We've made a promise to be bold and to raise women's voices around decision-making tables. To be good at that, we need to stay rooted in the community and to listen to what they are saying and hearing at the front line of serving Alberta's women. That level of collaboration still means government is responsible for making decisions that are smart and sustainable, but this measure speaks more to a way of working, as I mentioned to the Member for Airdrie, and to communicating over the long term.

Ms Drever: Thank you.

Although we have many women employed in the Alberta public service, there are very few women in executive leadership. Actually, back in February I was invited by Status of Women to sit on the Unbitten Tongues panel that was put on by the women in leadership initiative. It was actually a really great opportunity to sit down and talk to many different women about how we can encourage women to be involved in these roles and to lead the conversation. I was just wondering. Given that outcome 2 of your business plan on page 127 includes ensuring equality in public and private institutions, what is your ministry doing to remedy this situation?

Ms McLean: Well, I'm proud to say that some advancements have already been made. We have two new female deputy ministers starting this month. We have been planning a reorganization of the women in leadership secretariat in order to improve supports and resources to women in the Alberta public service. This is particularly exciting because the women in leadership movement continues to grow and solidify over the years, and this reorganization reflects the need to support a more mature movement. Although we're learning through women in leadership, I'm excited that work is under way to develop a demographic survey for all of Alberta's public service to identify barriers that women are experiencing when trying to advance their careers.

Recognizing that there are barriers preventing more women leaders to rise in the Alberta public service, we are working with corporate human resources to develop a diversity and inclusion proposal for the Alberta public service. We will also facilitate stronger workplace policies on flexible and alternative work that pave the way for more inclusive leadership, allowing more qualified candidates with out-of-work commitments to take on leadership roles.

We will work across government as well to support departments that make arrangements to address any ongoing barriers or issues women experience. Through the women in leadership movement we're learning more about what these barriers have been, and with corporate human resources again we are considering a pilot administrative mobility program, which I talked about a little bit earlier, to increase the upward mobility of administrative professionals in the Alberta public service who want to perhaps change their careers.

Ms Drever: Thank you very much, Minister.

I'd like to pass some of my time along to the Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Sure. You've spoken about this a little bit previously with the Member for Airdrie, talking about how we can encourage more women to participate in politics and in holding political office in various areas. I mean, we have done really well with our caucus and our cabinet, to be sure – we are almost 50 per cent

women and more than 50 per cent women in cabinet – but I do notice in your business plan that only 30 per cent of candidates in the 2015 election here in Alberta were women. At the federal level I think that was even lower. I certainly see issues in places like city councils, Calgary city council, Edmonton city council. Recently – I wasn't able to attend, unfortunately, because I was looking after my children – there was an event launch in Calgary, on Saturday, the Ask Her campaign.

The Chair: I apologize for the interruption, but the time allotted for this portion of the meeting has concluded.

I would now like to invite the Official Opposition to speak with the minister for the next 10 minutes. Are you wanting to share your time with the minister?

Mrs. Pitt: Yeah. We'll just go back and forth. I'm actually almost done here. I have to say that I am so impressed and so grateful and thankful that you have offered so much information. Sometimes before I've gotten to the next question, you've already answered it. Truly, like, that's about collaboration and getting things done, and I'm really, really grateful. I understand that this is a new ministry and that there's lots in the works, and that's great to see because you have a plan to get that in the works, right? So we'll get into measurables and grant recipients down the road. I really do appreciate that. I'm impressed. You're well prepared. Your staff is fantastic, so good job.

Ms McLean: Thank you very much. That's sweet of you.

Mrs. Pitt: Actually, the one question I didn't ask yet was key strategy 1.1 in your business plan. Apparently, I was jumping all over the place, so right back to the beginning. "Expand GBA+ knowledge and capacity so that it is integrated into all policy development and is included in government business planning, performance measurement and evaluation." Is there a current example of a project that your ministry is undertaking with the GBA plus?

Ms McLean: Lots.

Mrs. Pitt: You look excited over there.

Ms McLean: I can just rattle off a bit of a list for you. So far we're working on crossdepartmental initiatives to ensure that gender equality is better addressed with respect to adult learning, transit policy, essential services, minimum wage . . .

Mrs. Pitt: Sorry. What's transit policy? Can you expand on that?

Ms McLean: I think there's a good example that has been brought to my attention a number of times by the ministry. For example, when you're developing transit policy, you likely ought to take into account women with respect to your transit policy. Something I'd mentioned earlier is to ensure that you're not inadvertently doing something like creating a food desert by not putting public transit to places where typically women would frequent in order to purchase food for the family home. That is sort of an example, I guess, of how that would affect transit policy. But it's certainly across all policy, as much as we can tackle, and as we hire on within the ministry, which is still ongoing, to fill our positions, that work will become more proliferated across the government.

In addition to the areas that I mentioned: also with respect to poverty, the settlement of Syrian refugees; the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples implementation; the RTA regulations that are affected by the safer spaces for victims of domestic violence legislation; our work with corporate human

resources, the metrics there that we've gone into to some extent; the gender wage gap; as well as women's entrepreneurship and economic diversification.

So there's a bit of a smattering of what we've got our GBA plus into.

Mrs. Pitt: Excellent. Awesome.

Line 1.2 of the business plan: "Better align the Persons Case Scholarship eligibility criteria to the ministry's key priority areas." What steps or actions have you taken or do you intend to take on this key strategy?

Ms McLean: Dozens of women have earned this scholarship since it was established to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Persons Case. Currently students whose studies contribute to the advancement of women or who are studying in a field in which their gender is underrepresented qualify. Our mandate is now focused on increasing leadership and economic security, decreasing violence. New eligibility criteria will highlight our mandate, our areas of focus in the ministry. It's still being ironed out, so we will post more information online about the scholarship changes when we have them available.

5:40

Mrs. Pitt: Sorry, I thought you were going to say something else.

Ms McLean: No, no. I could give you some examples of success stories that we have with respect to the Persons Case scholarship in the past if you'd like.

Mrs. Pitt: Yeah. Actually, that answers another question that we couldn't earlier. So, yes, that's perfect.

Ms McLean: Great. Okay. As it currently stands, the Persons Case scholarship supports students who are in, as I mentioned, non-traditional fields or are working towards a career that promotes the advancement of women, and students of any gender identification may apply.

A recipient of the scholarship is now self-employed as a gender consultant and works specifically with communities providing gender training for developing and implementing strategies to support those affected by FASD, their families, and communities.

Another recipient of one of the scholarships was and remains one of the founding members of ConsentEd, which is an Edmonton-based community response to creating a world without sexual violence.

Another recipient of the scholarship is one of the only women in her computer science PhD program. She also actively mentors young women to pursue STEM careers.

Mrs. Pitt: Wow. Great.

Minister, you have answered all of my questions. Thank you very much.

I will give the rest of my time to the remaining members.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I would now like to invite the member from the third-party opposition to speak with the minister for the next 10 minutes. Would you like to go back and forth?

Ms Jansen: Back and forth would be fine. Thank you, Chair.

One of the areas that we didn't get around to last time was to talk about the subject of increasing women in leadership and democratic participation. I'm very interested in this conversation because I think, you know, for me entering politics as an elected official in 2012, there were a lot of things I had to consider going in. First of

all, resources because it takes resources to be able to run for office, and child care being another one. Certainly, there are a lot of issues to consider in that process.

I remember doing a panel with the folks at Equal Voice. There were a number of people in the room, and we had a conversation about the barriers to women getting involved in politics. Certainly, what the public has seen this year in terms of the kind of backlash women get in social media probably isn't one of those things that's all that encouraging, and I wonder how you tackle a situation like that. I mean, as the mom of a 15-year-old daughter who has to read what she reads about me online – and I don't even know how the Premier deals with that in relation to her own children. You know, these are pretty significant issues, and it's not like social media is going anywhere.

So how do you have that discussion and encourage women to get involved and still have that discussion about them developing what, unfortunately, we have to, which is a tougher skin, for lack of a better term, when it comes to some of the things that we face in terms of harassment and intimidation?

Ms McLean: As you pointed out, this is a huge conversation, right? It's not only about, on the back end, teaching women how to address these kinds of barriers and things that would, you know, actively prevent them from looking positively at participating in running for office, let alone participating at all in the political conversation, but also changing the conversation so that it's no longer acceptable to make the kinds of comments that we've seen, that you've pointed out have been made against yourself, other female elected officials, myself included, and most notably our Premier.

I think that one of the ways that certainly we're working to change the conversation is simply even by creating this ministry – right? – and by having a gender-balanced cabinet, showing women in leadership and being bold about those moves, being unafraid to make bold moves like appointing pregnant women to cabinet so that we can be public models such as yourself, a public model to the rest of society and use our own capacities as well to encourage other women to run for political office.

There certainly is work going on within the ministry to look into and research the best ways to encourage women to get involved in campaigns specifically. We know that there's been good work done in other jurisdictions, including United States, with respect to things like tool kits for women to run for office.

Ms Jansen: Or maybe mentorship. I think mentorship is hugely important. I think back to, you know, some of the opportunities in my life. If I've been able to move from one area to another, it's been with the help of very strong mentors, both male and female. Certainly, female mentors, I think, in politics are hugely important.

Ms McLean: Absolutely. We're working, certainly, on a nonpartisan level. We've been working closely with Equal Voice. We are also planning to host a thought leaders dialogue on women's democratic participation. The goal of this is to develop actions to encourage greater participation among women in municipal elections. We have, certainly, plans under way to support the training and mentorship programs specifically and communities of practice to advance gender parity in democratic participation. It's certainly not the kind of thing that we can answer in one sentence, even. It's a multifaceted approach.

Ms Jansen: I'm very interested in the self-serve registry. When you're trying to tackle the issue of getting women onto boards and in leadership positions – certainly, you know, I've been asked before to submit names of women that I thought would be great for

boards. I always feel like: oh, you know, I can't think of anyone right now. I really wish there was an opportunity for us to be able to offer up an opportunity to start collecting the names of really dynamic women that we could put on boards and agencies and that sort of thing. Tell me a little bit about: when you talk about a self-serve registry, what does that mean exactly?

Ms McLean: In work with community organizations we're still identifying what that might look like, but the interesting part about our coming out with this is that there has been a reflection in the community already. I know that there's an effort among some women in the legal community to put together and seek out portfolios and applications of women to apply for these positions. We've certainly created a dialogue and activity within the community, but with respect to a government-specific registry, as it were, the particular details of that are being ironed out in a formal sort of way.

Ms Jansen: So is this something where you could potentially, say, look to your Energy minister to perhaps, you know, start having those conversations with some of our bigger oil and gas companies? I mean, when I think of some of the most, for lack of a better term, prestigious board positions, certainly at some of the major oil and gas companies, how is it that you begin to have that conversation with the folks who are making those decisions?

Ms McLean: Certainly, the boards that I've generally been addressing are the ABCs, that are government, arm's length, but when we're talking about private-sector boards, which is, I think, what you're addressing, those conversations, some of them have been filtering back to me. Certainly, there is more of an appetite in the private sector as a result of flow through from what government has been doing. I do know that I had a chat with one of the ministers who had such a discussion with one of these energy companies, about how to, you know, ensure that women could have access to child care while they're at work. So these are new conversations that haven't happened before. The private sector knows that we're certainly very invested in this and interested in this work.

5:50

Ms Jansen: I remember having a conversation with some folks from the Institute of Corporate Directors, and it was an interesting conversation because, of course, we're talking private sector now. But I'm wondering if there's an opportunity to – certainly, everybody has to think about social licence nowadays. I mean, if you are not doing this work, then I think that at a certain point people are going to start asking you why you're not doing this work and why you're not applying that lens to your own company. I think that there's an opportunity not just to look at our ABCs but to offer up leadership and a suggestion going forward to our private-sector boards and to say: "You know what? We're doing this work here. Certainly, you know, the social licence piece is very important. What are you doing?"

Ms McLean: Absolutely. I met with a financial institution. They're in the private sector. They have a group where women and their allies meet, and one of the questions was: you know, really, what encouragement is there from the government for the private sector to offer child care to employees? And I was speaking to someone in finance, so I told him that the case is quite clear, actually. If you look at the financial impact of ensuring that your employees don't have to worry about child care, you actually get a significant return on investment. If you look at the financial impact, you actually can't afford not to offer some of these services. So having those conversations is integral to ensuring that this . . .

The Chair: I apologize for the interruption, but the time allotted for this portion of the meeting has concluded.

I would now like to invite members from government caucus to speak for the next 10 minutes as there is no independent or other member present. Would you like to share your time with the minister?

Ms Luff: My colleague is going to ask the questions to start with, and back and forth is good, yes.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Drever: All right. Minister, how does Budget 2016 support your ministry working at an intergovernmental level to participate in and raise issues affecting women and girls?

Ms McLean: Through the federal-provincial-territorial forum we will be working with the federal Minister of Status of Women and provincial and territorial ministers responsible for the status of women to bring forward issues and initiatives that will resonate across the country and are responsive to current issues that have an impact on women and girls. Where appropriate, the FPT forum will address international priorities, initiatives, and commitments such as the United Nations' to guide and validate the work of the forum. The Alberta Status of Women and the federal Status of Women will, as I've mentioned, be cohosting this year's 2016 FPT status of women national forum in Edmonton, and we will lead the co-ordination of Alberta's national and international reporting on gender equality targets.

We will also be engaging with indigenous leaders and representative groups to explore how best to implement the principles and objectives of UNDRIP, the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, in a way that is consistent with the Canadian Constitution and Alberta law.

Ms Drever: Thank you.

Key strategy 2.4 on page 127 indicates efforts to prevent and end violence against women and mentions indigenous women in particular. If you like, I could just quickly read it.

Collaborate with key partners, and governments at all levels, to address persistent and emerging issues, influence decisions and actions of key players, and seek innovative strategies to prevent and end violence against women and girls, with a particular focus on:

- Sexual violence . . .
- Family violence; and
- Violent crimes against Indigenous women and girls.

We recognize the challenges faced by indigenous women and girls in the face of colonialism and the trauma of residential schools, and I was just curious as to what your ministry is doing to assist this population in particular.

Ms McLean: Every missing and murdered indigenous woman and girl has a name and a family and a community who mourn and love her. We must participate and co-operate in the process of the national inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. We will engage with indigenous leaders and representatives to explore how best to implement UNDRIP, as I've mentioned. Also, knowing that others must engage in this work, we will give staff in other ministries GBA plus training and incorporate gender and intersectionality into major strategies and initiatives. Subsequent monitoring and evaluation of GBA plus implementation also ensures that any policy developed considers the implications for indigenous people and other populations.

We can plant the seeds now. Some will grow quickly, but others will require a longer time frame. Talking about consent, for example, can happen today, and informing people about their rights and the harm that they may be causing can start now and can continue until we appreciate consent at a societal level. Other actions will take time because they are deeply ingrained in systems within society that do not support survivors or that retain power imbalances between men and women. This is a very complex issue, and we are committed to it in both the short term and the long term.

Ms Drever: Well, I couldn't agree more.

We all know that pay equity is a huge issue for women. According to a recent report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Edmonton and Calgary are actually ranked as some of the worst places for women to live in Canada, unfortunately. One of those reasons is because of pay equity and the pay gap here and how women only make 65 cents for every man's dollar. Minister, the majority of minimum wage earners in this province are women. As you know, there are many barriers to women participating fully in the economy. I was wondering: what are you doing to increase participation, and how does the budget before us support the effort?

Ms McLean: We need to remove barriers that prevent working women from having a stable and fair income, and one of those barriers is access to quality and affordable child care. Sometimes the problems may be hours of availability, particularly for women who work outside the traditional 9 to 5. As I've noted, Status of Women is co-leading the effort on this with Human Services. We will be working and are working to increase women's economic resilience by helping women entrepreneurs grow their business, and this will also support sustained economic growth for Alberta. This is one of the reasons that we are making the incremental changes to minimum wage because anyone working full-time should be able to put food on the table and support their family. We are working with Economic Development and Trade and other ministries to encourage job creation and diversification and ensure that that benefits women.

Across government we are collaborating to develop targeted action plans to reduce barriers that currently limit women's economic participation. These include but are not limited to poverty reduction and public-sector opportunities for employees.

Ms Drever: Thank you very much.

I'm just going to pass my time off to the Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Sure. The Member for Calgary-North West finished my question about women being involved in politics. Thank you for your answers on that. I'm excited about the work that you're doing there.

You had spoken somewhat with the Member for Airdrie about the United Nations safer cities initiative, strategy 2.5 of the business plan. I'm just curious, seeing that you're from Calgary and Calgary is one of our major cities, if you're supporting Calgary in becoming a safer city at all through this initiative.

Ms McLean: We are committed to creating safer cities across the province, and we continue to work with stakeholders offering support to survivors of violence and with the correctional and justice systems, for example. We are certainly open to ideas the city of Calgary may develop. Currently 20 cities are participating worldwide in this initiative, so it's certainly more the exception and not the rule at this point. These include Ecuador; Cairo, Egypt; New Delhi, India; Papua New Guinea; and Rwanda. Our work helps the

city to create a proposal at this point that shows innovation and sustainability so that they can be successful in their application.

6:00

Ms Luff: Awesome.

I don't see anything, though, particularly in the business plan. It's great that that work is being done in the cities across Alberta, but I don't see anything in particular for women in rural areas. So I'm just wondering what you're doing for this, you know, large population of Albertans.

Ms McLean: We heard in our initial consultations that rural women tend to have added sets of barriers that affect their equality. We identified them early on as a population of interest because of the complexity of their experiences. Issues like rural transit and transportation, access to medical care, child care, leadership opportunities, and even the Internet are all factors, among many others, for women in rural Alberta. Our best work will come through partnerships with other ministries here to make sure that their work in rural communities reflects rural women's needs.

Ms Luff: Okay. Is there, like, a particular example of a particular ministry that you would be working with? Which one? No?

Ms McLean: Across ministries, so all of the ministries. However, much of our work on advancement of women's issues most often falls most closely with Human Services as they provide a large portion of the programming that exists from the provincial government.

Ms Luff: Thanks.

Just moving on, you did have a rather fulsome conversation with the Member for Airdrie about entrepreneurship and your focus on women's entrepreneurship. You talked about, you know, creating conditions that forward women's ability to create their own businesses, mentorship programs and networking opportunities, which I think are all really valuable. Helping women to build successful businesses is key strategy 2.2, but I don't see an associated performance measure there. So I'm just curious about how you're intending to gauge success in this initiative.

Ms McLean: Status of Women continues to be . . .

The Chair: I apologize for the interruption; however, the time allotted for this portion of the meeting has concluded.

As there are no members from the Official Opposition present, I would like to invite the member from the third-party opposition to speak for the next 10 minutes.

Mr. Cyr: That's not accurate. I . . .

The Chair: Oh, sorry. I apologize. Mr. Cyr is present; however, he's indicated that he does not have any questions at this time. I apologize.

Ms Jansen: Well, they're dropping like flies.

Thank you. I'm happy to go on and ask a few more questions. I'm interested in this concept of the food desert. It particularly interests me because, first of all, I've never heard the term before, so it's fascinating to me that that is a term, but just as importantly the conversation around how communities are developed and whether that in itself provides barriers for women to either congregate, to get together, or to find transit easily.

Also, in lower income areas I wonder about how, you know, a conversation might happen with developers who are actually designing communities, whether it's apartment buildings and

condominiums or second-stage housing or something, in order to take into account that there needs to be proper lighting, that there needs to be easy access to transit, those sorts of things. I think those might be interesting conversations to have with developers who, you know, are looking at community planning, maybe with that in mind as an added element.

Ms McLean: Uh-huh. I do know that across ministries there are conversations, just as you're suggesting, going on with developers and also with municipalities as they control a lot of the development that goes on within urban centres. Status of Women is certainly supporting that work by providing GBA plus training within the other ministries. As you've noted, this is particularly influential in the Ministry of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: You know, I'm thinking of two shopping areas in my constituency, one in and one just outside but both very well used. For a woman who has, and we see this frequently, a stroller and a toddler trying to navigate those huge intersections if they don't have transportation – frankly, Calgary, everybody says, is a driving town, so it's very hard to get around if you don't have a vehicle. If you're out walking in the area, you know, I've found – and my daughter finds that in getting to school, if she walks, it's 20 minutes. If she takes transit to school, it's an hour. We haven't gotten to a place where transit is actually, really, in suburban areas all that workable. For women in suburban areas there is that challenge. A task that may take 15 minutes if you don't have to walk with small children is going to take an extra long time if you have to use transit.

You know, I think those are important conversations we could be having, maybe even in the planning stages, something as simple as making sure that there are pedestrian overpasses so that people can move easily across really busy intersections if they have strollers and small children without having to worry about some kind of catastrophe happening. Considering that you have the ability to work crossministry, if the idea is to break down the silos between the ministries – and it's exciting to think that you could be doing that – you can definitely be having those conversations with Infrastructure and with Municipal Affairs not just in this area but in lots of areas concerning women's issues.

Ms McLean: Absolutely. I can tell you also, you know, wearing the Service Alberta hat, that there's an employee within our ministry, within Service Alberta, Andrew Dore, who has received the GBA plus training and is responsible for applying that lens to our work. This informs the work over there even in the initial planning stages and in consultations as well.

Ms Jansen: I want to skip back to – I know that you've touched on it a little bit – women entrepreneurs. I would be probably one of many people who had my own company for a significant amount of time. I think about, you know, when I was actually setting up my company. What I did in Ontario was that for lack of resources and having another job – I was a broadcaster at the same time – I ended up going to university and getting a group of business students to do my business plan for me. I remember thinking at the time: gee, I wish there were other opportunities for me to take advantage of help in getting this set up.

When you talk about entrepreneurship and helping women, I've even got some women in my constituency who have great ideas, but they just don't know how to take it to the next level. Again, I look back on that mentorship piece because I think we have a lot of fantastic women entrepreneurs in Alberta who could potentially offer that. A mentorship piece, I think, could almost be its own ministry, really, because there are so many opportunities to use it. How fulsome a look are you taking at that?

Ms McLean: It's certainly an area that we're targeting. I can give you a bit of an overview as well of the work that we're doing right now that touches on mentorship. We're developing a mentorship program and networking opportunities for high-growth oriented entrepreneurs and enterprises. We're also creating a women's economic development and diversification working group to coordinate and share information across GOA on upcoming events, missions, visits, initiatives, and support for women entrepreneurs and women-owned businesses. We are also conducting a survey to Alberta businesses to determine what gaps exist and identify additional needs to ensure that all entrepreneurs have access to clear information to start and grow and expand their businesses with clear and less costly pathways. We're also working towards a system where women entrepreneurs can register to receive information on trade missions, mentorship, networking, financing, and workshops and allow the government of Alberta to collect data on women-owned businesses by sector and track business development, job creation, and innovation.

6:10

Ms Jansen: Fantastic.

I want to skip quickly to – you mentioned the FPT that you have coming up. I was lucky enough to attend one in Yellowknife a couple of years ago. I was actually really surprised that as we sat around the table with women from all over the country, Alberta was actually faring quite well. I thought about the challenges, you know. I thought about our challenges in areas like domestic violence, and then I listened to the minister from Nunavut who talked about dealing with communities of 200 where not only did they not have access to supports for these women, but they had no structure at all in the town. They didn't have a mayor or a representative – nothing – and the mainland was only accessible to the women by boat, if they were lucky enough to be able to find one if they didn't own one. So some of the challenges they faced in some of these areas were unbelievable. It made me glad that we had the resources that we had. Certainly, you know, those conversations are important around the table.

One of the things that struck me with all of those folks – and we all talked about it – was the idea that our ability to share information with each other as elected representatives was hugely important because there aren't too many situations unique to one province, especially in the area of domestic violence, that you haven't had a similar situation in another area of the country. That information-sharing, I think, becomes very important. Have you made those links already with some of your counterparts in other provinces?

Ms McLean: Absolutely. I know that we've got some fantastic people within the department that have been working across Canada on an ongoing basis, and that work is more substantial even currently as we're developing the agenda for the FPT meeting. As we have the opportunity to cohost here in Alberta, we certainly play a significant role in that forum. It has enabled us, really, to have an excuse to talk to the other provinces. As you've pointed out, there's no point in reinventing the wheel when you know that something works. We might as well stand on the shoulders of giants where we can.

Ms Jansen: Do I have a minute left?

The Chair: Thirty-four seconds.

Ms Jansen: I just wanted to say thank you. I'm pretty much done with my questions. This has been terrific. I certainly have had every one of my queries answered successfully, and I just want to say that I'm looking forward to whatever collaborative work you want to do in this area in the future. Thank you very much for your time. I appreciate it.

Ms McLean: Fantastic. Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you very much, hon. member.

I would now like to invite members of the government caucus to speak for the next 10 minutes. If they choose, they can go back and forth with the minister.

Ms Luff: I think we've done some good work here, and I've been very happy to hear from all of the excellent women at the table this evening. Since I know that the minister probably would like to go see her baby, I think that we're good.

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there any other members present wishing to speak?

Seeing none, then pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(8) the estimates of the Ministry of Status of Women are deemed to have been considered for the time allotted in the schedule.

I'd like to remind the committee members that we are scheduled to meet next on Thursday, May 12, to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Health.

Thank you, Minister and your staff, for coming to join us this afternoon.

This meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 6:14 p.m.]

