



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee
on
Public Accounts

Justice and Solicitor General

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First Session**

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP), Deputy Chair

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Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Gerald Lamoureux, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services

Fiona Lavoy, Executive Director, Policy and Planning

Mary MacDonald, Assistant Deputy Minister, Resolution and Court Administration Services

Barb Martini, Executive Director, Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee

David Peace, Assistant Deputy Minister, Justice Services

Kim Sanderson, Assistant Deputy Minister, Correctional Services

Bill Sweeney, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Security

Eric Tolppanen, Assistant Deputy Minister, Alberta Crown Prosecution Service

Brad Wells, Senior Financial Officer

9:30 a.m.

Wednesday, September 11, 2019

[Ms Phillips in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning, everyone. I'd like to call this meeting of the Public Accounts Committee to order and welcome everyone in attendance.

My name is Shannon Phillips, MLA for Lethbridge-West, the chair of this committee. We will have some members joining us on the phone as we begin. I'd like to start by asking that all members, staff, and guests joining the committee at the table introduce themselves for the record, and then I'll go to the members on the phone lines as they begin to join us. Why don't we start to my left today with the committee clerk, please.

Mr. Roth: Good morning. Aaron Roth, committee clerk.

Dr. Massolin: Good morning. Philip Massolin, clerk of committees and research services.

Mr. Dach: Good morning. Lorne Dach, MLA for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Feehan: Good morning. Richard Feehan, MLA for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Leonty: Good morning. Eric Leonty, Assistant Auditor General.

Ms Hoffman: Sarah Hoffman, Edmonton-Glenora. Sorry. My computer is in the other room.

Mr. Wylie: Doug Wylie, Auditor General.

Ms Martini: Barb Martini, executive director of the office of the public guardian and trustee.

Mr. Lamoureux: Gerald Lamoureux, ADM, corporate services.

Mr. Bosscha: Frank Bosscha, Deputy Minister, Justice and Solicitor General.

Dr. Cooley: Dennis Cooley, associate deputy minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Mr. Wells: Brad Wells, SFO, Justice and Solicitor General.

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

Mr. Rutherford: Brad Rutherford, MLA, Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. Walker: Jordan Walker, MLA, Sherwood Park.

Mr. Guthrie: Peter Guthrie, MLA, Airdrie-Cochrane.

Mr. Amery: Mickey Amery, MLA, Calgary-Cross.

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

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

Mr. Gotfried: Richard Gotfried, deputy chair and MLA, Calgary-Fish Creek.

The Chair: Okay. Very good. Who do we have on the phones who has joined us so far?

Ms Renaud: Marie Renaud, St. Albert.

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

The Chair: Okay. We have Member Renaud and Member Barnes. Anyone else?

Mr. Toor: Devinder Toor from Calgary-Falconridge.

The Chair: And Mr. Toor. Very good.

Thank you very much, everyone, for those introductions.

We do have one substitution for the record: Mr. Rutherford for Mr. Turton.

For the benefit of our guests today, the microphones are operated by *Hansard*, so you do not have to do anything. Please set cellphones and other devices to silent. Committee proceedings are live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. The audio- and video stream and transcripts of meetings can be accessed via the LAO website.

We'll now move on to the agenda. Members, are there any changes or additions to today's agenda? Seeing none, would a member like to move that the agenda for the September 11, 2019, meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved as distributed? Moved by Ms Hoffman. Is there any discussion on this motion? All in favour? Any opposed? Members on the phone? Thank you. The motion is carried.

Now we will move on to the business portion of our meeting. We have guests today from the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General and the office of the public guardian and trustee who are here to address some of the office of the Auditor General's outstanding recommendations as well as the ministry annual report for 2018-2019.

The officials will now provide opening remarks not exceeding 10 minutes, and then we will, after that, proceed to the Auditor General's comments for five minutes. Deputy and others, please proceed.

Mr. Bosscha: Thank you, and good morning. I'm Frank Bosscha, the Deputy Minister of Justice and Deputy Solicitor General. As mentioned, at the table joining me are Barb Martini, the executive director of the office of the public guardian and trustee; to my right here, Gerald Lamoureux, assistant deputy minister, corporate services; and then Brad Wells at the end. He's the executive director of financial services and senior financial officer. Then to my immediate left is Dennis Cooley, associate deputy minister, Solicitor General.

Seated behind us from the executive team are Bill Sweeney, senior assistant deputy minister, public security; Kim Sanderson, assistant deputy minister at correctional services; Eric Tolppanen, assistant deputy minister, Alberta Crown prosecution service; David Peace, assistant deputy minister of justice services; Mary MacDonald, assistant deputy minister, resolution and court administration services; Fiona Lavoy, executive director of policy and planning services branch; and Dan Laville, director of communications.

Justice and Solicitor General leads a fair and innovative justice system, ensuring Albertans can live in safe and secure communities with effective policing and supports for victims of crime. Our seven divisions, including the Alberta Crown prosecution service and correctional services, work alongside our partners in law enforcement, legal aid, the judiciary, and many others to ensure the complex functions of the judicial system are delivered effectively.

In 2018-19 JSG spent nearly \$1.5 billion to deliver its mandate. The 2018-19 expenses were \$46 million, or 3 per cent, higher than the previous year because of in-year operating pressures. These pressures included a bail review, the introduction of a rural crime

initiative, and increased support to both legal aid and the victims of crime fund. In terms of revenue, the ministry generated \$342 million in 2018-19, up almost a million, or about 1 per cent, versus 2017-18. The nominal increase is primarily due to higher court fee payments and additional federal funding.

Before speaking to the ministry's outstanding audit recommendations, I'll provide a brief overview of the ministry's divisions, starting with the Alberta Crown prosecution service. This division prosecutes offences under the Criminal Code of Canada, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, and provincial statutes in all courts in the province and in the Supreme Court of Canada. In 2018-19 the division spent about \$103.6 million, which is \$9.9 million, or 10.5 per cent, higher than in 2017-18. This funding was primarily used to fill existing Crown prosecutor vacancies, to hire additional prosecutors to the Crown bail office, and to focus on rural crime issues.

Moving on to the resolution and court administration services division, this division supports the operation of Alberta courts through administrative services and provides Albertans with enhanced access to information, dispute resolution, and court assistance. In 2018-19 the division spent \$200.6 million, which is \$7.2 million, or 3.5 per cent, lower than the prior year. This is due to delays in recruitments. During 2018-19 work continued on the court renewal initiative to help provincial courthouses address increased caseloads. The initiative will ensure cases are heard as quickly as possible and helps keep the judiciary, staff, and members of the public who use the courthouses safe.

Public security. This is the division which is responsible for a wide range of vital programs that keep Albertans safe and secure, including the contract for provincial policing services, municipal policing grants, and police oversight. The division is also responsible for sheriffs, fish and wildlife officers, and commercial vehicle enforcement officers. In 2018-19 the division expended \$523.2 million, which is \$13.9 million, or 2.7 per cent, higher than in 2017-18. This was mainly due to increased funding for the RCMP to address rural crime and increased funding for the Alberta law enforcement response teams, also known as ALERT, to address the exploitation of children and domestic violence. In addition, the province introduced An Act to Control and Regulate Cannabis, which established a system for legalized cannabis in Alberta.

During the year the victims of crime programs spent \$43 million. That's about \$2.04 million, or 5 per cent, higher than in 2017-18 due to delivery of specialized services to victims, enhanced services for indigenous communities, and increased grants to regional and municipal victim service units. The unit also provided financial benefits to victims of crime and supports 77 police-based and 40 community-based victims' programs. This ensures victims are treated with dignity, compassion, and respect.

As for justice services, its key areas are the maintenance enforcement program, the office of the Chief Medical Examiner, support to Legal Aid Alberta, and the office of the public guardian and trustee. In 2018-19 justice services spent \$176 million, which is \$16.4 million, or 10.2 per cent, higher than in 2017-18. This increase was mainly due to additional funding provided to legal aid to improve access and service delivery while meeting demand.

In 2018 the government of Alberta negotiated a five-year governance agreement with Legal Aid Alberta and the Law Society of Alberta that took effect April 1, 2019. As a result, for 2018-19 JSG provided \$104 million to Legal Aid Alberta, which included an original budget of \$89 million plus an in-year supplemental estimate of nearly \$15 million. An integrated reporting framework ensures Legal Aid's accountability and value for money in continuing to improve the quality, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness of Alberta's legal aid program and supports ongoing evaluation of Legal Aid Alberta's value to Alberta's justice system.

Moving on to the legal services division, this consists of two branches: the civil law branch, which provides legal services to all government ministries and represents them in courts and tribunals, and the Legislative Counsel office, which drafts government bills, regulations, and orders in council. In 2018-19 legal services spent \$55.9 million, which is \$3.3 million, or 6.2 per cent, higher than in 2017-18. The increase is mainly due to an internal transfer of the office of the public guardian and trustee lawyers and legal assistance to the legal services division.

9:40

Now I'll talk about correctional services. This division provides secure custody of sentenced and remanded adults and young persons. The division also provides court-ordered community supervision of individuals both pre- and postsentence. In 2018-19 correctional services spent \$289.8 million, which is \$3.8 million, or 1.3 per cent, higher than the prior year. This is primarily due to increased payroll costs in the remand and correctional centres to ensure the safety of inmates, staff, and visitors.

Supporting all the department's work are the ministry support services. This includes corporate functions such as the minister's office, the deputy minister's office, and corporate services. In 2018-19 ministry support services spent \$24.9 million, which is \$2.4 million, or 10.7 per cent, higher than in 2017-18. This increase was largely due to a year-end accrual for pending settlement of five legal cases.

Finally, what I believe will be the focus of today's discussion: I'll talk briefly about the minister's response to recommendations made by the Auditor General in relation to legal aid, the office of the public guardian and trustee, and the victims of crime fund. As I have mentioned, we completed work on a longer term sustainable governance and funding framework for legal aid in October 2018. This involved working with Legal Aid, the Law Society of Alberta, and stakeholders on four main decision points regarding the service delivery model. This was a shifting to a needs-based approach and better integrating Legal Aid Alberta with other ongoing justice improvement initiatives; the methodology for determining financial eligibility using Legal Aid Alberta's existing financial eligibility guidelines; property matters in family law moving to a needs-based approach, where the merit of the case and the value of the property is considered in determining whether Legal Aid would offer services in specific cases; and sustainable funding providing predictable, multiyear, long-term funding of Alberta's legal aid program to address growth and demand and certainty.

In response to the 2013 and 2016 OAG audits into the office of the public guardian and trustee's control systems and management of client trust, seven recommendations were accepted and implemented. We have completed the review of the file management processes to ensure all client files are subject to adequate supervisory review, completed a review of the internal audit function to ensure it has adequate authority and independence to effectively perform its function, reviewed and assessed policies and procedures, strengthened processes for approval and payment of client expenses or disbursements, and improved processes for documentation. We've also improved performance reporting for the operations of the Public Trustee and developed processes to effectively manage the growth and use of the accumulated surplus in the common fund. For the victims of crime fund, JSG has developed a plan to determine the best use of the surplus in the fund to balance assistance to victims now and in the future. This plan will be subject to the current government's platform commitment to review the existing model for victims' services.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Very good. Thank you, Deputy.

We'll now move to a five-minute presentation from the Auditor General. Thank you.

Mr. Wylie: Thank you, Chair. I'm very pleased to hear of the progress made on the outstanding recommendations. That's excellent news. As is customary to our practice, we will follow up on all of the assertions made by management, and we'll come back and conclude on the outstanding recommendations.

Chair, I just want to maybe mention and see what the committee's views are. The committee receives a brief update on the status of the recommendations. We just heard the deputy provide the positive news on certain action that he's taken. I wondered if there would be an opportunity maybe at this committee for management to be able to describe in a little bit more detail the actual action that has been taken on the individual recommendations. Now, I know time is a consideration, and there are time allocation issues. We couldn't focus on all, but I wonder if the committee could maybe focus on one, and that might be the one matter that was relating to the OPGT, the office of the public guardian and trustee, relating to the accumulated surplus and the action taken there.

The committee received a very good briefing from Leg. research, and as you're aware, just to remind the committee, in the briefing the issue there was that not all of the interest earned on clients' investment was provided to the clients of the OPGT. Amounts were withheld to cover costs for errors and omissions of the staff of the OPGT and, again, the difference between the legislated minimum interest that was paid to the clients and the actual earnings on the investment portfolio. Identified in our audit report, over the years that amount has grown substantially. I believe that at March 31, 2019, the amount was \$75 million. At that time our audit concluded that the trustee did not have adequate systems to manage this process. As I said earlier, we're very pleased to hear of the progress made. I think the committee would benefit and give management an opportunity to describe the good work they've done.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now move into our first 15-minute block. Just for the benefit of our guests today, we begin the first rotation with 15 and 15, Official Opposition and then government. Then in our second, third, and fourth rotations they are 10-minute blocks.

We will now turn it over to the Official Opposition, with Mr. Feehan to lead off.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. I appreciate you all being here this morning to answer our questions. You may know that my role in the Official Opposition is as critic for Indigenous Relations, so you'll find that the vast majority of my questions relate to issues related to the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit community. I just want to try to find out sort of some general information at the beginning. I have specific questions, but I notice in reading the annual report that there isn't a specific focus on work focused on First Nations and Métis and Inuit communities. It isn't mentioned, for example, in the key factors influencing performance. So I just want to ask a general question first to make sure I have good information, and that is just about some of the focus that you may have put on working with the indigenous communities.

Mr. Bosscha: Certainly. In terms of the general question: across the whole justice system, or are there particular areas that you're interested in?

Mr. Feehan: Of course, I'm happy to hear about anything you're doing in any of your divisions, but if we could perhaps start with the justice system, that would be the best way to go.

Mr. Bosscha: Certainly. What I'm going to do is ask ADM Kim Sanderson to provide some information on what corrections is doing with respect to the indigenous population.

Mr. Feehan: That would be great. Thank you.

Ms Sanderson: Good morning. I'm Kim Sanderson, ADM for correctional services division. In answer to your question I can tell you that we have three contracts with indigenous communities across the province who deliver services on-reserve to their various communities. We've had those contracts in place for a number of years, and we work very closely with them in providing services that are culturally appropriate to the various areas they're working in. Additionally, in our correctional centres we have indigenous programming specifically for indigenous inmates and offenders. We have indigenous program co-ordinators in our correctional centres that provide that service.

I think that should answer your question.

Mr. Feehan: Great. Thank you.

Let me just ask some specific questions perhaps, Kim, if I might. I don't know if you're the appropriate person to answer. Do you keep track of who is indigenous in your various programs? Can you tell me, for example, what percentage of people in jails are identifiable as indigenous? Is that a measure that you use in the department?

Ms Sanderson: It is something that we do track. I don't have the numbers here this morning, but it is something that we do track. We do know that indigenous people are overrepresented in our justice system.

Mr. Feehan: Right. Okay. I guess that with regard to that, then, I'm just wondering about some of the key strategies that you're employing to reduce the overrepresentation of indigenous people in jails and with other aspects of Justice and Solicitor General. Are there some key strategies that I'm missing here in terms of reductions? I notice that your first outcome is for preventative and sustainable models of community safety. I'm just wondering if that is a focus within that.

9:50

Ms Sanderson: It's certainly a focus within those indigenous communities. They work very closely with the partners in the areas in which they work, looking at prevention, education, and working with our partners to look at addictions. Those are things that we rely on our partners to assist with.

Mr. Feehan: Is there any way, in reading the report, that I can have an understanding of what kind of resources are put toward, particularly, working with indigenous communities and, particularly, to reducing their involvement and preventative work? I do of course see that there's \$10 million working with the three communities, and that's fine, but in a billion-dollar budget I imagine there must be more than \$10 million spent on indigenous communities given the overrepresentation. I'm just wondering about methods for me understanding how you're doing this work.

Mr. Bosscha: If I may, what we can likely do is that we could probably pull together some of the information across the different divisions that would give you a sense as to the different programs that are in place and how they're working and what resources are

dedicated both within the government and then what we draw on from our partners.

Mr. Feehan: That would be excellent. Thank you. I appreciate that opportunity.

I'm wondering if you can tell me a few specific things about, for example, what situations or what criteria you use to make decisions about putting services on-reserve, whether or not there are any interjurisdictional barriers that prevent you from doing that. Particularly, I'm interested in the amount or number of services such as victim services units that are on-reserve or in Métis settlements or about issues such as indigenous courthouses being put on-reserve. I know there have been some discussions. Are there some existing right now, and are there plans for more, or do you have an analysis for how that will be decided, whether or not there are going to be those kinds of services provided on-reserve, that I can understand?

Mr. Bosscha: All right. Thank you. I'll ask the ADM for resolution and court administration services, Mary MacDonald, to speak to the indigenous court aspect.

Mr. Feehan: Great. Thank you.

Ms MacDonald: Good morning. Mary MacDonald, ADM for RCAS. A couple of things that would assist in answering the question. Last week the Calgary indigenous court was opened. It was kind of a culmination of an 18-month collaborative effort across the judiciary, various divisions of Justice and Solicitor General, and that court basically is designed to serve indigenous offenders who self-identify for all but the most serious crimes, up to murder, treason, that sort of thing. It's a voluntary direction into that court; you don't have to do it. It is a court that will sit once a week, and what it's done is that it's reallocated internal resources and essentially, then, gathered people from the various service agencies to be present at that court and to assist the person that comes before the court as well as to use the culture and traditions of the indigenous peoples in the court, from the eagle feather to the actual setting up of the court, which is in kind of a traditional circle.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. I did notice that in the press this last week, and I want to congratulate you all. Thank you. I appreciate that.

I know that the Blood Tribe, for example, has specifically been asking for a courtroom on the Kainai reserve, and I'm just wondering about, you know, what method of analysis you use to make a determination as to whether or not that kind of thing might happen.

Ms MacDonald: There are a lot of things that go into that type of analysis. One is a federal and provincial jurisdictional issue, another is the critical mass of need and then the available infrastructure funds to do that – so it's a multifaceted perspective – as well as dealing with a nation in terms of what it is, how they want to handle it, and where they want to handle it. I think there's a lot of discussion that will be ongoing in terms of that, but it's something, certainly, that we are very much alive to.

Mr. Feehan: Okay. Let me turn from the courthouses to the victims' services units. We know, again, that indigenous people are highly overrepresented in terms of being victims of crimes as well. I'm just wondering whether or not we have any victims' services units that are on reserves or Métis settlements, or perhaps you have other mechanisms for dealing specifically with victims' services for indigenous people.

Mr. Bosscha: There are a number of victims' services that are in place, but I'll have Senior ADM Bill Sweeney speak to it, please.

Mr. Sweeney: There are a number of victims' services programs that serve people right across the province, and when we talk about indigenous people, we have to talk about people in urban environments as well. Most of our programs are police-based services, so the police-based victims' services units work out of the police service office but provide service to a pretty broad geographical area. Last year I was pleased that we had authority to extend our indigenous victims' services programming to get to even more Métis and indigenous communities across this province. It's a preoccupation of the victims' services program area. We fund 77 police-based victims' services organizations and 40 other community-based programs, all of which touch indigenous people in one way or another.

Mr. Feehan: Great. Thank you.

Let me just be specific about it. Given that we don't have any police services on settlements or reserves, that would mean that there are no victims' services units explicitly geographically placed on either reserves or settlements. Is that correct?

Mr. Sweeney: Not entirely. You're accurate that some indigenous communities don't have a police detachment within their community, but there are many that have; for example, Wabasca-Desmarais, a place that I used to work when I was a very young man. A very young man. That would work great on the Mistissini Cree First Nation. We have people in Fox Lake, and we have people in High Level, yeah, all over the place. Of course, we have victims' services programs right on the Kainai reserve. We have an agreement with Canada under the First Nations policing program where we fund, with Canada, the police service and where we jointly fund victims' services programming.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. I appreciate it. Your information is excellent.

I would also like to ask about some specific issues with regard to the number of people who end up in jail as a result of nonpayment of fines. It's a large issue in the indigenous community, and I'm just wondering about strategies that you are using or some analysis that you maybe have done about how to reduce people ending up in jail – very expensive for us in this province – if it's an issue of nonpayment of fines. I understand there was some work that was done in the last while.

Mr. Bosscha: Yes. I'll turn it over to Associate Deputy Minister Dennis Cooley.

Dr. Cooley: Thank you for the question. It's a good question. It's certainly an issue that we're very much alive to, particularly on whether that's fines or not being able to address bail. It's an issue that we're looking into both with respect to the First Nation population as well as the non First Nation population. The idea is that we want to reserve our most expensive resource, which is custody, for those who truly need to be there because they're a danger to society and a danger to the communities and in danger of reoffending. It's something that we're looking into. We can certainly provide additional details if required.

Mr. Feehan: Is there an outcome associated with reducing the number of people who go to jail as a result of nonpayment of fines in your work?

Dr. Cooley: Right now we're at the exploratory stage for both of those, and we want to do some fact-finding and then provide some additional outcome measures.

Mr. Feehan: Great. I'm just going to keep moving along because I think I'm running out of time here.

The Chair: Sure. I thought that maybe there was additional information, but it turns out no, so go ahead, Mr. Feehan.

Mr. Feehan: Well, I'll just keep asking, and whoever is appropriate, you can ask.

The next thing I'd like to ask about is the Gladue reports. I know that they're being used increasingly in the court system, and that has got to put some strain on your services and resources. I guess I am wondering about the analysis that we're doing of the effectiveness of the Gladue reports. We certainly know that we're doing more of them, but do we know that we're getting any value for having done them? Does it change the services provided to either victims or offenders? I just want to know whether we're getting our dollars' worth out of having done all of this increased number of Gladue reports.

10:00

Mr. Bosscha: That's a very good question. David Peace, the ADM for justice services, can speak in detail to that.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you.

Mr. Peace: Good morning. My name is David Peace. I'm the assistant deputy minister for justice services, and I oversee the Gladue program. You're right, sir. It has increased to 18 per cent over the last year, but it is a solid program. We do 92 per cent of the Gladue reports within six weeks of them being requested. They're done independently, so both the prosecution and the defence bar benefit from these independent Gladue reports. We receive positive feedback on them. The growing number of Gladue reports is of concern to us as a program pressure, and we're looking at ways to optimize that through partnering with various community organizations throughout Alberta.

Mr. Feehan: You know, I absolutely congratulate you on meeting this high demand and on doing so with a very high record of getting the reports done in a timely way. My question isn't about that, because I think you are doing that. I'm wondering . . .

The Chair: I'm sure we'll get back to it.

Now we move on to the 15-minute portion within our first rotation of government questioning. Just a reminder for those in the gallery to introduce yourselves when you come to the mic for the record and also for the benefit of the public, who, I'm sure, are watching in the tens.

With that, I will turn things over to our colleagues from the government caucus. Please proceed.

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Chair, and thank you for being here today. I just want to start off on the topic around rural crime. On page 20 of your ministry's annual report, as part of performance measure 1(a), there is a section dedicated to examining what your department is doing to combat crime. As I'm sure will come as no surprise, combatting rural crime is as important to my constituents as it is to, I think, all Albertans across the province, particularly as we witness an alarming incidence of violent or property crime. Can you share with us the significance of this being added as a new measure and explain what resources have been dedicated to the achievement of this performance goal?

Mr. Bosscha: Certainly. Thank you for the question. For that one, it was started just after the 2018-19 business plan was done, and the strategy involves the Alberta police service, the RCMP, as a sole initiative, with funding and supports provided by the government. For this, it was best suited to place it as a priority in the joint JSG and RCMP business plan and – sorry. I may not be answering your question quite properly here. I'm going to actually ask Bill to talk about this. I'm sorry. I'm still coming up to speed on a number of these initiatives here, so maybe I could ask Bill Sweeney to speak to it, please.

Mr. Sweeney: Bill Sweeney from the public security division. Rural crime was a preoccupation for my division last year as a consequence of alarming increases in, ostensibly, property crimes but also persons crimes in rural jurisdictions. There was an overall increase in crime across the board in the province, but it was much more acute and much more alarming in rural jurisdictions. As a consequence of the trend that was catching the attention of just about everyone, the government invested \$8 million in policing and \$2 million in prosecution services to immediately address the issues that were starting to become not only chronic but epidemic.

The RCMP, as our provincial police service, was the recipient of that \$8 million, and with it they created a plan that we think today is actually producing some pretty remarkable results. They worked on a premise that a very small population of criminal offenders commit a large number of crimes. In fact, the data, which is supported both with empirical research through our division and Stats Canada, indicates that about 5 per cent of the offenders commit about 60 per cent of the crime. So the RCMP thought it would be very important if you could focus on that 5 per cent. At the front end of their plan was an intelligence strategy to focus on identifying who those 5 per cent are.

The second element was a crime reduction unit that focused on project-based investigations on those prolific offenders; ostensibly low-complexity property crimes but very concerning to rural Albertans. Since the crime reduction units came into play – there are four, and they're regionally based, but they're not regionally centred – they have arrested over 1,308 of these prolific offenders. That's in about an 18-month period, so it's a pretty remarkable start to a very successful program.

In addition to the crime reduction units, the RCMP created a callback unit, which would allow people that are calling in complaints to actually deal with the entire complaint without having a police officer attend the scene. The intent with that particular strategy was to ensure that police officers that were on the road were focused on investigations and not randomly chasing complaints. That, too, has actually generated considerable positive response from the rural public, but it also has saved police time, to the point of approximately 15 FTEs per year.

They also have a PROS data centre, where police officers on the road can call in and enter material into a computer-based records management system without having to go back to the office, because I'm sure anybody who represents rural constituents will know that one of the things they complain about most is that they're always at the office doing paperwork and not on the road. So that initiative was funded.

There are a number of other elements that I can provide more detail on, but it's a very comprehensive strategy and in the first 18 months had very significant results. We have seen property crime go down 10 per cent in rural Alberta.

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you.

I just want to follow up on the data centre aspect of it. Was that just for the crime prevention team that was set aside, or was that a broader strategy across the province?

Mr. Sweeney: Province-wide, yeah.

Mr. Rutherford: Okay. Does that continue to be properly – has it been properly funded?

Mr. Sweeney: We've not received any complaints from the RCMP. In fact, I can provide the committee with some specific information: they are giving us feedback that it's saving road time in the vicinity of 30 or 40 RCMP members for a full year.

Mr. Rutherford: Do we know how many reports that data centre has taken in? Then, to follow up on that, if that data centre report ends up becoming a criminal charge later on, have there been any issues with the witness testimony that it's gone from an RCMP officer to a data centre and then making it to the courts?

Mr. Sweeney: I have not heard of any problem or complication arising in the courts, and I do have that data that I can provide to the committee.

Mr. Rutherford: Okay. I appreciate it. Thank you.

One of the outcomes the Justice and Solicitor General committed to achieving was that vulnerable Albertans would be safe and supported during interactions with the justice system. On page 32 of the 2018-19 annual report, performance measure 3(a), the percentage of people who agree that fair and impartial service is provided to prosecute people fell from 83 per cent to 70 per cent, not meeting the 2018-19 target of 84 per cent. As this drop signifies a significant shortcoming in the achievement of this target, how can Albertans be reassured that prosecution has and will be conducted in a manner that supports those that have been harmed by crime?

Mr. Bosscha: Thank you for the question. At the time of the survey – it's always interesting with surveys as to what's impacting the responses – there was various media attention to a number of high-profile criminal cases, there was the introduction of cannabis legalization, and there was a lot of work being done to divert matters away from the courts, which all have an impact on the results from the surveys.

But maybe what I could do in terms of the prosecution of this is turn it over to the assistant deputy minister, Eric Tolppanen, to provide some further details.

10:10

Mr. Tolppanen: Good morning. My name is Eric Tolppanen. I'm the assistant deputy minister of the Alberta Crown prosecution service. There are a number of aspects that I can provide information on with respect to the response that the ACPS can provide to the question. First of all, Senior ADM Sweeney spoke of rural crime and referenced that there have been resources allocated to the ACPS for the purpose of aligning our service with the work of the RCMP in addressing rural crime. I can report that we have 10 prosecutors who've been hired to address that. One of them is in the bail unit within the ACPS, and nine are spread around the province and align with the four units that ADM Sweeney referenced.

In terms of other aspects of the ACPS that are addressing the confidence, we are through our case management processes focusing upon serious and violent crime. We have a Justice Summit, where we work with the judiciary, the police, and other stakeholders. Those aspects of it are, in our estimation, intending to address the confidence.

Mr. Rutherford: Now, is there a particular question within that survey that scored significantly lower, or is it just across the board that confidence dropped, or is there a specific aspect where it fell considerably relating to this drop in satisfaction?

Mr. Tolppanen: I'm afraid I don't know the specific questions that were asked that led to the results that we're seeing. I don't know if there's information with respect to that that we can provide in that regard.

Mr. Bosscha: We can certainly take a look at that and provide that information if it's available with respect to that.

Mr. Rutherford: Yeah. In writing will be fine. It's just to get an idea of where the confidence dropped, because if we're going to address it, we need to know where that is.

I guess a quick follow-up, because it was cited in the annual report as well. What additional steps are being taken to help victims in a courtroom who have experienced traumatic events, sexual violence for instance, who are fearful of telling their story in front of an open courtroom?

Mr. Tolppanen: There are measures available to judges to protect the security of victims who feel vulnerable. There is a capacity in some courtrooms to allow victims to testify from different rooms. Crown prosecutors have been educated with respect to the applications in that regard to ensure that victims aren't revictimized through the court process. We also have the capacity for child victims to provide their evidence through a video recorded statement, and then that is played in court versus having them have to testify in open court.

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you.

I have one more question. On page 21, as part of performance measure 1(b), it indicates that the percentage of Albertans who feel satisfied with policing in Alberta has fallen by 5 per cent, from 82 to 77 per cent. This variance can be attributed to rural crime concerns as satisfaction is significantly higher in Calgary and Edmonton. If the number one priority is protecting public safety, why did we fall short, and what measures have been taken to ensure greater satisfaction with and to increase the confidence in our police services?

Mr. Bosscha: Thank you for the question. I'll ask ADM Sweeney to please speak to that.

Mr. Sweeney: We're speculating, because we're just looking at the data and trying to evaluate and understand the implications, but our speculation is that the dramatic and sudden increase in crime rates in rural Alberta particularly – but, as I mentioned earlier, it's a phenomenon that isn't isolated to rural Alberta; it's just more acute there – probably created concern as to the adequacy and the level of policing that is provided to those constituents, the people that answered those questions. But I think further analysis is required to give us confidence that we understand the causation. We think there's a correlation, certainly, with the crime rates.

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you.

The Chair: Great.

We have our next questioners. You have about two minutes.

Ms Rosin: Okay. In early 2018, as outlined on page 22, performance measure 1(b), the government announced an investment of \$8 million into Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) funding and a further

\$2 million for Crown prosecutions specifically to address rural crime. The seven-point plan was developed in consultation with the RCMP to allocate the funds and help reduce rural crime by putting resources where they are most needed, focusing on crime reduction, enhanced intelligence and sharing information to better identify and catch prolific offenders.

Can you please explain to me what steps have since been taken with this funding increase to address the previous shortcomings and what results you've recognized or, in cases where we saw, I believe, over a hundred criminals walk earlier this year, what areas you may identify where there's still room for improvement?

Dr. Cooley: Sure. Thank you for the question. Yes, there was an increase in funding last year directed towards rural crime, so \$8 million went towards the RCMP, and then there was a commitment for additional funds for the prosecutions. As my colleague Bill Sweeney outlined earlier, there were a number of measures taken by the RCMP to establish the crime reduction units, the four units across the province – and those units are now operational – as well as the callback centre and the intelligence-gathering functions. So we are seeing some impact now, I think, from the measures that were put into place in 2018. There's certainly more that needs to be done, and we're currently looking at ways of augmenting that.

Maybe I'll ask my colleague to talk a little bit on the prosecution side, the work that we're doing there.

The Chair: I'm sure we'll get back to it.

Now we will move into the 10-minute rotations, beginning with the Official Opposition. Please proceed, Member Hoffman, it looks like. Yes.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. Maybe I'll take the first couple of minutes and then cede to my colleagues.

The first one I want to touch on is around Jordan and its implications to the work that's been done. I guess the main thing I want to ask about, though, is if there have been any assessments done if we were to achieve Jordan without having the prioritization initiative and have everyone achieve the Jordan outcomes, if we've done cost analysis on that.

Mr. Bosscha: Thank you for the questions. I'm not sure we've done the cost analysis as to the go-forward effect if we were to achieve Jordan.

Ms Hoffman: Even looking back?

Mr. Bosscha: Even looking back.

Maybe I'll ask Eric in terms of the assessment of the impact of Jordan and the costs.

Mr. Tolppanen: Eric Tolppanen, assistant deputy minister, Alberta Crown prosecution service. We haven't done a specific cost analysis of what impact Jordan has had on the court system or specifically on the Alberta Crown prosecution service. I can tell you that as a result of the need to speed the processing of cases, we've emphasized early case resolution and have dedicated greater resources to that intake process so that we're resolving cases earlier and allowing those cases that require the full breadth of the court system to be dealt with in a timely manner. There are a number of other initiatives that we are managing within the current resources that we have to try to divert cases out of the court system to try to address Jordan, create space for the serious and violent crime that should be processed through the whole court system. But we don't have a specific breakdown of the cost associated with each of those programs as they're being handled within the current resources of the ACPS.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you.

I think this flows from the question my colleague Ms Rosin was asking when she was talking about charges not proceeding, though, so if we could have an estimate as to what it would have cost, the nonprioritized cases, I guess, what the financial implications would have been or other things. I imagine that somebody has done that work to make the decision to prioritize other cases because of the implications. So if there are documents that relate to that that could be shared with us so that we understand what role those decisions played in making this final decision.

Mr. Tolppanen: We do track the number of cases that don't go through the whole court process as a result of having to prioritize serious and violent cases, so we can certainly provide that information.

10:20

Ms Hoffman: That would be helpful and at a later date through tablings would be more than sufficient.

I want to pivot a bit now to the public guardian and trustee and just start with that I think there was a rolled-up number of 18,000 trust accounts managed by the trustee during the '17-18 year. I'm hoping that we can get some more details in terms of the breakdown. How many of those were minors? For example, I know that I've met some while I've been out in the community that definitely have raised some concerns about the way their files have been handled. How many were minors, and how many were on behalf of represented adults?

Mr. Bosscha: Thank you for the question. I'll turn it over to the executive director, Barb Martini.

Ms Martini: Thank you for that question. The minors total is approximately 9,500, and the represented adult totals are close to 8,000 that have a guardian and a trustee, a public guardian and/or trustee. I don't have the specific breakdown for you of just trustee, but I could get that for you.

Ms Hoffman: So slightly more youth than adults but not substantially more.

Ms Martini: Correct.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. Okay. How many on behalf of deceased or missing persons? Do we have that number?

Ms Martini: I believe it's about 750 files now at this time, approximately.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. What's the complement of the staff in terms of that it seems like a lot of files and a lot of people who rely on the public to provide their financial and other supports to get them through life. What's the staff complement like to support that many people?

Ms Martini: Within the office of the public guardian and trustee we have a 256 staff complement now. Approximately 141 of those would be trustee staff focusing on trust issues.

Ms Hoffman: So 141 for essentially 18,000 people?

Ms Martini: Correct.

Ms Hoffman: What's the intake process like? What's the wait time? These are some of the things I've heard, when I've been talking in the community, around timeliness and the ability of the staff. People certainly haven't been blaming the staff. They've just

been saying that case volumes are too large and that the access is not sufficient for their desired hopes.

Ms Martini: With the trustee applications or referrals to us: it will depend on how much information comes in with the referral and how much time it takes us to go out and verify assets, verify liabilities, and then make the application to go forward to court. We would prioritize, and if it's an urgent situation, we'll attend to that first or in sequence. But those circumstances and that information are sometimes beyond our control, and we work as quickly as we can to get that. We can't go forward for court application until we have that information.

Ms Hoffman: Would it be possible – I don't expect you to have it here – to give a bit of, you know, maybe going back a number of years, sort of what caseloads look like at different points in time and what response rates look like just so we have a bit of a historical analysis?

Ms Martini: Yes. We can put that together for you.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you.

Then the last one. How many minutes do we have, actually, Madam Chair?

The Chair: Three and a half.

Ms Hoffman: Well, I'll pass it now, and then I'll come at a later round. Thank you.

The Chair: Please, Mr. Dach.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Chair. I've a couple of questions on a different topic, but I'll first of all start off with the questions relating to fine revenue from traffic tickets under the Traffic Safety Act, 2018-19, shown on pages 56 to 59, I believe, of the annual report, showing that the revenue generated was below budget by \$23 million. I'm looking specifically on page 59. Has the department determined what the plan would be to deal with less-than-expected revenues should this trend continue? I must say that it seems to be a good-news story with more obedient drivers perhaps, but I'm not sure what the explanation is for this drop in traffic ticket revenue. I'm just wondering if the department has determined what the plan would be to deal with this trend if it is continuing?

Mr. Bosscha: Thank you for the question. It's an interesting situation, because this is the first time that we've actually seen the revenues go the reverse. So either it's a change in the enforcement, or it's that drivers are actually improving. For the department, it is a matter that's under consideration. We're figuring out what options we have. A lot of it has to do with the different municipalities that use this type of enforcement and how they're enforcing. So there are things that are outside of our control, but we are looking at different options going forward into the 2019-2020 budget as to: what options and levers do we have at this point? It's a go-forward concern. Looking back, again, there have been changes to how photoradar is used and how enforcement is conducted at this point.

Brad, would there be anything else to that from a financial point?

Mr. Wells: No. I mean, I would just add that, yeah, historically the fine revenue has increased year over year up until 2016-17, where the government's retention of that revenue hit its high of about \$83.4 million. It has dropped down. The government retention in '18-19 was about \$75 million, so we have seen that curve plateau and start to drop off. As the DM has mentioned, there are options

being considered on how to address that as part of the upcoming budget.

Mr. Dach: All right. Just a follow-up in the matter of, I guess, public interest. I'd like to ask on behalf of my constituents, who may think that the fine revenue – or they maybe wonder what happens to these fine revenues. Do they go directly to the ministry, the department, and it's part of their budget? I tend to think not, but I think the public wonders if they just go into general revenue. How would a drop in these fines on an annual basis in that revenue affect your actual budgetary operation?

Mr. Bosscha: Thank you for the question. My understanding is that it does go into general revenue although some of it does get reflected back, when the budgets are being set for each of the departments, to take into account the cost of enforcement or how those funds might be used with respect to policing.

Maybe I'll turn it over to Brad Wells, who is the CFO and can probably explain better as to what happens with the funds as they come in and are disbursed.

Mr. Wells: Yeah. The government's fine retention is 26.67 per cent of the Traffic Safety Act fines. That goes into general revenue. As the DM ...

The Chair: Very good. Thanks for that.

Now we will proceed to 10 minutes on the government side. Just for the benefit of the members, if anyone who is on the phones wants to participate or ask questions, either send a note to the deputy chair or the committee clerk or some combination of that, and we will make sure that you can fully participate in the meeting. The same goes for the Official Opposition side. Just a reminder to the committee members.

With that, we have a 10-minute rotation. Please proceed, Ms Rosin.

Ms Rosin: Okay. Thank you. I know you guys kind of got figuratively saved by the bell last time, but I'm going to double back to where I was talking about Crown prosecutions. I know that Member Hoffman sort of chimed in. As I was saying, the previous government did allocate \$2 million for increased Crown prosecutions, but as I mentioned, we did see over 100 criminals walk in Calgary a few months ago. I'm just really wondering if you could speak to how that money has been allocated, if you have seen any improvements due to that increased funding, and, if not, where you see the room for improvement and what steps you think we can take to better Crown prosecuting and getting these criminals off the street. As someone who represents a rural riding, I think it's really tough for people to see those who have victimized them be put back onto the streets. It makes people feel really vulnerable.

So I'm just wondering if you can talk to what steps have been taken, what results we've realized, and where you think there's room for improvement.

Ms Hoffman: Point of order, Madam Chair. Based on the orientations that we've had, I think the first two questions are totally in order, and I think the third one is for the minister around a policy question. But I think the first two, around looking back: that's the mandate of the committee. Am I wrong?

The Chair: No. I think, yeah, just keep the responses to sort of the first two questions, and that's completely fair ball. Please proceed.

Mr. Bosscha: All right. Thank you. I'll ask ADM Tolppanen to speak to that directly from the prosecution services point of view.

Mr. Tolppanen: Thank you for the question. My name is Eric Tolppanen. I'm the assistant deputy minister at the Alberta Crown prosecution service. With respect to the \$2 million that was allocated to the ACPs, we, as I believe I mentioned earlier, hired nine prosecutors who work exclusively in the regional parts of the province, aligning with the RCMP's four units that divide up the province. We allocated one prosecutor to the bail office. As you might have read in the report, the bail system in Alberta has been changed, so the Crown prosecutors now appear at the first instance bail hearings. That prosecutor was meant to augment the prosecution team such that we could better address bail matters arising from the regions.

10:30

The other nine prosecutors, as I indicated, are spread around the province, co-located with existing offices, but they serve as the contact point for the RCMP so that when the RCMP are pursuing an investigation with respect to a matter of significance with regard to rural crime, that's their point of contact. That's the prosecutor who would be working with them.

In terms of a specific program, in Medicine Hat with these resources we've been able to assign what we've coined a duty Crown, whose responsibilities are to assist the RCMP by going to the RCMP detachments, providing training, assisting them by reviewing files, and generally assisting the RCMP with their investigations. It was run as a pilot, and the feedback from the police has been very positive with respect to the impact of that.

I can also indicate that we do track, as I indicated in response to an earlier question, instances in which cases have not been able to proceed as a result of resource constraints, and although there was in Calgary fairly recently publicity around some cases that didn't proceed, we've seen that number drop as a result of increased resources to the ACPs.

Ms Rosin: Okay. Thank you.

My next question. It's been incredibly clear that Alberta has seen a very steady increase in crime, as pointed out on page 12 of your report. The ministry says that this is one of the key factors influencing your performance. We've seen increases in the rates of violent crime, property crime, and a growing epidemic of gang violence and organized crime. The government has made a promise to Albertans to address organized crime and gang violence in the form of Alberta law enforcement response teams, or ALERT, to specifically combat violence and protect vulnerable Albertans. I think long-standing inaction on organized crime and gang activity has caused a lot of Albertans to feel threatened and unsafe. As mentioned earlier by my colleague, on page 21, performance measure 1(b), the percentage of Albertans who feel satisfied with policing has fallen 5 per cent. That shows that 23 per cent of Albertans are now dissatisfied with their police services. That's nearly a quarter, and I would definitely agree that many of those are those living in rural areas.

I'm wondering if you can please share with us the specific impact that the ALERT unit has had with respect to making measurable strides in defeating organized crime and gang-related violence in Alberta.

Mr. Bosscha: Certainly. Thank you for the question. ALERT issues an annual report, that outlines many of their accomplishments. In the 2018-19 report they highlight that they've had a fairly significant impact. They laid 1,835 charges. They seized \$11.93 million worth of drugs. There were 24 child interventions, 343 people charged, and there were 68,428 grams of cocaine seized. There was \$2.4 million in proceeds of crime seized,

8,484 grams of fentanyl powder seized, and 68 firearms seized. So it's had a very strong impact in that part of the world.

Ms Rosin: Amazing. Thank you.

That's all I have. I'll pass it off to my colleague Mr. Stephan.

Mr. Stephan: Thanks. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for coming and speaking with the Public Accounts Committee. In terms of my first question I want to talk about the legalization of cannabis. You discuss it on page 19 of your annual report. I appreciate the framework. I want to talk about the framework and how we are seeing progress so far in making sure that we reach those four priorities listed in the annual report: keeping cannabis out of the hands of children and youth – we know that that's very important; early use of marijuana, when you're a child or youth, can severely adversely affect cognitive development – protecting safety on roads, protecting public health, and limiting the illegal market for cannabis.

I know this is a huge material change in law. It happened, you know, just over a year ago, and we're really in uncharted waters. With something new like this, it's very significant. What I'd like to know is: as you're refining and trying to reach these priorities that we have set out in this framework, what are the course corrections that you've made as you're refining and always striving to do the best you can, and what improvements or what things have you learned that you've changed or done differently as you're developing an action plan to reach these four priorities?

Mr. Bosscha: Thank you for the question. It is a different time in our lives with this now being legalized.

Maybe what I can do is that I could ask Senior ADM Sweeney to speak to this. He was in charge of the Cannabis Secretariat at the time that all of the work was being done in preparation for the legalization of cannabis.

Mr. Sweeney: The issues that you raise are very important ones. The Cannabis Secretariat worked across government to commence conversations and to introduce initiatives to contribute to both a healthy and safe Alberta as a consequence of cannabis legalization.

From a policing perspective, the preoccupation was drug-impaired driving. It was a preoccupation that the illicit market would continue to operate within the context of the licit market and that other types of drugs which are much more harmful to Albertans would be introduced. There was a concern with respect to the training that officers had to identify people who might be impaired as a consequence of consumption of cannabis.

We've been working with Canada on an initiative to enhance sobriety testing, which is called SFST, and DRE training for police officers. We've just signed a contribution agreement with Canada with respect to their contributing to training our officers. That's an \$8 million commitment from Canada to assist us in making sure that our officers can be appropriately prepared when they stop people who may have consumed drugs. And not just cannabis; that includes the full spectrum.

We've also been . . .

The Chair: Thank you, ADM Sweeney. I'm sure we'll get back to this and get into the weeds on this topic.

Now I will move on to the third rotation, with the Official Opposition. I believe we are starting with Mr. Dach, and then we will move on to the phones to Member Renaud.

Mr. Dach: Just a quick topic that I wanted to touch on today is with respect to photoradar tickets and the service fees that are charged and fine-payment options that are offered. Payment options that are

identified on a paper ticket that one receives in the mail do not include the option to pay by cheque and mail it in. It used to. Now, I must preface my remark by saying that I don't speak from an abundance of personal experience, but I have seen these paper tickets, and it used to give the option to mail in and avoid a service fee. It no longer does. That's the paper ticket that is mailed to the registered vehicle owner once a photoradar ticket has been generated.

I'm just wondering how that has happened, why that option was dropped on the paper ticket. Particularly in rural areas, if you're, you know, living in a rural area, on a farm perhaps, you don't want to necessarily drive in to the provincial court to pay the ticket to avoid the service fee. If you go to a registry agent, you're paying the service fee. Online you're paying a service fee. Those service fee options are shown on the ticket, but the mail-in option has disappeared, and I don't know why. Can you explain that?

Mr. Bosscha: Thank you for the question. It's one of those changes that has come about as a cost-savings measure because the receipt of cheques required a whole process on the back end that was fairly expensive. While it has created an inconvenience for a number of people – you know, you basically can't save the fee now. You're going to have to pay it. Whether it's online or it's in person, there is that service charge, as I understand it. My understanding is that it was strictly to deal with the fact that there were significant costs associated with still receiving cheques and processing them.

I'll maybe turn to Brad, the CFO.

10:40

Mr. Wells: Yeah. I mean, I would just add that, yeah, there's a significant cost to government for processing cheques, so the intent was to motivate people to an online solution, which is at a lower cost for government.

Mr. Dach: I understand the motivation perhaps, but was due consideration given to the difficulty for people who just don't have access to the Internet or perhaps have difficulty driving in and also to giving them an option where they can avoid the service fee? On the website the payment-by-mail option still exists, which is fine, but on the printed ticket which one receives, that option, which is a legitimate option still – it isn't actually printed on the ticket.

Mr. Bosscha: I think ADM Mary MacDonald would be able to speak to it. I think court services is the one that would have been processing those fines.

Ms MacDonald: My understanding is that the reason for not accepting cheques in the mail and that option there is because it costs more to process the cheque than is received. It is basically a mechanism to use the more efficient processes and resources, you know, to bring this forward. I think that, notwithstanding what we try and drive the citizen user to use in terms of their interaction with the government, as a court service we're certainly open to facilitating their abiding by the responsibilities on that fine payment. But, overall, that kind of global approach is an effort to cut our costs while giving good service.

Mr. Dach: I understand what you're saying. I just wanted to clarify, though, that the fine-payment option by mail actually still exists because it does show and is advertised on the website as an option, but on the ticket it's no longer there as an option. It's not printed. You indicated in your answer, I think, that it might be eliminated as an option. I think it still exists as an option to pay by cheque, but it's just not advertised on the ticket.

Ms MacDonald: True, and that's partly a mechanism of how you're trying to get that interaction. But, basically, if people are trying to stand up and fulfill their duty of paying the fine, we would enable that to occur.

Mr. Dach: Great. Thank you.

Ms MacDonald: Thank you.

The Chair: We'll now move on to the phone. I believe Member Renaud has a series of questions.

Ms Renaud: Thank you. My questions are about the OPGT. The Public Trustee appears to collect two types of administration fees from OPGT clients. According to the financial information included in the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General annual report 2018-19, the Public Trustee collected approximately \$5.32 million in admin fees from clients in 2018-19, and further to those collected fees, the ministry annual report indicated that an additional \$6.68 million was payable but hadn't yet been collected. Here's my question: does the Public Trustee collect two different types of fees from clients, and if so, what's the authority for collecting annual admin fees?

Ms Martini: Thank you. I'm happy to respond to that question. The Public Trustee collects fees for each of the client types that we support. For represented adults, if the client's account balance is less than \$7,000, we do not charge any of those fees. If the client's account goes above \$7,000, we will then charge fees at that time. The \$6.68 million in fees would be those fees that have been calculated but not yet collected. The Public Trustee at the moment is with a committee, a working group, to review the fee structure, and we're expecting recommendations to the Public Trustee in early 2020.

The authority to collect fees comes from the Public Trustee Act. If anyone has concerns, questions regarding their fees that were collected, there's the opportunity, when their trusteeship order is reviewed in court, to ask the Court of Queen's Bench to review the calculation of those fees and if they were appropriate for the services that the Public Trustee provided.

Ms Renaud: Thank you. Is there a place or is there a... [inaudible].

Ms Hoffman: Point of privilege.

The Chair: Yeah. Member Renaud, can you hear me?

Can you just stop the clock for a second?

Member Renaud, can you hear me?

Ms Renaud: Yes, I can.

The Chair: Okay. Now we can hear you a little bit better. That is much better. We could not hear your follow-up. Please proceed.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Is there a place we can go to get the fee schedule as it exists right now?

Ms Martini: If you contact our office, yes, we are happy to provide a copy of the fee schedule.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Thank you.

I'm going to defer, actually, to my colleagues.

The Chair: Okay. Very good.

I'm looking at the Official Opposition side, if there are more questions.

Mr. Feehan: I just want to follow up a little bit on some questions for the office of the public guardian. Now, I understand that there is a surplus that has been gathered, some \$75 million approximately. I'm just wondering if you have a mechanism for determining how that surplus got to be that size and what the intention is, moving forward, in terms of distribution of that back to people who are receiving services or if money is being diverted from that to other aspects of service provision.

Ms Martini: Thank you for that question. The office of the public guardian and trustee: the trustee specifically does have a surplus at this time. Based on the report from the Auditor General in 2016, we looked to hire a consultant and actually review the amount of that surplus and share with them what the purpose of that surplus is. I would like to make that information known to the committee here today.

The common fund investment actually has an advisory committee as well that makes recommendations to the Public Trustee. This advisory committee is based on experienced financial industry experts, banking executives, Treasury Board and Finance staff, and the JSG financial managers and pension managers. We contracted with Aon to provide a study regarding the surplus and what would be an appropriate amount to have in that surplus knowing the factors that we use that surplus for.

The reason we have the surplus is to ensure that we can maintain a stable interest paid to our clients over time, that the interest rate can withstand diverse market conditions, and to make sure that we do not go into a deficit with that . . .

The Chair: Okay. Very good.

We will now continue the rotation. This is our third rotation, on the government side. Just for the benefit of our guests today, we have one more rotation of 10 minutes per side, and then what we do at the end is that each side has three minutes of opportunity to read into the record other written requests for information or other undertakings. So just to let you know what to expect over the next 26 minutes or so.

With that, you have 10 minutes, beginning with Mr. Stephan.

Mr. Stephan: Yeah. I appreciate Justice being here. I understand that time is of the essence, so I'll be very brief and then hand some time over to my other colleagues. I just want to kind of finish up with a question I had on the cannabis policy objectives. Maybe I'll kind of focus on one because time is short. Are we comfortable that we have the best practices to keep cannabis out of the hands of children and youth?

Ms. Bosscha: Thank you for the question. We have a high degree of confidence in what work is being done. Now, one aspect of this is that this whole program has been transferred over to the AGLC in terms of how to manage this and look after the issues that arise with this product being available publicly now.

Maybe I could ask Senior ADM Sweeney just to provide a bit more information as to the confidence levels as to the work that's been done.

10:50

Mr. Sweeney: The current framework was derived from extensive consultations, in fact the most extensive consultation on a public policy issue in recent history in Alberta. Over 60,000 respondents provided advice to the secretariat and to the government with respect to the framework and the legislation that arose as a consequence of that framework. After the Cannabis Secretariat introduced the legislation, the responsibility for cannabis was transferred to the Treasury Board secretariat, and evaluations and

reconsiderations as to the propriety of the legislation and the measures really are an issue for Treasury Board to lead on.

From a public security division perspective, we contribute to those conversations through policing services, who are on the front line and see issues, but of course that's not the only constituent that can provide advice. Health is a big partner for the reasons that you outlined in your initial statements with respect to the health consequences of legalization of recreational cannabis. So Treasury Board is listening from a number of sectors. From a policing perspective, there is nothing that has been raised to me or to our minister from the police services with respect to cannabis legalization at this early stage.

Mr. Stephan: Thanks, Mr. Sweeney. You've been busy.

I'll just save my follow-up question to read in, and I'll allow one of my colleagues to continue with questioning.

Mr. Amery: Good morning, and thank you, all, for being here. I wanted to take you back to the court lead times. In particular, I wanted to refer back to page 34, performance measure 3(c), of the annual report. In there, about halfway through, it says that "the ministry has actively employed numerous policy and program changes to increase proportionality and reduce serious and violent case lead time to trial," with a view, I think, of complying with the Jordan deadlines. It also says here that "the ministry has demonstrated a collaborative approach in ensuring [that these] serious and violent cases move efficiently through the criminal justice system," but it does not provide any further detail on what those collaborative approaches are. Could you please elaborate on that for us?

Mr. Bosscha: Certainly. There are a number that are in place. There's the Alberta criminal justice summit, which is a biannual meeting of executive stakeholders within the criminal justice system. It includes judges, law enforcement agencies, federal and provincial prosecution services, indigenous organizations, and defence counsel. This summit looks at a whole number of different initiatives to address the delays within the justice system. There is a stakeholder subcommittee that was formed specifically to address the cases moving through the system.

In addition, Justice, or JSG, often meets with members of law enforcement, the judiciary, the defence bar, and Legal Aid to discuss how we can move matters through the system in a more efficient and effective way. Within the courts there's the establishment of the court case management office, and that uses the limited judicial resources, the RCAS resources and the ACPS resources, in a way that is more effective and efficient. RCAS is also working to expand case management offices to additional regional locations and to the youth court.

The collaborative approach is also within the Justice department. Our different divisions that have a role or are impacted by the court such as ACPS, RCAS, corrections, and the legal services division all play a role in working together to find where we have barriers or delays that can be addressed through changes in policies or procedures. Then, as an ongoing sort of approach, we assess and monitor the impact of how matters are moving through the court systems to find where we have bottlenecks.

Mr. Amery: Thank you.

Going back to that same section, I wanted to refer or direct your attention to the fourth paragraph of performance measure 3(c), where it says that "case processing time is also influenced by the availability of court resources (judges and lawyers)." One of the government's election commitments was to hire 50 additional Crown prosecutors. Would you please elaborate for us on how that

increase of 50 prosecutors would affect the lead time for criminal cases, and can the department achieve its goals without a corresponding commitment to hiring additional judges as well?

Mr. Bosscha: Thank you for the question. I will actually ask Eric Tolppanen, who's the ADM for prosecutions, to provide a response.

Mr. Tolppanen: With regard to the first part of the question, as to the impact of 50 additional Crown prosecutors on lead times, the benefit of having the 50 prosecutors would be that for Crown prosecutors, who currently struggle to find the time to assess the cases early to determine the reasonable likelihood of conviction, to extend resolution offers such that those cases are moved out of the system, we'll be creating more capacity for that to happen. If you consider that on the day of trial a significant number of cases result in guilty pleas but still have been set for the trial time that would have otherwise been used, if we take those cases out of the trial courts, resolve them early, divert them out of the court systems, which we will be able to do to a greater extent with additional prosecutors, that will free up court time and will reduce the lead times.

Mr. Bosscha: Maybe I can take the second part of the question, with respect to the need for additional judges. With respect to how ADM Tolppanen has sort of summarized it, that the impact of additional prosecutors removes pressures on the courts, the need for additional judges becomes somewhat lessened. Having said that, we do still need to have sufficient judges in place to match the increased prosecution levels that we will have. If it's at Court of Queen's Bench, then that's where we need to continue to put requests in to the federal government to appoint the necessary superior court judges.

Mr. Amery: Okay. Thank you.

I wanted to turn your attention now to page 28, right at the top of the page, key strategy 3.1. The annual report states that the department is working with local police organizations in order to develop policies and practices to shorten lead time to trial and thus overall time to trial in order to comply with the Jordan decision. Can you please explain some of the processes that are being developed alongside the police services and how those processes will lead to shorten the wait times to trial, with the view that typically the Jordan timeline starts to count from when charges are laid?

Mr. Bosscha: Thank you for the question. Again, I'll ask ADM Tolppanen to provide a more detailed response on the steps that have been taken.

Mr. Tolppanen: Thank you for that question. There are a number of procedural changes that we've worked on with the police to address the very issue that you raised, which is the fact that the Jordan time limit begins at the time of arrest and ends at the conclusion of the trial. One such measure was to work with the police with respect to reducing the amount of time that elapsed between the time of arrest and the first appearance in court. Previously it was sometimes in excess of six to eight weeks between the time of arrest and the first appearance in court. We've worked with the police through a collaborative process, a standing committee that has police representatives as well as Crown, to arrive at a policy that says that except in exceptional circumstances that time limit should be four weeks.

The Chair: All right. We will now move on to our fourth rotation, beginning with the Official Opposition. I'm looking at Member Hoffman to begin, please.

Ms Hoffman: Thanks. I'm going to try to be succinct with my questions and request the same with the answers if possible. I'm very happy to have stuff in writing at a later date, too.

The first one was around the OPGT report that was mentioned earlier. I'm wondering if that can be shared with our committee as well as a fee schedule that ties to the initiatives that they provide.

Mr. Bosscha: Certainly.

Ms Hoffman: Awesome.

Then in terms of the remand section in the annual report and accompanying documents, I know that there was some expansion of treatment, including methadone and Suboxone in remand and, I think, maybe in other detention facilities as well. I'm wondering if we, looking backwards, of course, can have information about those measurable outcomes and what some of the implications were on behaviour and other things that were identified, again, in the annual report.

Mr. Bosscha: Yes. We can certainly provide that.

Ms Hoffman: Materiality. I'm hoping that you can tell us a little bit about what your materiality was in producing these documents and your financials that you submit so that we have confidence in their reflecting the overall costs and the audit, essentially, that we do internally as government to ensure that we are aware of that.

11:00

Mr. Bosscha: I would think we can provide that. Yes, we can.

Ms Hoffman: Great. Then the last one I'll do, which maybe we'll have a little bit of a discussion on, is sort of two for one, I guess. Did the department regularly inquire with the office of the public guardian and trustee about the status of the recommendations that were outstanding, and what steps, if any, has the department taken to support the office of the public guardian and trustee in implementing those recommendations?

Then the last one is that many of those recommendations were outstanding until very recently, and some of them went back to 2008. What were some of the things that happened in the ministry to ensure that the recommendations were going to be ready for audit and that we were making that progress?

Mr. Bosscha: Certainly. Thank you for the questions. We can focus on the discussion for this. The OPGT came over into the department in 2017, I believe it was, and at that point we became responsible for the recommendations. I will turn it over to Barb Martini, the executive director of the OPGT, to talk about how the department supported the OPGT in addressing these recommendations from the OAG.

Ms Martini: Thank you. We have had department staff provide resources and advice to help us address the OAG recommendations. In addition to having Finance staff attend the quarterly meetings that occur with the OAG and the OPGT – I think that's something that we took as a proactive approach when we came over in 2017 in reaching out to the OAG, having quarterly meetings, and showing the progress on each of the five recommendations. I think that was key. We also have an internal audit. The divisional assurance internal audit was one of the five recommendations and moving that out of the OPGT's realm, out of their sphere, to external. But they still provide information for us. They still do audits on disbursements for us, so that has been critical.

We've also had financial representatives on the OPGT Investment Advisory Committee, as I mentioned, who make recommendations to the Public Trustee. We have quarterly

Investment Advisory Committee meetings, and that's been very helpful. We've also had support from the ministry in transitioning from a very old SharePoint site, 2010 to 2016, which has really been instrumental in us moving forward with all of the recommendations and being able to track those. So I would say that the support from the ministry has been very, very good.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you.

Mr. Feehan: I just have a few more questions, and I know that you were kind of cut off the last time, but I will wait for the report to get some of the information that you are providing. I noticed that you had mentioned earlier that there is about a \$7 million set of administration fees that have not been collected through your ministry, that it was sort of assessed that they existed, but you haven't actually gathered them up yet. I'm just wondering what the reasoning for not collecting them is.

Ms Martini: Some of it would be the value in the client's account, us not wanting to have an individual go less than \$7,000, a represented adult. For additional information, I would like to take that back and make sure I can provide you a fulsome response in writing.

Mr. Feehan: That's fine. Thank you.

I guess I'm also just wondering, when we have what seems to be a fairly substantial accumulated surplus, why fees continue to be charged. Why aren't we using that surplus to reduce the amount of fees that are charged?

Ms Martini: Two components to that. The first: why we charge the fees and whether there will be any change in the fee structure. I think that's certainly what the fee committee is going to be reviewing, what's an appropriate amount and how to charge and when to charge. But the second component, that I think is really important to stress with the surplus, is the fact that our IT system right now is 35 years old. It's 35 years old, so we are in the process of replacing that. We have projected out over the next many years the replacement of that system, ongoing enhancements, and even a second replacement of that system. I think that for us to be able to sustain that within our own program is very important and very important for the clients that we serve. That is a portion, a very significant portion, of what that surplus will go towards.

Mr. Feehan: Great. Thank you very much.

I'd like to switch topics for a few moments now. I had a few more questions with regard to indigenous communities' involvement with Justice and didn't quite have enough time to ask all those questions. In the shortness of time, I guess, I'm just interested particularly in the outcomes from the inquiry on the murdered and missing indigenous women and girls and some of the recommendations that came from that. I'm aware that the final report probably came out at a time later than this document, your annual report, covers, but in anticipation, I guess that perhaps I'm just wondering about the work that is being done within Justice to look at the process of the murdered and missing indigenous women and girls inquiry and whether or not there are processes in place to evaluate the recommendations and to seek to implement them.

Mr. Bosscha: Thank you. I'm going to ask Fiona Lavoy, who's our executive director of policy for JSG, to speak to that.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you.

Ms Lavoy: Hello. Fiona Lavoy. I'm the executive director of the policy and planning area. Just by a little bit of background, we are

a part of a government-wide initiative that relates to the response to the recommendations. Within the ministry itself we have representation from all of our divisions, that has a vested interest in reviewing the recommendations and responding to the recommendations. But there is a component of that that is Justice specific, within the Justice realm, but there's a broader perspective within government, so we're looking at that from a twofold perspective: what's within our realm of control within the ministry, and what's within our influence on a government-wide basis?

Mr. Feehan: Are there specific outcomes associated with your department's implementation of the recommendations? Is that being created at this point, or is that still a piece of work in process?

Ms Lavoy: That is a piece of work in process. In terms of any implementation that we do, that is obviously taken into account in what we are going to measure and evaluate as part of that process. So any program changes that we're making or any systemic changes would be part of that process.

The Chair: And we will look for that in next year's annual report.

Mr. Feehan: Okay. I also would like to ask a little bit, while you're here, about the FILUs, the family information liaison units or whatever. Sorry. I'm sure you know what I'm talking about. I'm just wondering about any evaluation processes for the effectiveness of having that as an operation of government as opposed to having that resource out in one of the indigenous-based community agencies. Is there an evaluation process about that? I'm just wondering if you could fill me in a bit.

Ms Lavoy: Sure. I might actually defer that to Mr. Sweeney because the FILU program is under his realm.

Mr. Sweeney: Yes. The FILUs, which were actually funded by the federal government, have worked within our portfolio to provide services during the course of the inquiry. With any type of granting from the federal government there's an evaluation component that is attributed to the grant agreement. I can tell you that there are a number of conversations that are occurring within my division with respect to our experience with the FILUs and the powerful impact that they've had and the potential future.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Feehan: When the report comes out on that, can you just have that forwarded to us? Thank you.

The Chair: We will now move into the 10 minutes for the government, and then we will have the three minutes for members to either reiterate the things that we want provided to us as written undertakings or read questions into the record.

We will now proceed with – I believe it's picking up with Mr. Amery, or is it Mr. Guthrie?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Guthrie.

The Chair: Mr. Guthrie.

Mr. Guthrie: Thank you. I'm kind of looking at the revenue and expenditure side of things here. On page 58 of the report in the actual to actual section, the expenses breakdown, I see \$17.2 million was spent on unexpected manpower costs such as overtime for staff in remand and correctional centres. The report states that this overtime is a result of "managing increasingly complex inmate

interactions.” Are you able to describe those interactions? What’s the ministry’s strategy for reversing these increased overtime costs?

11:10

Dr. Cooley: Thank you. Yes, certainly, there was the notation in the report to address the overtime costs associated with the population. The increasingly complex interactions: a lot of that has to do with remand, particularly at the Edmonton Remand Centre but also in the Calgary Remand Centre as well, trying to deal with the number of remanded offenders moving in and out. The remand population has been increasing considerably over the past decade. It’s increased by about 360-odd per cent. Remand populations fluctuate. They can go up by 50 or drop by 50 on, you know, a daily or weekly basis, so it often creates this unpredictability in terms of staffing requirements.

There are two measures that we’re doing. One is to address the remand population and try to ensure that remand is used only for those individuals who require separation from the public for safety issues, so we’re going to manage that. But we also need to deal with overtime per se. We are within the ministry developing an overtime reduction strategy for corrections that will look at issues around how we schedule, how we staff our particular posts, how we monitor leave usage as well as looking at if we have the actual appropriate number of staff to man posts at regular time. The issue that was raised in the report we’re aware of, and we’re now trying to develop a strategy to respond.

Mr. Guthrie: Okay. Thanks.

As a follow-up to MLA Dach’s line of questioning from earlier, page 57 of the report states that there was a “\$5.4 million decrease in other revenue mainly due to lower volumes of Traffic Safety Act tickets and associated Victim of Crime surcharges, as well as decreases in federal fine surcharges.” Is the ministry anticipating a continued decline in ticket revenue, and does the ministry have a plan to replace those revenues from ticket distribution by other means? You know, will there be a change in budget, that kind of thing?

Mr. Bosscha: Thank you for the question. I’ll ask the CFO, Brad Wells, to provide some further information.

Mr. Wells: Certainly. Yeah, it’s a great question. It’s difficult to predict the revenue stream, but it certainly has recently, as we said earlier, plateaued and now is trending nominally downwards. There are options under review for consideration as part of Budget 2019 to address that, and those will be finalized with budget finalization.

Mr. Guthrie: Okay. On page 56, under revenues and expenditures again, we see public security as being the largest expense by far. This is under the ministry’s domain, and this category has gone up year over year. I was looking for a split in expenses for RCMP versus sheriffs, but I couldn’t find that figure in the report. Do you have the expense breakdown for those two departments?

Mr. Wells: I do have it. I just don’t have it off the top of my head there. I mean, the PPSA is around \$260 million, and traffic sheriffs, the sheriffs branch, is around \$75 million.

Mr. Guthrie: Okay. Taking this a bit further, I’ve looked at budgeted figures, and at least at a glance here it appears that sheriffs had the largest increase in their budget under public security, but we had a decrease in ticketing. So why were more funds required in that department? Was it enforcement, staffing, negotiated agreements? What was that?

Mr. Bosscha: Thank you for the question. We can provide more detail through ADM Sweeney, please.

Mr. Sweeney: Part of the increase is attributable to the fact that a component of the sheriffs department used to reside within the ALERT configuration, the SCAN unit, for example, which does the safer communities and neighbourhoods legislation and enforcement. We had a surveillance unit as well. Those units were withdrawn from ALERT because it wasn’t appropriately aligned to that governance model and came back to the department. Most of the increase that you see relative to the sheriffs branch is attributable to that change.

Mr. Guthrie: Okay. Thank you.

Finally, I realize that RCMP and sheriffs have different responsibilities. You know, sheriffs are responsible more for traffic and not criminal enforcement, so they don’t have the training for that. But that said, what’s the difference on a per-officer basis between RCMP and a sheriff? Accepting and appreciating the Criminal Code differences, but what is it for each officer all in – car, salary, equipment – on a per-unit basis?

Mr. Bosscha: Sorry. We’ll ask Bill Sweeney, ADM for public security, to talk again, please.

Mr. Sweeney: Our cost with a provincial police officer or the RCMP is based on a 70-30 cost calculation, and it’s a very complicated formula, so for me to give you numbers and say that it’s apples to apples would be misleading. What we pay for an RCMP officer, for example, is approximately \$180,000 per member. That includes everything from their accommodations to their pensions to their training to the cost of their induction training and the facilities that they occupy, so it’s a very inclusive formula.

We calculate the cost of a sheriff based on a salary differential. It’s not all-inclusive, so it’s approximately \$100,000 that we use as the base figure for the cost of a sheriff. But all those other considerations wouldn’t give you a good, accurate comparator in relation to the costs unless we take into account these other considerations.

Mr. Guthrie: Okay. Thank you.

In light of the time here, I’m going to defer now to MLA Stephan for the next question.

Mr. Stephan: Madam Chair, how much time do I have?

The Chair: One minute and 13 seconds.

Mr. Stephan: All right. I’m going to ask very quickly just for deliverables. You had mentioned in the past that you’re developing an overtime plan to be more efficient, to have that not occur. If you could provide to the Public Accounts Committee that plan, we’d like to see it. I think that would be beneficial.

I’d also like it if you could please provide to the committee, in terms of the legalization of marijuana, a report on whether or not the legalization has increased or decreased costs in the justice system and where it shows in your actual financial results.

Finally, the Attorney General had asked for the department to develop a business plan for the \$75 million victims of crime fund. If we could please be provided with that business plan, that would be great.

Mr. Bosscha: I think that we can certainly do that.

The Chair: All right. We now proceed to the lightning round element of our proceedings today, which is three minutes for

reading questions or requests for undertakings for the department to provide to the committee.

I have a few, and then I will move it on to my colleagues. Yeah. I guess I have to sort of symbolically turn the chair over to the deputy chair, and I'll just read these in.

11:20

Mr. Gotfried: Sure. I'll do that.

[Mr. Gotfried in the chair]

Ms Phillips: Thanks.

How many FTEs for quality assurance are in the office of the public guardian and trustee to satisfy the recommendation around file management and sort of controlling for risk of errors and so on; if we could be shown some evidence of how the surplus management recommendation has been met by the office of the public guardian in response to the AG's recommendation; if we could be provided some information around the training for OPGT staff, and report to us any analysis around turnover in staff due to stress or other factors; if the OPGT could share with us the timeline for the IT implementation changes for the 35-year-old system that was referenced and the approximate costs for such an undertaking, given that a straight line was drawn between the IT turnover and the disposal of the surplus assets.

Now I will turn it over to – sorry. Yeah. That's it.

[Ms Phillips in the chair]

Mr. Feehan: On behalf of Member Renaud, who sent in the question, she just would like to know a little bit more about what happens if an individual has less than \$7,000 and they're not taken on by the office of the public guardian. Where are they referred, and what resources are available for assisting them?

I also myself would be interested in knowing what data you collect on the number of employees in your departments that identify as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit. I'm particularly interested in whether or not we have members who are on the Human Rights Commission representing those individuals, prosecution, and officers. And I would like to know a little bit about any efforts you're making toward recruitment of indigenous people to participate in the various departments that you have.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any further questions?

Mr. Dach: If I could ask – I'm not sure if we've covered this ground before. I'm wondering if there's a process in place with respect to evaluation of the new IT system to ensure it's capable of doing what was intended, and if so, will the results of that evaluation be reported, and to whom will they be reported? Also, are there processes in place to alter or correct the system that's not doing what was intended, and if not, why is there not an evaluation process in place?

The Chair: With 16 seconds left, I think we will turn it over to the government side, please.

Mr. Stephan: Sure. If you could provide us, you know, in a culture of continuous improvement, a listing of course corrections that Justice has made in furtherance of meeting its stewardships in respect of the Alberta cannabis framework policy.

Mr. Rutherford: I would just like to know the percentage that the RCMP is fulfilling its contract obligation on personnel and whether or not it's fully staffed. Second, if there's any data that has been collected on the mental health court, on the rates of recidivism and the breaking down of silos; is the program showing successes?

Mr. Gotfried: In reference to victims of crime I'd like to have a response to: what steps are you taking to utilize the growing annual surplus to better serve those who need it, as there have not been any significant steps taken in this area since 2016 and some recommendations at that time, and what type of education and communications plans might you have in place so that those who are victims of crime are aware that there are some options and opportunities for them?

Thank you.

The Chair: Good.

Anything further? Okay. Please.

Mr. Rutherford: The Mental Health Police Advisory Committee: your report talked about 250 people or personnel, first responders, who have received the training. Is there a plan to extend that across all first responders in the policing community?

Mr. Stephan: I'd be interested in understanding what changes are being contemplated in respect of what's called catch and release to increase the public's confidence in the administration of justice in our policing.

The Chair: Okay. Very good. Seeing no more requests at 50 seconds, we will now move on to the final bit of our meeting here. I would like to thank officials from the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General and the office of the public guardian and trustee for attending today and responding to our questions. We ask that the outstanding questions be responded to in writing within 30 days and forwarded to the committee clerk.

With that, we will now move on to item 4 on our agenda, which is other business. Hon. members, our subcommittee on committee business met on Tuesday, September 10 at 2:19. The Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees has asked that we host the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees conference in partnership with the Canadian Council of Legislative Auditors in 2021. Alberta last hosted this conference in 2009. The subcommittee on committee business for the Standing Committee on Public Accounts has recommended dates for hosting the conference from August 15 to August 18, 2021, here in Edmonton. That is a matter for our committee to deliberate upon because there are some budgetary implications for Members' Services going forward within the next couple of years.

Now, we will move on to item 5, which is date of next meeting. The committee is scheduled to meet on October 16, 2019, and that meeting is fixed right now. However, if events overtake us, we may be reporting back to this committee on some changes to the meeting schedule, but that is how it stands right now.

I will now move on to item 6, which is adjournment. I will call for a motion to adjourn. Would a member move that the meeting be adjourned? Mr. Rowswell. All in favour? All right. Any opposed? That motion is carried.

Thank you very much, everyone, for your time and focus this morning.

[The committee adjourned at 11:27 a.m.]

