



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, March 15, 2018

Day 5

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (NDP), Speaker
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (NDP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP),
Alberta Party Opposition House Leader
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (NDP)
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (NDP)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP)
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (NDP),
Government Whip
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (UCP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (Ind)
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (NDP)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (NDP)
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (UCP)
Jansen, Hon. Sandra, Calgary-North West (NDP)
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (NDP)
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),
Leader of the Official Opposition
Kleinstauber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (NDP)
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (NDP)

Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (UCP)
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (NDP)
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (NDP)
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),
Government House Leader
McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,
Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (NDP)
McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),
Official Opposition Whip
McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (NDP)
McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (NDP)
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (AP)
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (NDP)
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (NDP)
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (UCP),
Official Opposition House Leader
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),
Premier
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (NDP)
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (NDP)
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (UCP)
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (NDP)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 1 Vacant: 2

Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Clerk	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of	Committee Services	Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Stephanie LeBlanc, Senior Parliamentary	Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of	Gareth Scott, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Counsel	<i>Alberta Hansard</i>	
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel		

Executive Council

Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Shaye Anderson	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Sandra Jansen	Minister of Infrastructure
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Children's Services
Brian Mason	Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Community and Social Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

Parliamentary Secretaries

Jessica Littlewood	Economic Development and Trade for Small Business
Annie McKittrick	Education

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Coolahan
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Clark	Horne
Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Turner
Ellis	

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Carson	Littlewood
Clark	Piquette
Connolly	Schneider
Coolahan	Schreiner
Dach	Starke
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Miller
Ellis	Orr
Hinkley	Renaud
Horne	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
McKitrick	Yao
McPherson	

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Aheer	Littlewood
Drever	Pitt
Gill	van Dijken
Horne	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	Nixon
Dang	Piquette
Jabbour	Pitt
Luff	Schreiner
McIver	

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms Kazim
Deputy Chair: Connolly

Anderson, W.	Orr
Babcock	Rosendahl
Drever	Stier
Drysdale	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kleinsteuber	Taylor
McKitrick	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	Miller
Cooper	Nielsen
Goehring	Nixon
Gotfried	Pitt
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Cyr
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach

Barnes	Malkinson
Carson	Miller
Fildebrandt	Nielsen
Gotfried	Panda
Hunter	Renaud
Littlewood	Turner
Luff	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
Deputy Chair: Mr. Drysdale

Babcock	Malkinson
Dang	McPherson
Fraser	Nielsen
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	Vacant
Loewen	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, March 15, 2018

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Prayers

The Acting Speaker: Good morning.

Let us each pray or reflect in our own way. Hon. members, time is precious. Let us use our time as public servants dedicating ourselves to achieving our common goals and working towards the betterment of our great province. Let us remember that strength and success are accomplished by working together. Listening, understanding, and respecting one another's views can open up new possibilities and new opportunities. Amen.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day Committee of Supply

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Good morning. I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

Hon. members, before we commence this morning's consideration of supplementary supply, I would like to remind members where the committee left off in the rotation. When the Committee of Supply reported progress yesterday, there were three hours and two minutes remaining for consideration of supplementary supply pursuant to Government Motion 6, agreed to on March 13, 2018, and members from the government had nine minutes remaining in the rotation, to be followed by members of the Official Opposition.

The rotation in Standing Order 59.01(6), which was outlined yesterday, is deemed to apply, and

for the time remaining, to the extent possible, the rotation outlined in clauses (b) to (e) shall apply with the speaking times set at 5 minutes [at one time] as provided in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c).

The rotation will then repeat for any time remaining. Speaking times are now limited to five minutes; however, provided that the chair has been notified, a minister and a private member may combine their speaking time with both taking and yielding the floor during the combined 10-minute period.

Finally, at the conclusion of six hours of consideration, including the two hours and 58 minutes taken yesterday, or earlier if no members are wishing to speak, the Committee of Supply shall vote on the supplementary supply estimates.

Supplementary Supply Estimates 2017-18 General Revenue Fund

The Deputy Chair: Are there any members wishing to speak from the government side? Hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, would you like to go back and forth?

Loyola: Yes, Madam Chair. I'd like to go back and forth with the Minister of Community and Social Services, please.

The Deputy Chair: Minister, are you in agreement?
Please go ahead.

Loyola: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning to all. As always, it's a pleasure to be here in the House with all of you.

Minister, I'm looking over the supplementary supply estimate request, and I see here that you have \$26 million for income support to people with barriers to full employment due to increased demand for financial benefits. I'm hoping that you can go into a little bit more detail about this line item and perhaps even give us a few case scenarios of people in the community that you may know that require funds from this particular line item.

Mr. Sabir: Which line item?

Loyola: It's the \$26 million for income support to people with barriers to full employment, Minister.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Member, for the question. As you can see, the employment and income support programs are divided into two broad categories. One is: expected to work. The other one is: barriers to full employment. In general, the expected to work category includes those individuals who are temporarily out of work and are expected to get back to work, I guess, in a shorter period of time while barriers to full employment are those individuals who have multiple barriers other than just market conditions. They may have some educational barriers in terms of their abilities, different kinds of barriers. We have seen that caseload go up as well because the market conditions are tough. It's difficult for these individuals to get back into the market to get a job. In order to deal with that increased demand, we're adding this money so that we can provide for those individuals.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know that the last couple of years have been really tough. I've had a few constituents of mine that have actually come into the office, of course, requiring help with income support. To the minister: could you describe a little bit about how the process is for these constituents of mine to actually engage with your office, how it is that they go about applying for this, and the benefits of this program to these people?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Member. We do have Alberta Supports and Alberta Works centres throughout our province, and the locations are available online. You can look into what will be the closest office for whoever is looking for the benefits. An Alberta Supports centre will be able to assess their eligibility and provide them with all the benefits that they may be eligible for. Other than that, I believe that my office's information is also available online. For the most part they're administered by Alberta Supports and Alberta Works centres, and we do have Alberta Supports and Alberta Works centres throughout our province. There is an emergency hotline as well, which supports them after hours if there is some emergency. They can also help provide those benefits.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Yeah. I see that we have the Minister of Status of Women here in the House this morning, and I just wanted to ask her a few questions if she doesn't mind. First, before I launch into that, I just want to say how proud I am of our government and the fact that we

have established this Ministry of Status of Women. When I'm out door-knocking in the community, when I'm out meeting people, people are so incredibly proud of what this government has done and specifically with the introduction of gender plus analysis in all of the legislation that we're bringing forward here in the province.

I have to say that the programs encouraging women to get more involved in the political sphere, no matter what level of government, have been inspirational to so many women. I have to say that in my neck of the woods in southeast Edmonton and not just in Edmonton-Ellerslie but, you know, in Edmonton-Mill Woods as well as Edmonton-Mill Creek, really, I can personally see it myself with the number of women who have come forward in order to really engage in the political process.

I also had the benefit of meeting with the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues, that ran an entire program specifically trying to welcome and engage racialized women, who normally have a lot more barriers, I would say, to participating in the democratic process here in this country and all over the country, no matter at what level. I was so incredibly encouraged to see that funds from the Ministry of Status of Women were provided to the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues for that particular program. When I sat down and visited with these women, there were women from Africa; for example, there was a young woman from Nigeria who was incredibly involved in the last municipal election. She didn't run herself because she didn't feel ready, but she was very involved with one of the campaigns for one of the city councillors. She used that opportunity to really learn what the process was like. She was encouraged because of the program coming through Status of Women.

9:10

Of course, there was a young woman from the Philippines. There were a couple of young indigenous women sitting around the table. Let me tell you, it was probably the best hour and a half that I've spent in such a long time, being given the opportunity. Now, of course, the Minister of Status of Women asked me to sit in on that meeting on her behalf. But let me tell you, as a man we sometimes don't get to see what all those barriers are for women and especially racialized women here in this country when it comes to running for office. Having the opportunity to sit there for an hour and a half and listen to the stories of these women was really enlightening for me. I know we're doing good work, but we still have more work to do, obviously.

Now, to the Minister of Status of Women: I see here in the supplementary estimate requested for the Ministry of Status of Women that you have \$675,000 for the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services, and yesterday we were talking at great length . . .

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

We are now moving over to the Official Opposition. Hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, would you like to go back and forth, or would you like to take five minutes?

Mr. Cooper: I would like to go back and forth if it's okay with the minister.

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Community and Social Services. You are in agreement? Yes?

Hon. member, please proceed.

Mr. Cooper: Excellent. Thank you so much, Chair. It's a pleasure to be here this morning and a pleasure to see the minister joining us. I look forward to some exciting back and forth while we discuss some very important matters.

I think I would just like to start by asking the minister, you know: in the supplementary supply it's a pretty substantial number for your department, in excess of \$239 million. I'm wondering if you can just briefly – I hope that you'll be brief because I do have a number of questions that I'd like to discuss with you this morning – give us a bit of a sense generally about why a lot of the \$239 million costs weren't anticipated. Obviously, you're asking for additional monies here in the supplementary supply. If you can give us a bit of an overview as to – I understand that they are here – what they are. Why did you get your budget wrong by \$240 million?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thanks, Member, for the question. You can see what the numbers are there, but due to the downturn in the economy there were caseload increases which were not predicted. It's human behaviour involved as well when you're making those predictions. At the same time, I guess we were committed to providing the supports which are needed. Once somebody qualifies for these programs – these are statutorily mandated programs – we have to provide those benefits. We did our best based on the estimates, the advice I received from the department from previous years' averages, but we have seen the commodity prices such as oil going down having an impact on our economy. It was the worst, I guess, downturn in 40 years, so maybe it was not possible to predict everything with absolute precision, but one thing that Albertans were sure of was that government will stand with them when they need those supports. This addition reflects that commitment that government stands with those who are in need of these services.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I must admit that I'm a little bit perplexed. I hear the Finance minister every day telling us that everything is rosy and up, up, up, yet I hear the minister of community services telling us that his budget was devastated to the tune of \$230 million because of how negative the impacts of the economy have been. It's a little bit perplexing to understand how both are true, but I guess I will continue.

I'd like to drill down a little bit deeper into the exact numbers that we're speaking of. On page 26 of the supplementary supply estimates document it states that you needed an additional \$13.3 million for salaries, wages, and employee benefits. Can you elaborate on the factors that came to be that required such an additional amount? How many people was that? What is the percentage of service demand increase that required an additional \$13 million?

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Member, for the question. I described what was happening in the past year, and when the Finance minister says that things are looking up, certainly things are looking up. We have seen 90,000 full-time jobs in the last year, we have seen the economy growing by 4.5 per cent, we have seen average weekly wages go up, we have seen manufacturing go up, we have seen housing starts go up, we have seen exports go up, we have seen motor vehicle sales go up, we have seen business incorporation go up, we have seen retail sales go up, and we have seen restaurant receipts go up. So things are looking up, and we are

hoping that with the economy improving, we will see some easing of those pressures.

But back to your question. When we saw oil prices going down, the economy was hit hard. The caseload in income support almost doubled, and that \$13.3 million for salaries, wages, and employee benefits was reflective of that increase in the demand. Daytime calls, for instance, to our income support contact centres increased 200 per cent, from 10,000 to almost 30,000 in 2017-18. The Alberta Supports contact centres are getting 29,000 calls per month, which is 10 per cent more than what it was in '16-17.

Also, the ministry opened 22 new Alberta Supports centres in '16-17 and 12 more in '17-18, so we added more Alberta Supports centres as well so that Albertans, regardless of where they live in the province, have access to the services, have access to qualified staff so they can reach out to government programs and services.

The Deputy Chair: The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Chair. I guess I have a couple of additional questions with respect to the economy being up or down or service requirements being up or down. If, in fact, it is a direct result of a down economy and if, in fact, the Finance minister is to be believed that everything is up, up, up, can we anticipate a \$13.3 million reduction in the budget next year because, clearly, there's going to be a significant reduction in the need for services? If everything you've said this morning and everything the Finance minister has said is true, then the caseload is going to be dropping off dramatically over the next number of months because the recovery has been fully felt, according to the Finance minister.

My question is two-fold. One, should we anticipate a decrease in services over the next quarter or two, and if not, when can we anticipate to see a reduction in the expenditures? I just heard you say that you're opening a whole bunch more, but in fact if the economy is recovering and that was the need, why do we need to be opening those? I'm not saying that we don't. It's possible that we do. But why do we need to if, in fact, the Finance minister is to be believed?

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

9:20

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Member, for the question. First, why we are opening more centres. We are converting the existing Alberta Works centres, which were mostly dealing with the benefits that are available through Community and Social Services, while, in moving towards Alberta Supports centres, there will be 34 different benefits available not just from CSS but from other ministries as well. For instance, if somebody needs something relating to Children's Services, child benefit, seniors' benefit, those kind of things, it will provide a full suite of services. We need those to make sure that Albertans get the supports they need.

Second thing, while we see a dramatic reduction in caseload, we are seeing that that line is flattening. The thing is that when things go down, these are individuals who are let go right away. When things start picking up, the market picks up labour based on their skills and qualifications, and there is a lag when they get back into the market. But we are hoping that with the economy growing, we will see a reduction in caseload and a reduction in that line expense.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: I will provide some time in the next set of questions for you to answer, but I'll ask it now. On page 26 of supplementary supply estimates you request an additional \$39.5 million for income support to people expected to work or working due to increased demand for financial benefits. Based on the Alberta office of statistics on income support caseload that's updated February 6 of 2018, the income support caseload has continually and steadily climbed since 2014-15. Given this relatively predictable trend, why didn't your ministry budget for these services accordingly prior?

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

We will now go to the government side. Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister of Status of Women . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, sorry to interrupt. Are you going back and forth?

Ms Renaud: Sure.

The Deputy Chair: Is that okay, Minister?

Ms McLean: We could do that.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Please go ahead.

Ms Renaud: I understand that the Ministry of Status of Women uses a really amazing tool, an analytic tool, gender-based analysis plus, to assess how diverse groups experience policy, programs, and initiatives. I'm wondering if you could elaborate on the specific things we're doing to support gender equality within your ministry and the activities we're supporting.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Status of Women.

Ms McLean: Thank you, and thank you to the member for the question. Status of Women has three priority areas. These are to reduce violence against women and girls, to improve economic outcomes for women in Alberta, and to get more women into leadership roles, and that includes leadership like political office, seats at decision-making tables like boards and commissions, CEO positions. That's some of the work that I've been really focused on in particular, given the recent downturn, in an effort to ensure that women are part of the recovery and that they have the opportunities equivalent to their male counterparts and to take advantage of the opportunities as they're starting to grow.

To that end we asked the Alberta Securities Commission along with the Minister of Finance to adopt, disclose, or explain the rules which were adopted, a policy that was adopted in Ontario and that has been shown to incrementally increase the number of women on corporate boards. We also know that it wasn't enough to be doing that outside of government. We had to look at ourselves as well and how government was performing with respect to our appointments on our boards as agencies, boards, and commissions are responsible for the majority of the spending of the public purse, when we look at the AHS board and how large that budget is, for example.

We took a look at what our own numbers were and discovered that under the previous government, under the Tories, only a third of those seats were held by women. This was likely due to a gender-washing, which essentially means that there was not an effort to look at desegregated data or to look at the impacts that are disproportionate often of programs and policies on women and girls and how societal norms, et cetera, disproportionately affect women and girls. So knowing that and taking a conscious effort in having

that gendered lens, we reviewed our policies and our procedures for recruitment to our agencies, boards, and commissions. We made it more transparent.

We looked at the wording of different postings. The wording is very important for these kinds of postings, whether it's a job or an appointment, because typically women will self-select out of positions if they see words that they don't identify with, like "leadership." Unless you expressly define what that means or can mean in the context, women will often self-select out. Also, women, we know, psychologically tend to not apply for a job until they are overqualified for it whereas men will apply for a job based on their perceived potential, of their own perceptions.

So we changed that entire process, and as a result we are now at over 50 per cent of those seats on our agencies, boards, and commissions being held by women. That goes to show what can happen when you apply that gendered lens, the GBA-plus analysis. It helps to identify who benefits and who is left behind and then allows you the room and knowledge to mitigate for those impacts. That's what we've done on the leadership piece, and it shows real, concrete impacts.

So often I hear comments. We were just at the United Nations, and we were discussing impacts on rural women and girls across the world. Obviously, my focus was particularly with a lens to rural women and girls in Alberta. It was unfortunate to hear from some more conservatively minded individuals this perspective that for some reason women need to be, quote, qualified whereas for men that same standard does not apply when it comes to leadership positions. We've seen that play out time and time again in this province. So it's important that when we say words like "qualified," we actually define what that means and that those metrics are evenly applied. So often it's used as a way to say that women aren't good enough and that that's why, even though they make up 50 per cent of the population, there are legitimate reasons to not fill those positions.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. minister, you have spoken for five minutes. If we could allow the member to ask a second question.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Sure. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm so happy that we are using this tool to ensure that the policies that we make and the programs that we support and the initiatives we encourage are indeed accessible to everybody. People might not know that GBA-plus is a lens for race, ethnicity, religion, age, mental and physical disability.

Now, I was, of course, like most people, thrilled to hear about the additional funding for the sexual assault centres and funding to address counselling wait-lists, and that is particularly important, I think we've all seen. You'd have to be asleep most days not to notice that more and more women are emboldened to disclose. They're feeling safer, and they're talking about workplace harassment, abuse, assault. We're hearing it from all over. I think we're at a turning point. We aren't going to go back, and I'm incredibly thankful for that. Unfortunately, not everybody is at the same place. Some people still excuse that behaviour because they were young or they didn't know any better, but I think that this government is clearly drawing a line about what is acceptable and what is not.

In my previous work and in my work on the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities one of the lenses that we apply is disability. In particular, we know that women with disabilities face a very high likelihood of being abused at some point in their lives. Domestic violence is a very real problem for them as well, as is access to counselling. Many, many women with

disabilities have additional barriers to counselling, not just financial or time but physical accessibility. I'm wondering if the minister could expand on this a little bit and tell us about how this analysis is going to support women with disabilities as well as women that are feeling strong enough and supported enough to come forward and disclose.

9:30

Ms McLean: Thank you for the questions. I'll note, particularly in light of the Me Too movement and the number of women that are coming forward of all stripes and socioeconomic backgrounds, that these are very important questions. These are very important topics, that we should all be listening to very carefully, paying heightened attention to. You know, certainly, while my friends in the opposition – the opposition whip, I'm sure, has important considerations. I would encourage him to listen to the question even though that has not been my observation.

To that end, I would love to take the opportunity to talk about how the additional funding for AASAS, which is historic and very important in this province, is something that has never been done in this situation before. In fact, I'm informed that across the country, the funding that has been provided to AASAS, the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services, is the most funding that any province has provided to rape crisis centres. When we talk about the most funding, in the scope of government we're still talking about small dollars, \$8.1 million. I would certainly encourage the deputy Leader of the Official Opposition to pay attention to this point as well.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. minister, we are now past your time.

We will go to the Official Opposition. Hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, will you continue to go back and forth with the Minister of Community and Social Services?

Mr. Cooper: Please.

The Deputy Chair: Minister, you're okay with that?

Mr. Sabir: Sure. Please.

The Deputy Chair: Please proceed.

Mr. Cooper: Just prior to the end of our time I asked a question specifically related to the fact that there has been a steady trend of increase in need for services. Given that this relatively predictable trend with respect to income support for those expected to work has been consistent over a long period of time, why did your ministry not budget accordingly for these services?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you. As we were talking earlier, you indicated that this caseload was increasing from 2014-15, and that was the time when we saw a decrease in the commodity prices and the kind of decrease we saw in oil prices, that was unprecedented, and a downturn we haven't seen in 40 years. What we were doing – we were absolutely committed to making sure that Albertans got the supports they needed, but sometimes it was impossible to predict those numbers with absolute certainty because the caseload was increasing at an unprecedented rate due to the unprecedented drop in the price of oil. More people were asking for money. However, whether it was forecasted with certainty or not, Albertans were certain of one thing, that they would get the supports they needed. Government will stand with them when they need those supports.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Yes. You did not just miss it by a little; you missed by \$40 million at a time when, if you believe the Finance minister, everything is coming back up, up, up. The caseload must be just dropping off at breakneck speed if the Finance minister is to be believed.

On page 26 of the supplementary supply estimates document you note that an additional \$26 million is required for income support to people with barriers to full employment due to increased demand for financial benefits. Now, it's my understanding that for Albertans to qualify for income supports due to barriers to full-time benefits, they must have a combination of the following factors: persistent mental or physical impairment; lack of formal employment, social skills, work history; age; et cetera. Can you explain why the number for this line item has grown since your previous budget and what the factors were that led to this increase?

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Member, for the question. You indicated the factors for barriers to full employment. This is a line item that is not directly tied with the unemployment rate. Rather, we have seen, historically, a steady increase. Over the period of the last year there was, I guess, more caseload growth. Again, it's a statutory program. When Albertans show up at any Alberta Supports centre or reach out to the Community and Social Services ministry, once they qualify and fall into the criteria you explained, they get the benefits that they are entitled to.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd just like to ask a couple of quick questions here with respect to supply and some comments the minister has made in the past and whether or not there'll be implications for this in any line items in supply. Minister, we understand that you had no intention of a PDD review until just a few months ago. I believe it was January 19 when the PDD review was announced. As such, it could not have possibly been budgeted for in the previous year. Does the work being done on the PDD review that was announced in January fall under any supplementary supply line item?

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Member, for the important question. With respect to this program, in the last two and a half years we have done a number of things. We have always been open to working with the community on all issues that matter to them. For instance, when I became minister, the first issue I heard was the safety standards regulation, so I worked with the community. More than 2,000 Albertans participated in that consultation, and we repealed that regulation, that was not liked by anyone, actually, across the province.

Coming out of that recommendation report were almost 11 recommendations, and a PDD review was one of them. But there were other recommendations that could have been implemented in the short term, where the community can benefit right away, so we worked on a number of recommendations. Other than that, we also repealed the supports intensity scale.

When I was touring around the province last year, there was still a desire that we can learn from this review, that the community can benefit from this review, and we agreed to that. At this point we are

consulting with the community with respect to the scope and process of the review, and the department is absorbing those costs. Once that process and scope is set out, we will see how we will support that review, and we will certainly provide what it takes to do that review in a meaningful way.

Mr. Cooper: Surely you will agree that there are some significant costs for a review of this size and magnitude. What I hear you saying is that you have so much buffer room in all of your other budgets that you can absorb all of those costs into the work that the department is already doing, or you're spending money on the PDD review that is either unbudgeted or not in the supplementary supply line items. Can you help me better understand which one of those two things is what's actually happening: you have tons of extra space and, as such, you can travel around the province and put the foundation in for what is a very important review, or you're spending money outside of what should be in a supply line item?

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Member. I think that's not what I said, that you heard. What I said is that it's a two-phase review process. In the first phase we are gathering input and feedback from individuals, families, advocates, service providers with respect to the scope and process of the review. At that point, once we have that feedback, we will determine what the scope of the review is and the process we will take, and we will have a better idea of what it will cost to do that review.

The fundamental thing that I want to point out in this review is that it's different from previous reviews done by accountants. We are working with the community from day one because we believe in the slogan Nothing about Us without Us. From step 1 to the end we will work with them and include them in the most meaningful way possible so that they decide about their services, their future, how to improve this program.

9:40

The Deputy Chair: The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Chair. Last spring the House voted unanimously to create a disability advocate, and we have heard very little on this matter since then. Does the position fall under any budget line that's now in your supplementary supply, as it clearly would have been difficult to budget prior given that the vote was only last spring to have this? At times during that debate we had heard that the costs may be as high as \$900,000. I'm curious to know exactly the status of the disability advocate. Is there a line item in your supplementary supply that will cover the costs of that? If there are no resources currently being spent on the office, is that because it hasn't been created yet? Are there any financial resources in your supplementary supply budget allocated to the recruitment of this position? Can you give us some sense of why we haven't heard anything, the actual costs, and why they're not included in supplementary supply if they aren't? Or if they are, please give some indication as such.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Member, for the important question. Yes, last session we created the disability advocate. I'm very proud to stand with a government that, within less than two years in office, was able to create the first disability advocate Alberta will ever have. With respect to that office it's not about just hiring one individual; it was about setting up a whole support office within the ministry. Then we reached out to . . .

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

We will now go to the Member for Calgary-South East for the Alberta Party.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, would you like to go back and forth for your 10 minutes?

Mr. Fraser: Yes, please.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Minister, is there agreement?

Mr. Fraser: Community and Social Services.

The Deputy Chair: Minister? Yeah.

Please go ahead.

Mr. Fraser: Minister, on page 26 the \$81.4 million in unexpected expenses for employment and income supports suggests that Alberta is not experiencing the strong economic recovery that you've been boasting about. How many Albertans were served by this increase and from what parts of Alberta? Can you please explain why you did not take into account these increased demands?

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Member, for the question. I think these numbers reflect those who received services from income support programs. As I said, it was the worst downturn that Alberta has seen in 40 years. It was an unprecedented downturn due to the decrease in the price of oil and other commodities. Out of this, \$39 million is for those who are expected to work. Due to that increased caseload, we will provide those services with that. At this point there are 34,200 people, which is a 65 per cent increase from '15-16 in this caseload growth. And \$26 million out of that \$81 million is for barriers to full employment.

But we are seeing improvement in the job situation and the economy. Our economy grew by 4.5 per cent, the fastest across this country, and we have seen jobs coming back. Like, 90,000 jobs were added just last year. Our GDP growth is up. Wages are up. But what happens when we see these improvements is that there is always a lag in terms of people getting off this caseload and getting back into the market. So we will see a little bit of a lag, but we are seeing the flattening of the line, and we are hoping that this year we will see a decrease in this number and fewer people needing those supports.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thanks. One additional question on this particular issue. You're talking about the growth within the province, particularly that there may be more people here trying to find some economic gains and/or employment. How many people from out of province were approved through AISH in this last little bit, that would maybe explain some of these increases?

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you. AISH provides benefits to Albertans who are ordinarily resident. When somebody is a permanent resident or citizen and is ordinarily resident in Alberta, it will provide that benefit to those Albertans. So whoever received AISH benefits in the last year was qualified under the existing criteria, which is enshrined in our law. We don't provide benefits to somebody who is sitting outside the province. You have to be a permanent resident

or citizen and ordinarily resident in the province in order to apply and qualify for this benefit. Does that answer your question?

Mr. Fraser: Let me clarify. Perhaps it's people that came here, that were on AISH in other provinces, that became ordinary citizens of this province, that could not receive work or could not receive employment through your programs. Was that anticipated? And are there any measures that you're looking at in terms of people that come from out of province that are already on social assistance, that have been approved by those provinces and that come here now looking for, maybe, employment through our programs and do not receive it? That, then, maybe explains part of this increase.

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Chair. I don't know if I'm following the question, but every province has a different program and different statutory or regulatory requirements in order to qualify for those benefits. The AISH program sets those requirements in the AISH Act and regulations. You know, one of the qualifications is that you need to be ordinarily resident in order to qualify for that.

If you are asking whether there is some influx from outside of Alberta on these programs, I was looking at some numbers from 2012-13, when there was an increase of \$400 in the AISH program. If you see the caseload growth during that time, it was still not a huge jump out of the ordinary, that people started planning their move to Alberta around that benefit. There was still a steady growth in that program. This time around we haven't seen that kind of thing, that somebody is moving from out of province just to get AISH.

People qualify when they have disabilities, and if they meet that criteria, we will provide this benefit because it's a statutory benefit.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Chair. Could you please explain the \$23.5 million in AISH caseload growth? How many individuals does that represent? Are there differences in the severity of these individual cases in terms of their conditions or financial needs compared to the pre-existing caseloads? Similarly, the \$43.8 million in PDD caseload growth and \$19.8 million in family support for children with disabilities.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Member. With respect to AISH, the \$23.5 million, that was required to accommodate higher than expected caseload growth. The caseload is projected to grow by 6.7 per cent in 2017-18, and the total number will be around 58,800 individuals. That caseload growth is a bit higher than what we have seen before.

In terms of if there is a difference between what they get, AISH is in fact guaranteed, if I can put it that way. It's a guaranteed income program. It makes sure that your income from all sources doesn't fall below a certain limit, the legislated limit of \$1,588. Sometimes when the economy goes down, people who have some part-time employment might lose that, and the government will have an obligation to make sure their income doesn't fall below \$1,588. Sometimes that also increases the cost per case. In general, I guess, the program is to ensure that everyone who is on this caseload gets \$1,588 minimum from this program from all sources. There are certain incomes that are exempt, nonexempt, partially exempt, so there are some exemptions available to them if they have some employment income, that kind of thing.

9:50

With respect to PDD funding it's \$40 million higher than what we asked for initially – the caseload is projected to grow by 4.1 per cent, to more than 11,900 individuals – \$3 million of that was used to support the minimum wage increase and to accommodate the agencies with more overnight staffing and those kinds of services, and \$2.4 million for career and employment services for persons with developmental disabilities was offset by a grant from the federal government. So that makes a total of \$46 million that we increased for PDD.

Similarly, in FSCD we have seen a significant caseload growth; that is, 10.7 per cent, making the caseload almost 12,500. That's why we added \$19.8 million. I guess there were many factors at play: increased awareness among parents about these services, better diagnostics, technologies, and research.

In all of that, we can say that these are statutorily mandated programs. When Albertans qualify, government has an obligation to provide those benefits. During these tough times, certainly, these programs were more needed. We make sure that Albertans get the support they need.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Minister, you mentioned when you were speaking about PDD – and perhaps this is in some of the other questions that I've asked – the unanticipated. Are you saying that you guys did not anticipate your own increase to minimum wage, that that's why? When you initially funded this, you knew all along that minimum wage was going to be increased, yet you couldn't budget for that, and this is why we're where we're at?

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

We'll now move on to the government side. Are there any members wishing to speak? Hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert, would you like to go back and forth?

Mr. Horne: Please. With the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

The Deputy Chair: Minister, you're in agreement?

Mr. Feehan: Yes.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Please go ahead.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the minister for agreeing to go back and forth in sharing our time today. Now, of course, I think we can all agree in this House that the work of Indigenous Relations is so incredibly important, especially as we gather today on Treaty 6 lands and we acknowledge all of the challenges facing many of our indigenous people both on-reserve and in our urban communities.

Now, Minister, I notice that there's fairly little in the supplementary supply directly in relation to your ministry, and I wanted to commend you on that careful management of your budget. I did notice that there were some transactions with the climate office. You know, I've heard a lot of positive feedback in terms of that from my communities. As well, being a member of the Métis Nation, I've also heard a lot of comments from that community. I was hoping to get a little bit more insight, perhaps, on what work your ministry has been doing on climate change in relation to our indigenous peoples and how these are really helping communities right across the province, how much interest there is, and what the challenges are for indigenous communities accessing those funds.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you very much, and thank you to the member for the question. The climate leadership initiative has been a very important part of the work that we're doing with the indigenous community and, in many ways, is reflective of our ongoing commitment to the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. I can explain that in a couple of different ways. One is that one of the commitments that we have made is that whenever Alberta does well, we should be ensuring that all members of the province do well. That includes the indigenous population within this province. As such, we have been working with the community to look at ways in which they can participate in the climate leadership initiative. Thanks very much to the carbon levy that has been put together in this province for the last couple of years, we've been able to have money dedicated particularly to what we refer to as the indigenous climate leadership initiative. In the past year that totalled approximately \$35 million.

The decision was made to do two things, and we've been working with the indigenous community on those two things. The first was to describe seven programs that would allow the First Nations to participate in the actual care of the environment, reducing the carbon footprint. I think it's very important that we recognize that the indigenous people in this province have in fact been the caretakers of the environment in this province forever, frankly, however long back that goes. They have done so diligently and in such an incredibly good way that they've been able to pass on the environment from generation to generation and teach the next generation how they are to deal with the environment in a way that's positive.

When we put together the carbon levy and, subsequently, these programs, they were very excited about the programs. They were very excited about the philosophy of taking care of our Earth. In fact, they very often have commented to me that the very fact that we put together such an extensive program, starting with the carbon levy, has really allowed them to be supportive of a lot of the other work that we're doing in this province such as the building of the pipelines to the coast. I know that sometimes you read in the media that we are somehow violating indigenous rights by building a pipeline, but they've made it very clear that moccasins come in pairs. That means that while you're building the economy, while you're creating jobs, which, of course, are very much desired in the indigenous community, opportunities for employment, you're also taking care of the environment.

I can tell you that the social licence that we're looking for around the pipeline debate is clearly and absolutely reflected in the responses of the indigenous community, who tell us that without taking care of the environment, they could not be in favour of the work in the oil and gas industry. The fact that we are doing both together makes it responsible, reasonable, and consistent with the philosophy that you pass things on to your next generation in a positive way.

Coming from the carbon levy, we were able to design seven programs. The seven programs run the gamut that starts with the ability for communities to educate themselves and their chief and councils or the Métis settlements chairs and councils on all of the aspects they need to understand in order to participate in this new economy that we're building in this province and in order to be able to educate their communities about the programs that are available but also about the need to move forward and how we've designed the process to move forward.

In addition, we've designed programs that allow them to take immediate action such as the solar panel program, which allows communities to put solar panels up on any of their buildings. Now,

of course, you may know that many communities are a bit ahead of us on this one, communities such as Montana, communities such as Louis Bull, that are already putting up solar panels on some of their public buildings. So we went to them and we learned from them. We are very excited about the leadership that they have shown to us, and we thank them for that leadership. We have used that knowledge that they have to move ahead in terms of the design of our programs. Initially we ran a pilot program in the fall of 2016 in which they were able to put up solar panels and we were to look at the design of the program and look at how that worked.

The second program that we . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. minister, you have hit your five minutes.

If we could have a question asked back to the minister, please. The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

10:00

Mr. Horne: Yes. Thank you, Chair. Now, Minister, there was one point or one transaction in here that I did take note of, and that is in relation to the Siksika Nation and some money for the repairing and rebuilding of flood-impacted homes in their community. I noticed that it was previously budgeted in 2016-17, but it lapsed due to the timing of some cash requirements. Of course, you know, housing, especially on our reserves, is a very important issue and one that, unfortunately, we haven't paid as much attention to historically. So I'm happy to see that that is something that we are addressing, but I was hoping to get a bit more information on why it lapsed and what we're looking at moving forward.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you very much for the question. As you indicated, housing is an extremely important aspect of all of our lives, and unfortunately in the floods of 2014 many people lost their homes, particularly the three Stoney communities and, of course, Siksika. Hundreds of homes, indeed, were lost and replaced. Fortunately, we were able to make some arrangements for building in all of those communities fairly efficiently. For the Stoney tribes it has been completed. All of those homes are built. We in fact have been able to extend a small piece to one of the Stoney tribes to add six additional homes recently, so it's been a very successful program, and we're wrapping that up very nicely.

The reason why we are bringing money forward from the 2016-17 budget now in the supplementary reading is largely for Siksika First Nation because the timing of the build in Siksika has been a little bit different. As a result, we're simply now asking for money which was previously budgeted for this very purpose and just bringing forward dollars that have already been booked against our books, our liabilities, and are now reducing our liabilities. So the \$31,923,000 will now be brought forward in order to complete the final . . .

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We will now return to the Official Opposition side. The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Chair. My questions will be regarding Agriculture and Forestry, and I will ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs if that's all right. I'd go back and forth with him if that's all right with the minister.

The Deputy Chair: Minister, are you in agreement to go back and forth?

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah. That's fine.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Please go ahead.

Mr. Schneider: This year the supplementary supply for Ag and Forestry is \$257,223,000 in addition to the \$4.5 million made available from lower than budgeted expenses elsewhere in the ministry. Where my colleague left off yesterday is where I'm going to pick it up at. The Suffield fire last year caused a great amount of damage to special area farmers and ranchers. I think Municipal Affairs probably has a little bit to do with this anyway. Is any of the money within the Ag and Forestry supplementary supply earmarked for those interest-free loans that were announced last year?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on behalf of the minister in question. As you know, the wildfire budget is variable every year and dependent on the experiences of any particular year in terms of our decision-making. Each year we look at the particular costs that arrive at the particular time. Any of the particular expenditures, some of which you've identified, that have arrived in this year will be included in the supplementary budget. The costs vary from year to year depending on their nature, and the extraordinary wildfires in this particular year have resulted in this particular increase. I can tell you that as bills come in from that particular fire in that location, they will be paid for out of the budget that is available, including the supplementary budget.

Mr. Schneider: Is any other funding for either the Suffield or Waterton area fires being topped up? Same kind of a question: would Waterton be involved in the same supplementary supply, the bills for that particular fire as well?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. If you are asking about Waterton directly related to the fighting of the wildfire, the answer would be yes. It would be included in the wildfire budget in order to pay whatever bills come out of this year's activities.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Okay. Thank you. Do we have any indication – I mean, I think it's probably provincial, on the federal thing – on when these ranchers will be fully compensated? I remember there was a bunch of cattle that died, a bunch of land that burned, et cetera. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you very much. The process for compensation when these events occur has been well established and has been used in this province for a period of time. It really does depend on when farmers are able to detail and outline the losses that they've incurred and provide the information necessary. So it's simply a matter of process. My understanding is that the process has been moving on at a good pace and that farmers can anticipate, you know, payment or compensation in the same time frame that they would typically experience it for other kinds of disasters that they have had to apply for in the past, whether it be hail and crop or other things that they typically look for in this area.

The Deputy Chair: The Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you. Just while we're over there in the southeast portion of the province, I wondered if there have been any programs developed to compensate or provide for special area

leaseholders whose prairie grass and rangeland was burned up during the fire. Have there been any programs developed to compensate those folks?

Mr. Feehan: I know that the minister involved has been working very closely with the people who are affected by the wildfires. In this particular case the supplementary budget is looking primarily at the fighting of the fires itself. I will direct that question for further detail to the minister involved and seek that he provide you with information.

The Deputy Chair: The Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you. I guess while we're at it, you may have to ask the minister this as well. I wonder if they will also get grazing access on other Crown parcels, those folks?

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. Again, I will defer the question to the minister. But I do know that these kinds of negotiations are fairly commonplace, and I would expect that these decisions will be made in the usual pattern that they are made whenever there are events of this nature.

Mr. Schneider: Has agriculture or Municipal Affairs, I guess, worked with Environment and Parks to work on an elk management plan to compensate for the loss of elk habitat caused by the fire? I mean, I think we started with a couple of hundred elk here several years ago, and I think, as we all know – we all determine that there are different numbers there – because of the fire there's been a loss of some of their elk habitat, and I wondered if there's been an elk management plan of some kind. Either one of you guys might know that.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you very much. I know that oftentimes multiple ministries are required to deal with these kinds of issues, and I assure you that they are in constant communication with each other about this. Of course, in the event with elk this is a common experience that animals move their grazing habits, not only for wildfires but for a variety of other activities, reasons over the years. Environment and Parks is quite used to the fact that there are changes that occur and that they need to respond in new ways. I know that the indigenous community – I'm happy to speak to that – are out there in the field very often. We are working with them to look at ways in which we can co-manage these sorts of issues so that their wisdom, that they have from being there every day and seeing what's happening in the field, can be routinely used in government. So I anticipate that all of these people working together will develop plans moving forward in a good way that not only includes farmers and ranchers but also includes the indigenous community, which I think is a bonus for us all.

10:10

The Deputy Chair: The Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you. I guess in the same vein – and I don't know if this has been spoken about yet in cabinet – I wondered if there will be an increase in elk tags or a lengthening of the season for the Suffield hunt this year. We're all aware, like I said, that there is a rather large number of elk down in that area, and farmers are always complaining about them being in their haystacks and such. If we now have a habitat that is less than it was before the fire in

Suffield last year, I just wondered if any discussion had taken place within cabinet about lengthening that hunt that you spoke about or actually adding a few more tags possibly.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you very much. Environment and Parks, of course, works with the best information provided to them by scientists, who can tell us about the need to cull animals at different times or to provide different levels of tags depending on the needs in the community. As I said, we are working with indigenous communities to try to increase, you know, the roundness of our information with regard to these things. I anticipate that those scientists and those community members who have that knowledge will be consulted on this and that the usual procedures for determining the ebb and flow of how many tags are allotted each year will be entered into.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you. I'll just switch gears a little bit, but I'm staying with agriculture. AgriStability. Is there any idea of what the breakdown of AgriStability is, and are there any changes coming on the horizon as far as that program is concerned?

Mr. Feehan: Again, I'm afraid we'll have to defer some of that, you know, future forecasting to the minister when he is available. I will pass on the information to him about your request.

The Deputy Chair: The member.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Chair. So I guess we might as well pass on this one, too. Is there a reserve fund of sorts when issues such as bovine tuberculosis, for instance, or BSE break out, which happened in '03? Is there any reserve of sorts within the ministry when these kinds of issues or breakouts happen?

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. Well, I do know that as part of the business plan each year there is a risk management . . .

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. members.

Are there any members wishing to speak from the Alberta Party? The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to go back again to the Minister of Community and Social Services and share my time. Is that okay?

The Deputy Chair: Please proceed.

Mr. Fraser: Okay. I just wanted to go back; we got cut off there. You had said that, you know, part of the \$43.8 million increase for PDD caseloads was due to minimum wage. Again, I just wanted you to answer the question. If you knew there were minimum wage increases coming in your department, how come you were unable to budget for that in the last budget? If you could explain that.

Mr. Sabir: Yeah. I did mention that there was \$3 million to support that increase. That increase came in October. Yes, we worked with our providers to make sure they had the supports. But that's not the major part of this line; \$46.2 million was the total supplementary funding. For the most part that was due to the higher than expected

caseload growth. It went to support individuals who need those supports to be successful and to be included in the community.

We have worked with individuals with disabilities on many different issues; for instance, the supports intensity scale. We reviewed it and repealed it. Safety standard regulation: we reviewed it and repealed it. We worked on a new contract and planned it with them for almost a year. As we have done in all other cases, it's our commitment to this community that we will not impose solutions on them. Rather, we will work with them on all issues that matter to them. Sometimes those issues change. Sometimes those individual goals change. Sometimes a service provider's philosophy of providing services changes. So all those things do sometimes cause unexpected expenses that cannot always be predicted and provided for in the budget. As I said earlier, our commitment is that we fully believe that Nothing about Us without Us, their slogan, and on all issues we will work with them to make sure that Albertans with intellectual disabilities have the supports they need.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again to the same minister. We talk about the increase of caseloads and unexpected or unintended consequences. Is a part of that that more people unable to obtain jobs under PDD attribute to this increase? Perhaps companies that once could afford it, because of minimum wage and other initiatives that this government has imposed, are turning away more people with PDD, and that is attributing to this particular increase?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you. I guess, let me put this program a little bit in context. This program provides from a few hours of respite services to intensive 24/7 care, with staffing 24/7 and everything in between. On that spectrum disabilities vary, individual goals vary, service providers vary, their philosophy of providing services varies. In all, this program is designed to promote social inclusion of those through various services.

When it comes to employment, it will depend on the individual's goal, if the individual has identified employment as a goal. There are four main categories within the PDD program. Home support will be, for the most part, provided to almost 80 per cent of individuals who are on PDD caseloads. They will receive those services. That's about the staffing supports at home that help them with their daily living. There is one stream of service, which is employment support. Another one is community access. If some individual will identify employment as their goal, then the program area will support them to pursue those goals, help them train, help them find employment. So it depends on the individual's goals. For the most part, this program caters to the needs of individuals. At the planning stage when they are approved, there is a specific plan that identifies their goals of this program in collaboration with the individual, their family, their providers. It's a collaborative process. Depending on the goal of the individual, if somebody has identified employment as their goal, the program area will provide that employment.

In over two and a half years we have added almost \$100 million to this program to make sure that individuals get the supports they need. It's not a defined benefit like AISH, for instance, which is a defined benefit in that you get \$1,588 from all sources, and your income cannot fall below that level. But for a person with the developmental disability program it's not a defined benefit. You will get the supports you need, and that will depend on your identified needs and identified goals.

Thank you.

Mr. Fraser: Again, in those identified goals for those folks that employment is important and, like you said, not a defined benefit – so assuming that that one particular individual who gains employment would not likely need more support. If that's the case, are you measuring things like minimum wage in your department, as you mentioned before, an unintended consequence that you were unable to budget for? How many people that are coming into your department now that normally could seek employment in some of these institutions are being turned away because of the minimum wage increase, and is your department looking at that?

Mr. Sabir: I think that with respect to minimum wage, I would say that we believe that all Albertans who are working have the right to a fair wage. They have the right to a fair wage so that they can put food on the table, they can have a roof over their head. Increasing the minimum wage certainly ensures that. Within our province there are more than 300,000 people who earn below \$15. Out of that, an overwhelming majority, two-thirds of them, are women, often with children. When it comes to minimum wage, it certainly supports those women, it certainly supports to create a more fair society, and it certainly supports the government position that we believe that Albertans needs to be paid fairly.

10:20

In terms of minimum wage it has nothing to do with this program. These are individuals who have different kinds of abilities. Depending on their abilities, when they identify employment as their goal, we provide them training supports and all we can do to help them secure the jobs. If you're suggesting that by minimum wage somehow nobody is hiring them, that's not the case. We have seen a job increase of 90,000 full-time jobs in Alberta after the minimum wage increase just over the period of last year. Yes, there is more work that needs to be done, but we are seeing that things are improving.

Our economy is adding more jobs despite that minimum wage increase, and overall we are seeing that our GDP has a positive growth. Our economic growth rate is 4.5 per cent, the fastest in Canada. Our retail sales are up. Our exports are up. Every indicator that needs to be up is up in our economy. We are seeing positive signs, and that will have a positive effect on all of our programs. For instance, hopefully we will see a decrease in our income support expected to work caseload. When the economy grows, I think we all benefit.

Mr. Fraser: Minister, I would agree with that. The question was: because of the minimum wage increase, are more people that normally would be able to be employed through your department being displaced in other areas? That was the question. You're the one who raised the issue that you overspent because of minimum wage, so you brought that question into this House based on your answers. My question again: how many persons with disabilities are being displaced because they can't find employment from these employers that normally would employ? You're the one who said that perhaps these people – that's why you've had the increase. Can you explain that, and are you measuring that?

Mr. Sabir: I think that out of \$46 million, \$3 million was provided to support the service providers with their staffing requirements, mostly those who have overnight staffing. I know you are more interested in that \$3 million, but there is another \$43 million that is going to those individuals who need those supports. The bulk of that money that we added went to address the caseload.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister. Your time is up.

We will now go to the government side. Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to go back and forth with the Minister of Culture and Tourism if that's okay with him.

The Deputy Chair: Minister, are you agreeing?

Miranda: Yes.

The Deputy Chair: Please proceed.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Chair. We know that Alberta has one of the most vibrant and diverse arts and culture communities in Canada and that without a strong arts and culture program, we wouldn't have a strong province.

[Mr. Dang in the chair]

Minister, I understand that you introduced a new grant to support the screen-based production sector, which includes film, television, and digital media. I understand that this is replacing the Alberta production grant. Can you please tell me why you are asking for additional funds for this program?

The Acting Chair: The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you. Thank you, Member, for the question. Strengthening and stabilizing Alberta's vibrant film and TV industry is part of our government's plan to support and create good jobs, grow our economy, and, of course, diversify it as well, thereby making people's lives better. The previous government had designed a bottomless grant program with very little financial accountability measures, and it was often oversubscribed. It left the province and the government, in fact, scrambling to keep up with the demand, and what we've done is that we've fixed that.

The screen-based production grant replaced the Alberta production grant, the previous one, to better reflect today's industry and introduce new funding criteria with specific application intake dates, for example, and stricter financial controls to our grant program. The new program was introduced on October 25 of last year. We made these changes to ensure that we are investing Albertans' money wisely. We introduced more robust criteria, as I mentioned, a more rigorous evaluation to ensure that we have the greatest benefit in terms of economic and cultural returns to the province. It will provide more incentives to productions that use Alberta crews and infrastructure like the Calgary Film Centre, for example, to ensure that all of the money that we're investing stays in the province.

As you may recall, there was a report from the Auditor General. We fully accept the recommendations of the Auditor General as we found that they coincide with what we had found in our evaluation of the grant process. It gave us an opportunity to deliver insight as well into what we had suspected was going on with the grant. As a result of these new grants, we have included elements such as clarifying the guidelines, more effective communication of the program guidelines being made to the grant recipients and other stakeholders, and enhancing the monitoring of these grants as well as developing a structured risk assessment framework.

Thank you.

Ms Goehring: No more questions.

The Acting Chair: No more questions.

Is there a member from the government side who wishes to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Chair. I would like to address my questions to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and we can go back and forth.

The Acting Chair: Minister, go ahead. [interjections]

Dr. Turner: All right. Actually, I'll withdraw.

The Acting Chair: Is there anybody else from the government side who would like to ask questions? No? All right.

Members from the Official Opposition, is there anyone who would like to ask some questions? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will touch on forestry this time, the Ag and Forestry ministry. This time we'll touch a little bit on forestry. Now, yesterday I asked the minister of ag about a communications question.

The Acting Chair: Hon. member, would you like to go back and forth with this question?

Mr. Schneider: If I could. That's what we did here a few minutes ago, if that's okay.

Yesterday, when I asked the minister about some communications issues with regard to, well, several fires, actually, and I asked about communications, he suggested that I would have to speak with the minister or ask questions of the Minister of Municipal Affairs. So you'll have to help me here, Mr. Chair, because I'm not sure. I'll just punt it out there and see who wants to take a shot.

We have already determined that there's \$257,223,000 in the ask for supplementary supply along with the \$4.5 million that was made available from lower than budgeted expenses in the Ministry of Ag and Forestry. Just a question: is any of this money earmarked to improve communications between all facets of fire response agencies? I think, as we all know, we've heard out of reports that come after those fires that we do have a communications issue between all the players.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah. That is Municipal Affairs. Yes. There are a few different things that we're working on. AFRRCS is the actual radio system that's being rolled out across the province that actually helped quite a bit in Fort Mac. We were able to bring radios up there to get everybody onside to try to communicate a lot clearer. We've taken recommendations from KPMG, from the report at Fort Mac, from the Kenow fire, one of the recommendations that we've actually implemented already. AEMA was already in the midst of implementing a lot of these, to be honest, because after every disaster we look at what's gone on and what's happened. Our communications are key.

When you look at Kenow in particular, we had Municipal Affairs, you had Environment and Parks, you had the federal jurisdictions, you had First Nations. You had all kinds of different people involved with that, right? So we had the information out there. You know, even though people have the information, sometimes, yes, the communication isn't quite as good as we would like it. Right now we are rolling out – well, we do have programs for education and for municipalities, in fact, in our Alberta Emergency Management Agency already. We have field officers that are working with municipalities on a constant basis on making sure they have that information on how to communicate.

10:30

We also have what's called incident command and then unified command, which is trying to make sure that everybody is on the

same page as far as communication, that everybody knows their roles and responsibilities: who takes charge when, who calls the evacuations. You know, it was clear on our side, but it is something important for us to make sure we roll out. We are communicating with municipalities on an ongoing basis on that.

We also just did an emergency exercise, which the POC, the Provincial Operations Centre, does every year. This one was actually simulating a wildfire up around the Grande Prairie region, in the county where it would come into an urban area, and we did identify some things there to make sure that those municipalities understood their roles and responsibilities.

Communication is a huge one for us, but it's already in Alberta Emergency Management Agency in what they do already.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wonder if I could get you to just expand a little bit on this AFRRCs, this new communication that you talked about. I think there was a press release shortly after the Fort McMurray fire that talked about a warehouse in Edmonton where some advanced communications devices had been somehow left or were not ready to go to work, maybe, during the Horse River fire. I guess, a question is if this was part of this AFRRCs. Were any of these new communications devices deployed during the Suffield or Kenow fires?

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. I don't know what particular article you're speaking of, but when I talk about the AFRRCs radio, we did have some with AEMA that we could roll out and bring that are mobile, so we did bring them up there, and it did assist because sometimes, depending on the jurisdiction, the different types of radio frequencies and the radios they're using are different across first responders. There are a lot of folks out there that have had the AFRRCs rollout. You know, it's an expensive system. A lot of RCMP are getting involved. A lot of fire departments now have it. I can't remember the percentage. I'd have to get the percentage that have rolled out already across the province, but it's a pretty decent amount right now.

I don't know that article in particular that you're speaking of, but we did have communications come up there. In fact, once we were able to get them up there, it helped out quite a bit in those fires. You know, I'd have to get the particulars on Kenow. There are some folks, like I say, across the province that have AFRRCs, but we have people on the ground as well in those situations, our field officers with municipalities and with First Nations, so that they can all communicate back and forth, too. With Kenow they were all in an operations centre that was pretty tight and they were all pretty close to each other, but still in those extreme situations trying to get some of that communication is a bit tough at times, obviously, with everything that's happening, and people are stressed.

But any of those particulars, if you want to get some questions to me, I can get some more detail for you. That's no problem.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that from the minister.

I'm just going to change gears a little bit. I spoke to the minister about this before. Given that early season fires are more common in old growth areas, obviously, like Fort McMurray rather than areas close to mountains, basically in the foothills, that tend to be at the later end of the fire season, a question that I've had is: I wonder if

some of the expense for fighting some of these bigger fires could have been alleviated, I mean, if the tankers had been closer to those areas that are more prone. We had tankers, I believe, sitting at Hinton and Edson in the foothills of Alberta 85 kilometres from each other, when – you know, I'm not blaming anybody for anything. I'm just asking a question. Did anything that we learned from the Horse River fire lead us to believe that we should tend to have our firefighting tankers closer to the old growth areas of the forest that tend to be the ones that burn the most? I think I got that spit out right.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. Are you talking about tankers like the ones on the ground or the air?

Mr. Schneider: Yeah.

Mr. S. Anderson: Okay. Sorry. I wanted to clarify with you. Like I said before, after every disaster we do look at, you know, what's happened, logistically where everything is across the province. I was up in High Level and talking to the folks up there. It depends on some of the airports as well that are capable of taking some of these big tankers. That is actually a pretty big consideration, to be honest with you. We do look at that after every disaster to try to figure out where we should have these tankers. I mean, you look at Alberta, and it's a massive expanse of land. Obviously, with the grass fires, any of the old growth fires it is a little tough to, you know, try to figure out what's going to happen every year. You do the best you can. But when it comes to the air tankers, a lot of it does come down to the airports that can actually handle the size and the weight of those guys. Yeah. So that's really what a fair amount of that is based on.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.
The Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister. I'll switch it up again. I'm going to just ask if the ministry has developed any new strategies to combat the pine beetle problem within forestry so that we don't experience the devastating fires that happened in British Columbia there last summer, with all the dead and unharvestable wood, a lot of which, as we know, is all caused by the pine beetle devastation. Just wondered if the ministry had come up with any ideas how we could tackle some of this.

Thanks.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you very much for the question. Of course, you're quite aware that we've been working across provinces and with scientists on this particular problem. I know the University of Alberta has been doing some extensive research in this area. I do not have anything new to report at this time, but we do anticipate that, you know, work will be ongoing, and we will employ the best information to come up with the best decisions as we move forward.

Thank you.

Mr. Schneider: I guess a quick question, and I'm not advocating this at all: would select clear-cutting be a solution? [Mr. Schneider's speaking time expired] Next time.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Member.

On the government side are there any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, back to the Official Opposition side. Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to turn to Culture and Tourism, and if it's okay with the minister, I'll go back and forth.

The Deputy Chair: Minister, you're in agreement?
Please continue.

Mr. Orr: Okay. Thank you very much. The ministry has already asked for 35 per cent operating expense budget up front on the interim supply, and it leaves me a little bit puzzled why in addition to that we're needing an additional \$22 million to supplement last year's budget. I just wondered if you could give me sort of an overall view of what that \$22 million supplemental will be for.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you. We have asked for the additional \$21 million: \$5 million for public access programming support to the National Music Centre so that they can provide programming, basically, to Albertans, and this is going to allow us to do that; \$5 million will be going towards putting the money aside for a \$5 million contribution to a potential bid by the city of Calgary for the 2026 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, if that actually goes ahead. It is tentative on whether we actually are able to reach an agreement with all levels of government. In addition to that, we have expanded the Alberta production grant, as I had mentioned earlier. The new Alberta production grant has obligations and will allow us to invest an additional \$14,900,000.

10:40

The Deputy Chair: The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you very much, Minister. That helps.

The piece for the National Music Centre, then: obviously, that's come up since budgeted last fall. I just wonder if you could give us a few details in terms of why they have that need and why it wouldn't have gone into the budget for the next year. I'm going to assume that you've already committed to it or spent it in this current rotation.

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you. As you know, the National Music Centre is providing cutting-edge performance facilities and an extensive collection of memorabilia, historic facts in addition to being the storage house of Canada's musical memories. The government of Alberta has indeed invested in the National Music Centre to create access to these world-class facilities to help artists from across the province and around the world to develop their talents here. The investment itself will generate new jobs and economic opportunities in Calgary and create an entry point for visitors to become more familiar with the many unique destination opportunities in the province. Along with the city of Calgary and the government of Canada we have provided money for the project so that all Albertans and, indeed, all Canadians can benefit from this.

The capital fund has already been allocated, but there was a need for programming. Otherwise, you would have a facility and would not have enough programming in it. So we have through the OIP, the other initiatives program, provided the \$5 million in funding to ensure that we have programs in place to facilitate all the fantastic work that they're doing.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Minister. I've actually been through the facility. It's an amazing place. They do amazing things. It is a very cool place. I'm a little bit surprised, though, that they would not

have anticipated that operating expenditure and it wouldn't have been put in the original budget for the year. I guess my question is: why the unexpected need for the additional operating piece? Maybe the real question there: is that related to or partly due to the economy, a decline in visitor attendance and revenues generated?

Miranda: Thank you. There was an agreement that had been entered into between the government of Alberta, the government of Canada, and the city of Calgary, and it was always envisioned that there would be funding provided for programming once the capital project was done. Some of the programming that had been envisioned had not at the time of the budget been provided to us. The details had not been provided. So through discussions we understand that these new needs for programming emerged, and opportunities to provide these experiences and this unique programming for Calgarians, Albertans, really, emerged as a perfectly good, reasonable thing to invest in in order to promote the cultural aspect of the National Music Centre and allow for additional programming to be, I guess, set up in this new facility.

The Deputy Chair: Member, go ahead.

Mr. Orr: Thank you. I'd like to move on now and talk about I guess I'll say the past Alberta production grant since we've now moved to a new one. I guess my question relates to the department's lack of a timely response to deal with the issues. In fact, it seems that they weren't raised until the Auditor General raised them. Yet there's been a systemic overspending way back, to my knowledge, as early as 2013 and maybe before that. I just wonder if you've been able to truly pinpoint the reason for that overspending and why it's been systemic consistently for at least the last five years, not just once or twice.

Miranda: Thank you for that question. Indeed, as reported by the Auditor General, the way that it was set up, basically, was as a bottomless grant program. The financial accountability measures that should have been part of the program in the first place were not really there. There was a lot of discretionary ability left up to the ministry.

Now, the work that we did in order to arrive at this new program was initiated long before the Auditor General's report ever came out. As you might recall, we introduced a new program very close to around the same time as the Auditor General released their report. The reason for that is because we needed to first understand what the needs of the industry were and understand where the problems could potentially impede growth in the industry and, in fact, scare some of the investments away from the province. So we did stakeholder meetings. We have evaluated the program itself. We have done an extensive analysis of the different kinds of projects.

The industry itself has also changed. What initially was supposed to be a cultural aspect, the artistic side of it, became a more commercialized industry. Now we've started exporting shows, whereas before it had been mostly short films, you know, students from postsecondary education accessing this program as they had graduated to kind of get their names known. The program itself, to be fair, evolved from being mostly a cultural program to support screen-based production, to include a cultural and a commercial line.

Now, like I said, the stakeholder engagement that we did revealed to us that there was a need for us to, one, explain that we needed to have these controls and these measures and explain to them why they needed to be so that we could actually meet the objectives and stay within our budget. Otherwise, we would continue with this trend that had been set by the previous government of basically going back every year and asking for more money. We didn't want

to do that. At the same time we needed to engage with these stakeholders so that they could understand where we were going, understand what the needs were. This new program now, for example, still has a cap of \$5 million, but they're able to apply for an additional \$2.5 million if they are using infrastructure such as the Calgary Film Centre and are ensuring that we're exporting Alberta as a province.

Any time that we have, you know, this geography, that we are so blessed to have, it does provide an incentive for tourism opportunities as well. Put together, we now have fixed the problems, and we have consulted with the Auditor General, who agrees. We agree absolutely with their findings because they actually confirmed what we ourselves had determined. The time that it took to answer the question more concisely, the reason that it took time from when we first found out about this problem to implement a new program, was the length of time that it took to engage with the stakeholders and come up with a solution that worked for government and the industry to ensure that we can continue growing the sector itself.

I have seen now that these new programs have created a new sense of . . .

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any members from the government side wishing to speak?

Seeing none, are there any members from the Official Opposition wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Chair. If I may, I'll just continue with where we were, maybe one last question on the old Alberta production grant. As we've already noted, there has been a continual overspend for the last five years: \$5 million, \$6 million, \$5 million, \$9 million, \$5 million. Yet I do commend the ministry, in spite of that happening in that one particular aspect of it, for managing to keep your overall budget within budget and actually making up the overspend from other aspects of your ministry. I understand that it was a bottomless pit in the way it was structured, but the discretionary part, I guess, is what I want to kind of try and focus on.

The department did have some discretion there. I kind of wonder if there wasn't sort of a deliberate intent – and I'm not meaning this in a malicious way, but I'm meaning it in the direction of favouring a particular industry – to actually continue to grow that grant portion, even though it was over budget, until you had time to figure it out. I mean, to be over budget five years in a row and yet stay within the overall ministry approved budget says to me that it wasn't accidental or it wasn't something that the department wasn't aware of. It was a deliberate discretionary choice. I just wonder if you could comment on that for me to help me understand that.

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you. To understand, again, I think we really need to look at the history and how this evolved. As I was explaining, it went from being really a program for artistic expression, supporting a very small sector in the province at the time, to then becoming a much more lucrative production sector. Now you had *Interstellar*, you know, *Brokeback Mountain* being filmed here. We had all kinds of TV shows and movies being filmed in the province.

10:50

So there was absolutely a desire to grow this industry. We have seen what it looks like in places like B.C. and Ontario, which, you know, are the jurisdictions that have the largest amount of production. We have seen the entrance to the market of companies

like Amazon and Netflix right now also entering into production, Apple TV as well. All these different things provided for a good investment. There was a good return on the money that we were investing, and it made sense. Unfortunately, the way that the program itself was created was that, in essence, as long as anybody with a program met the minimum criteria, they could apply, and they would be almost guaranteed to receive the funds.

In the regulations themselves there was no way for the minister to turn these down, right? The program was not built with those. So what I have done now is ensured that once I have reached the maximum of this particular budget line, then I can turn – and this is the reason why I explained it to the industry. I needed to have their buy-in on this so that they understood that if we reached that limit, I would not be going over that, and they would be okay with that. Of course, the industry continues to grow. It's something that we have to look at in the future and see how we can support this because there is a lot of potential to grow it to be the size of what it is in Vancouver or in Toronto, for example, where there are many studios using the facilities and increasing it.

I want to ensure that you also know that within the new criteria, like, we've clarified the requirements for the program, and we have communicated these to our stakeholders, of course, but we have enhanced monitoring of the grant so that it's ongoing every quarter. We're going to be able to see how much money is still left before we go into the next intake program. Then the structured risk assessment framework that I have referred to, basically ensuring that – one of the challenges was that when a production company came in and filmed, for example, season 1 of any particular show, usually they did that with a numbered company and not necessarily a name, so there was no continuity. Some of these grants that the Auditor General was referring to were companies that would basically come into the province, form a numbered company, dissolve, and then in season 2 would start up a new company with a new number.

So in order for us to have that continuity – the program regulations did not require that kind of monitoring, which is one of the reasons why some of these other companies were able to get funding sometimes. I think it was a few years back, anyways. From my perspective, having all of these elements built into this program and having the buy-in, especially from the industry, we're not in fact causing any kind of uncertainty but are actually having a little bit of an ongoing relationship with them so that they know what the limits and the limitations and the caps are. We're also able to ourselves monitor ongoing this budget, now that the program is set up as a quarterly intake, before the new intake period starts so that we can manage the cash flow and not get into the same situation because I don't think it's appropriate.

The reason why we've asked for the additional funding is because . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. minister, you have spoken for five minutes, so we will revert to a question from the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you. One last question in this area, and then I'll move on. Am I to assume that none of the supplemental funding, then, will go towards some of the other cultural industries: Alberta book publishers, Alberta magazines, and Alberta audio production companies as well? There's nothing for them? Related to that question, I guess, then, is that – I mean, they get 2 and a half million dollars combined. There's \$45 million for the new screen-based productions. It seems like a very heavy overweighting. You know, I'm pretty sure that book publishers in particular – well, I guess, quite frankly the others as well – have as much as 70 per cent of

their industry revenue coming from export sales. Is there sort of an overweighting or an imbalance with regard to these other cultural industries?

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you for the question. You know, when I look at this specific grant, I'm looking at an industry that, number one, like I mentioned before, helps with tourism because we're having the province itself being the backdrop for many of these films. The other thing, of course, is that it induces expenditures in places like hotels and food for the crews and the lumber that it takes to build these sets. So there are a lot of other pieces that putting money into this particular industry actually incents, which is the reason why it has become such a lucrative sector in other jurisdictions.

Now, with respect to the other cultural industries, there is absolutely room to grow, and there are absolutely a lot of different things that we can be doing like the screen-based production grant.

At this time this was the biggest expenditure that I had, one that I needed to bring under control, and absolutely my focus was to make sure that I worked with the industry to get it right so that we would not cause any panic and that we would continue to have a steady flow of productions coming into the province and incenting new productions coming to the province.

I know the Minister of Economic Development and Trade has turned his mind – and I have now as well – to digital media, for example. We also, as in the previous budget, you might know, introduced a tax credit for postproduction, which also helps in all of this.

Now, the thing about screen-based production that also needs to be kept in mind is that it is not just about the filming and the actors. There are also writers, screenwriters. There are all kinds of artistic work and artistic endeavour that go into it. So even though it doesn't necessarily go into, let's say, the book publisher profession or editors or what have you, there are still aspects of those cultural industries that benefit from having a screen-based production.

The other thing, of course, is that the scale of these productions is in the \$45 million to \$50 million range for one season, for example, and that's why they qualify for these \$5 million grants. The investment that they make and the money that they bring into the province creates a very good return on that investment, similar to other cultural industries.

You know, it is a reflection of the economic times that we are looking at all of the opportunities to continue to promote this side of our economy, and I will be having further discussions with the industry to see how we can support them as we go.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any members from the government side wishing to speak?

Seeing none, are there any other members from the Official Opposition that would like to speak? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I have my questions, and they're going to be for the Minister of Municipal Affairs if I could. If we could go back and forth, I would appreciate that.

The Deputy Chair: Minister, you're in agreement?

Mr. S. Anderson: Okay. Back and forth.

Mr. Taylor: Municipal Affairs is important to everybody here, it seems like. These are really good questions, and I'm pleased to be

able to ask these questions to you. According to the supplementary estimates \$15 million was made available from lower than expected expense in other programs. Can you please provide details on what programs were underspent? There's another part to this question. I'll just finish it off so that you have both parts to it. Why wasn't this money spent as originally intended in Budget 2017?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you very much, Chair. Thank you to the member for the question. Actually, I'd like to get the details for you, if you wouldn't mind, so that I could give you the particulars on that. I don't actually have those in front of me, but I'd be more than happy to do that, to get you exactly what you're looking for. I just don't have that in front of me.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Okay. Thank you for that. I look forward to getting those answers to see where that money has actually gone and how it's being spent, which programs didn't quite make it.

11:00

According to the Alberta Emergency Management Agency's website "disaster recovery programs," often referred to as DRPs, "provide financial assistance for municipalities and their citizens who incur uninsurable loss and damage as a result of a disastrous event." A state of local emergency does not have to be declared in order for costs to be eligible to receive DRP funding. The DRP is administered by the AEMA, which is an agency under the authority of Alberta Municipal Affairs. My understanding is that DRP is budgeted for every year, an amount totalling \$200,000, and then once the year is over and we know exactly how much we have spent, it is requested through supplementary supply, all of that. All that being said, is \$18.67 million expected to cover all of the expected liabilities associated with the DRP for the 2017-18 fiscal year?

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Chair. Yes, we do, you know, a base budget, obviously, for disaster relief, but as everybody knows, with the changing world that we're in, more and more disasters are more and more extreme. To be honest, actually, in Alberta we have a lot of smaller disasters, which fall under the DRP, that we don't get funding for from the feds because we don't meet the threshold. You can prepare as much as you want and you can have the funding available as a base, but going forward, the federal government has changed what they fund us, so a lot of times we don't hit those thresholds.

A lot of this funding is because of that, because we've had emergencies come up. I mean, climate change is affecting all of us – more floods, more fires – and you can only prepare as best you can, right? So that's to cover a lot of those. You know, the DRP comes in from individual property owners. They come to their municipality, they make their applications, and the municipalities come to us with those requests. Each year is unique, and there are fewer or more requests, depending on the disasters that have happened. Quite frankly, we know that there are more and more, and we expect that to happen again this year, but we prepare as best we can.

That's basically what that is, paying out for disasters. You've got what happened in Fort Mac, obviously, some of the wildfire disaster recovery assistance programs, so that's where that falls. Inevitably,

with climate change, it's going to get worse and worse, and we will have to be paying out more, unfortunately, and working with the Insurance Bureau of Canada on a lot of this as well. They're very far ahead on where they are with climate change, so they can bring forward programs that will help as well. It's kind of, I would say, a team effort all across the board.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Madam Chair. I can't recall exactly, but \$18.7 million is lower than in the past if I'm not mistaken. Is the amount outlined here, the total expected DRP for 2017-2018, lower than for 2016-17?

Mr. S. Anderson: Sorry. Is that lower than what's in here right now?

Mr. Taylor: Yeah. Is the amount outlined here the total expected DRP for the 2017-18 year?

Mr. S. Anderson: Yes. It's what we have put in here because of what we've had come forward. There is lag time, obviously, on a lot of these requests that come forward, so this is what we have to pay for what we've received, what has happened, and anticipation. Like I said, we can prepare as much as we can going forward, but we have to wait until these disaster relief programs are applied for. I'm not sure what's going to happen through this season coming up, but we will have to, you know, wait and see, and then those applications will come in. In the future I can't guess what it's going to be, but this is to pay for all the things that have been going on and the things that we have received relief requests for already.

Mr. Taylor: I'm just kind of curious because I'm watching the snowpack that's happening across Alberta. I mean, it's everywhere. We're getting quite a bit more snowpack right now. As we're speaking, it's snowing quite heavily, and some of the members that have to go south to Calgary, et cetera, may have trouble with the roads. Because you've seen more snow this year than we've had in previous years, are you anticipating something for this budget with the snowpack and the possible consequences that could come with flooding?

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, like I said, we do try to prepare as much as we can. There is a big snowpack this year. I mean, some people like it because they know it's going to give us a lot more water than last year. Obviously, we didn't get much snow last year, which was unfortunate, you know. It is something we always try to prepare for, but like I said, this money here is paying for – there is a bit of lag time with disaster relief funding, so it all goes on what we received from municipalities around the province. We will have, again, our base funding, and then we will have to re-evaluate as circumstances change. It's something that we have to adapt to as well, so we will be ready for everything as best we can, but it depends on kind of how the season unfolds, to be honest with you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Taylor: You alluded to the fact and were talking about the federal government and that funds would come from the federal government but that it's kind of hard to determine which funds are coming, how much funding is going to be coming. I guess it's based on the size of the event that's occurring. That is what I think you were alluding to. How much of this DRP money that we've had is expected to be refunded by the federal government in the end?

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Chair. As I said, a lot of what these have been are smaller ones, smaller disasters that weren't funded by the feds. These ones are all from us. That's why that money was requested, because it didn't fall under what the feds were giving us. Fort Mac, for an example, was a massive disaster, so that triggered the criteria and the circumstances where the feds would jump in. Because we've had all these small ones – they are big to us, but on a federal level they don't see it as such even though they add up to a massive amount of money for us – they don't jump in and assist us. It's all up to us to do that.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you. Going to another part, which is, I guess, near and dear to all the hearts of the municipalities, the MSI, you read as per the MSI website that "the Municipal Sustainability Initiative . . ." – the MSI; I'll stick with that; I'll tongue twist myself on that one a few times – ". . . helps support local infrastructure priorities and build strong, safe and resilient communities." Again, according to the MSI website 2017 saw \$1.18 billion in MSI capital. According to the supplementary supply estimate it appears that MSI funding is pegged at \$1.65 billion due in large part to the additional MSI . . . [A timer sounded] I guess I'm timed out. I'll finish that later.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Member.

Are there any members from the government side wishing to speak?

Seeing none, are there any members from the Official Opposition side wishing to speak? The Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: Do you want me to start the question again?

Mr. S. Anderson: Did you have a little bit left?

Mr. Taylor: Yeah, I still have a little bit of the question left.

Mr. S. Anderson: Okay.

Mr. Taylor: MSI funding is pegged at \$1.65 billion – that was what I was at – due in large part to the additional MSI funding of \$800 million included in supplementary supply. Was this additional \$800 million unexpected?

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. You know, I like to joke around sometimes with my municipalities. When they ask about MSI, I say: oh, what's that? They sometimes look a little scared. MSI, obviously, is the biggest grant that Municipal Affairs gives out, \$1.2 billion. We are by far the most generous and largest funder in Canada for that. Through the downturn we made sure that the funding was there for municipalities because infrastructure is important. You know, water and waste water, though some people might not notice it and it's not sexy, is unbelievably important, so we wanted to make sure that the money was there, and we've continued to do that. It's important to me as a resident of this province but also as Municipal Affairs minister. We have 342 municipalities that we have to take care of.

Continuing and going forward, with the \$800 million that you were speaking of, as we recover, we want to make sure that our municipalities have what they need to fund their core infrastructure projects. You know, in going around the province this summer, we're in the largest infrastructure build in the history of Alberta, but it's still not enough. We're playing catch-up from a massive social and physical infrastructure debt that was left, and no matter what

we do right now and how much money we put in, it's still going to be awhile till we catch up with the roads and hospitals and bridges and so on.

11:10

The \$800 million that's being added to the MSI in the 2017-18 fiscal year, which the municipalities will receive in the 2018 calendar year, along with the other allocations approved in the upcoming provincial budget are to that goal, to make sure that we have core funding for them. It's not an increase in overall MSI levels, but it's going to give the municipalities the flexibility to continue with these massive projects that we have right now that they're trying to play catch-up on. It's just a way for us to give ongoing support and make sure that the money is there for them. That's really what it is.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Minister.

Can municipalities expect to see \$1.6 billion directed to MSI in the coming budget, or was this a one-time bonus?

Mr. S. Anderson: It would be nice if we all got a bonus of that. No. Basically, what it is: this \$800 million, like I said, is coming forward, but you'll see in the budget on March 22 the other details for MSI that are going to be there. Obviously, you know, in this province we were tightening our belts, and that's something we all have to look at across ministries. The details will be coming forward. One of my promises that I made when I was at AUMA yesterday with the mayors is to make sure that we work on MSI and work on this program going forward to find something that's sustainable, that's predictable, and that's long term, making sure that we consult with the AUMA, the AAMD and C, Edmonton, and Calgary. I'll be doing that going forward. In the budget you will see this \$800 million, but you will also see the finer details of what's coming out. I can't actually speak of that yet until after the budget comes out.

Mr. Taylor: So they've had additional monies that have been distributed. Can you tell me when the additional MSI money was distributed to municipalities?

Mr. S. Anderson: Normally they do their budgets – right? – in the fall, and then into our budget cycle is when we look at when it's going to be distributed. We'll have more information on this one after the budget. They'll be finding out pretty soon about what it is. I can't give you an exact time on that. Sorry about that, Member.

Mr. Taylor: This might be another question that might be difficult for you to answer right off the bat, but I'll give it a shot and see what you can do with it. Can you please provide us with the amounts being allocated to each municipality? I know that municipalities in my riding would love to know that, especially ahead of time, because they have their budgets that they have to do. Doggone it, if they can see that ahead of time, it's a lot easier to do budgeting.

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Chair. For sure, I totally understand where you're coming from. You know, like I said, the MSI originally was supposed to be a short-term program. My promise to them was to say: I want to make sure that this is long term so that right in the middle of your budget cycle you don't have what you've feared for ages, that it's going to be cut overnight and it's gone. That's not happening. I'm going to work on that and have been working on that very hard to find wins for my municipalities.

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

I can't tell you the exact allocation because what's happening is going to be in the budget, but I will tell you that, you know, we still use the same formula, which is 48 per cent according to population as listed in the 2017 Municipal Affairs population list, 48 per cent allocated according to the 2017 education tax requisitions, and 4 per cent allocated according to road length as listed in the 2016 statistical information return.

I want to make sure that we have something stable going forward and try to legislate something for them because obviously right now, as I said, it's pretty unpredictable. They're kind of at the whim of the winds right now, so I want to make sure that they have that stable, predictable funding. They'll find out more after the budget.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have another question, just because you kind of brought it up, and it goes towards that same idea. Because we know that this MSI agreement is set to expire here – it actually probably expired, I think, a couple of years ago, and the government agreed to extend the agreement for a further couple of years, which is good – is any money being allocated in supplementary supply towards developing an MSI replacement?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Chair. It did expire last year, so it goes till 2019. The reason why I extended it a little bit longer is because, one, I was a fairly new minister when it happened but also because we were in the middle of the MGA, which is obviously the second-biggest piece of legislation in Alberta. We'll be working together with them on something going forward to make sure that they have stable, predictable funding in this program, but that's within our ministry already. It's not something that we have to have supplementary supply for. That's within our ministry. We're working on that type of thing already, so it's not to do with that.

Mr. Taylor: My question kind of is: do you have another 10- or 20-year plan that you're setting up? Will it be MSI, or will it be something else?

Mr. S. Anderson: We don't have a set time frame on it right now. We're going to be sitting down, as I said, with the AUMA, the AAMD and C, Edmonton, and Calgary and figuring out with our stakeholders what's going to work best for them. You know, some stakeholders like the formula of MSI; they think it works well for them. Some others think that it maybe could be adjusted. I don't want to predict what's going to happen there because it is going to be all about the consultation with these folks and understanding what they think is going to work best for them and for me to be able to facilitate that. I wish I had a crystal ball for you and I could tell you, but I'm not sure yet because we're going to be working with everybody on the ground.

I know that that's something that I pride myself on at Municipal Affairs, our consultation. I want to make sure that we do as much as we can with people and as often as we can. We'll know going forward, working on it with the people, what it's going to look like.

Mr. Taylor: We've talked about additional MSI funding that's been going on. Has any of the additional MSI funding been directed at MSI operating?

Mr. S. Anderson: No. It's strictly capital.

Mr. Taylor: Okay. If I understand things correctly, a cost incurred related to a disaster is allocated to the budget year in which the disaster occurred. Is that correct?

Mr. S. Anderson: Yes. That's what the supplementary supply is for, because of this, 2017-18.

Mr. Taylor: Can you explain what the additional \$4 million is being spent on in relation to the 2016 Wood Buffalo wildfire?

Mr. S. Anderson: I don't have the actual specific details for you, the particulars of it. I can get some more information on that for you to give you a little more particular info. Yeah, like I said, it's still paying off a lot of the things that have happened, obviously, through the fire, but I'd have to get those exact details for you.

The Chair: That moves us into the next segment. Are there any government members who wish to ask any questions?

Seeing none, the opposition. Do you have any further members who wish to speak? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much. I have a few questions for the Minister of Status of Women. If it's okay with the minister, I'd like to just sort of pose a few questions, and then if we could go back and forth, that would be lovely.

The Chair: Sure.

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah? Okay. I just, first of all, wanted to thank the Minister of Status of Women for bringing attention to the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services. I know we're only dealing with a small amount of money right now by comparison, the \$675,000 that is with respect to the wait times and the crisis of wait times. I would challenge anybody in this House to say if they don't know somebody who's been impacted by sexual assault. Obviously, every single one of us knows somebody, and if we haven't had that conversation, I'm fairly certain that in conversations with other people those would be made very clear, especially with the Me Too movement and many, many courageous women coming forward.

11:20

A couple of the things that I wanted to ask about are with respect to – I'll put my four questions out there first, and then I'll have a few follow-ups. Why is the funding being asked for from this supplementary supply instead of your last year's budget? I was just curious, especially with the crisis in wait times. I'm just curious about why it's going about it that way, especially, I mean, as they're struggling with the counselling services.

The other question I have with respect to that: is that going to be a regular funding piece, or is this just sort of a one-time thing? The \$675,000: is that going to be a sustainable funding piece?

The other piece that I wanted to ask is if the minister could elaborate on how that's going to work with the wait times, the process, specifically as it's related to programs within the Ministry of Status of Women, with protecting women and girls. I realize that we have a broad spectrum of people that are in this crisis that are waiting for these wait times, but is there anything directed specifically with regard to female genital mutilation or honour beatings or anything like that? These are specific parts of the portfolio that we share. I want to understand if some pieces of that are going to also be included in this.

How will you be measuring your success with the wait times? Are you going to be able to provide the House with updates as to

how this crisis is being averted through these dollars? I'm hoping that we'll be able to see that that happens.

Maybe I'll give the minister a few moments to answer a couple of those questions, and then I'll have some follow-ups. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Chair. In your follow-up I would request that you repeat the first question because I didn't hear the stem of it.

With respect to the funding year over year, first of all, I'd like to provide a clarification. Status of Women does not provide program funding for anything. This is a flow through of Status of Women according to some budgetary accounting principles. It is going to be funded through the Community and Social Services department, so they will be the administrators of the grant, and the funds will actually be coming from them despite the fact that there's a number showing a flow through on our budget. That is because we do not provide programming whatsoever to anyone. We have a granting arm that is for small-dollar seed money for projects across the province.

I will do my best with the information that I have from Community and Social Services to answer your questions. The wait times issue is something, certainly, that I can speak to. The wait times for getting counselling at these crisis centres, which is a portion of what these funds will be going to, is currently in some geographic areas around eight to nine months. That is a significant period of time for someone in a crisis situation to be faced with and is incredibly discouraging.

We know that this is a priority. It's been a priority for our government, which is why when AASAS presented us with their business case for \$8.1 million, as a government we decided to fully fund that. It is our understanding from the service providers that this will reduce wait times to the two-week window, which is their ideal, but in some circumstances or geographic locations it may be a little bit longer. Their ideal time frame is to be able to provide counselling services within two weeks, and that's after an initial crisis counselling.

The funds are through a grant. There will be ongoing dollars. There's an initial influx of dollars. Again, you would have to follow up with Community and Social Services for additional details given that it's coming through them, but my understanding is that there will be year-after-year funding and that there is a commitment in the agreement with AASAS to do that.

In terms of measuring metrics, this is not a government-run service. It is through front-line service providers, but we are providing support. They will be the ones tracking metrics. Again, you would have to follow up with Community and Social Services to see what requirements have been provided in terms of the grant as we are not the administrators of the grant and are not able to provide that level of detail of information.

In terms of what it is being used for, it will address seven underserved regions of the province identified by AASAS. Some of these regions currently have limited or no specialized supports, including High Level, High Prairie, Peavine, Rainbow Lake, Fort Vermilion, Fort Chipewyan, Fort MacKay, Janvier, Wabasca, Slave Lake, Athabasca, Hinton, Jasper, Edson, Bonnyville, Cold Lake, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Canmore, Banff, Lake Louise, Lethbridge, Cardston, Taber, Pincher Creek as well as the urban municipalities where there are currently service offerings.

My information from CSS is that it will provide funding for 15 full-time employees in addition to one provincial co-ordinator, who will work closely with each region to build capacity and mentor staff. Each region would have one full-time regional co-ordinator, who

would work with several stakeholders to identify service needs, service capacity, potential partners, raise public awareness, and educate the community, as well as one full-time system navigator or educator, who would work with survivors to access existing services.

The goal of this funding, as mentioned, is to ensure that every Albertan survivor, no matter their location, is supported. In light of the I Believe You campaign and the Me Too campaign we have seen large numbers of women coming forward to seek support services.

The Chair: Hon. minister, I hate to interrupt, but you've reached your maximum of five minutes.

Ms McLean: Thank you.

The Chair: Go ahead, hon. member.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Minister. I'll ask you my first question again just for clarity. Let me make sure I'm saying this correctly. You've asked for this funding. Now, you'll have to clear this up for me. You're saying that this is flow through, that the funding that is being asked for in supplementary supply didn't come from last year's budget. That's what I'm wondering, why it didn't come from last year's budget and why it's being asked for in supplementary supply, especially given the crisis. I was wondering if you could explain that to me. Maybe it's as a result of the flow through. You might have explained that already, but just in case that's a different answer, if you could explain that, that would be great.

Also, you had mentioned that you don't do program funding. Can you explain what you mean by that? If I also understand correctly, Minister, you were saying that these are all grants. They're small grants that come out of the Ministry of Status of Women for various things. It will just help to understand this. You've explained that the \$675,000 is a flow through. I understand that. However, with respect to wait times in some areas – I don't mean to just direct it back to wait times. I understand that those dollars are specifically going towards helping with that, but we are in the portfolio of Status of Women and protecting women and girls. I'm just curious. If you don't have program funding – maybe that's just not for this; maybe you have other program funding. If you can explain that.

Also with regard to FGM and honour beatings . . .

The Chair: That brings us to the end of that segment.

We will move back to the government side if there are any private members here who wish to question the minister.

Seeing none, we will return to the Official Opposition, still at the 10-minute rotation if there are any who wish. The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Good. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to supplementary estimates as presented this week. I must say that I shake my head in dismay that here we are two weeks away from the fiscal year-end, and the government is looking for more money to finish off the fiscal year.

Albertans do not necessarily believe the NDP when it says that the worst of the recession is behind us. Two weeks ago the Finance minister was all smiles and happy – happy days are here again – with the third-quarter report, reporting that the deficit is down \$1.4 billion. But we have to recognize that, you know, the real deficit is only down \$900 million.

11:30

The Finance minister did have the opportunity to exercise his option with regard to the risk adjustment. The risk adjustment was

essentially money that wasn't earmarked to be spent; it was there to protect in case of unforeseen revenue problems or such. That \$500 million risk adjustment removed shows that we are at a \$900 million reduction of deficit. Now the government, through the supplementary supply, is looking for another 1 and a half billion dollars to finish off the year, 1 and half billion dollars over budgeted expenses for fiscal 2017-18.

The Chair: Hon. member, I neglected to ask you if you wanted to share your time back and forth or if you just wanted to go five minutes.

Mr. van Dijken: Well, we'll share time back and forth. That'll work.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. van Dijken: I believe that it's an insult to Albertans to try and play them down for not recognizing that this government continues to have spending out of control and fails to get their spending under control. All Albertans realize that this extra spending is going to be debt financing. You know, the guys on Wall Street and Bay Street think this is just fine because Alberta Capital Finance will need to go to them. They issue bonds, and they get sold on the market. That keeps them active, but Albertans are not very happy about it.

Then we also have to recognize that credit-rating agencies look at this and they consider, again, that we're in a period of reducing the deficit. But with the realization that the government is needing supplementary supply at a point in time when revenues are up over \$2 billion, the rating agencies must think: what is this government up to, and why can't they get their spending under control? Then we take the risk of the credit rating taking a hit, and interest rates on those bonds go up.

I implore the government to continue to work on their spending constraints and ensure that the money is being spent efficiently and effectively. Then we may be able to get on a path to balance in the future. I know that's what the United Conservative Official Opposition is focused on, you know, the priorities of hard-working Alberta families. I also recognize that the NDP's Treasury Board voted to spend more money or move money around. They've done a number of those things, 37 times this year, and here it is now, the request to vote that money.

I do have a few questions with regard to some of the money being allocated in the supplementary supply. I'm needing some clarification as to why the decisions were made the way they were. The first question I would have is about the \$800 million in MSI grants being loaded into the supplementary supply instead of into interim supply for the following fiscal year. I guess my question is: why was the decision made to put it in this? Was the money already spent? What does that leave us to expect in next year's MSI funding if we're now throwing \$800 million into this year's grant program?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Chair. Thank you for the question. You know, as I said before, there was a massive infrastructure debt in this province left to us. When the opposition member speaks about priorities of Albertans, I'm not sure if he realizes that schools and roads and bridges and hospitals are priorities of Albertans.

I had the opportunity to go around the province this last year of being a minister, a year and a bit. Everywhere I go, there is a priority. Some of them are bridges. You know who crosses bridges? Farmers, ranchers, oil and gas folks that keep this province running. So when they ask us for money, where does the opposition think it comes from? Not magical fairies like they say. This comes from a

real place. This comes from a spot where we go to pay for the priorities that Albertans ask us for, to make sure that that's built to keep this province going, that \$800 million in MSI. I'd like him to go to my municipalities, 342 municipalities across this province, and say: we're going to cut all that funding so that you can't build all the things you need in your communities. That's not what we're going to do over here, Madam Chair.

There is massive growth going on around this province right now. I had the opportunity to be up in Grande Prairie a few weeks back and see all the growth that was going on up there. That is hard on the bridges. It's hard on the roads. It's hard on the communities. We just heard yesterday from some folks in Olds about thousands of jobs that are going to be coming up down there. Look at Cavendish coming in. Look at all the things that are happening around the EIA and all the building that's going on around highway 19 and around there, all the exports, all the cargo. We have to pay for that, and people want us to. Those are Albertans' priorities.

Making sure that that money is in the budget for these municipalities when they need it for their core infrastructure projects is number one for me. I want to make sure that I take care of my municipalities. I will continue to do that, and that's why we're doing this right now. There will be more details coming forward in the budget about MSI, as I said to one of the other members. We'll be working with AAMD and C and AUMA and Edmonton and Calgary and looking at a more sustainable, long-term, predictable funding model that's going to work for everybody and that will make sure we grow this province not just now but into the future.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Chair. The minister fails to recognize the direction of my question. I would like to see, possibly, if he'd answer the question. I guess the question is that in planning and in going into a fiscal year, there are projects that are identified and needs that are identified, yet this minister decides throughout the year to all of a sudden pretty much double his MSI funding. My question is: was that not foreseen before? Are these surprise expenses? Or did the minister fail to actually do proper budgeting when we voted the budget in 2017-2018 at the time? We take a look at where now the minister is deciding that he has to just about double his MSI funding. Why was that decision made through the year as opposed to making it when the budget was actually developed?

I believe that proper budgeting would allow us to let the municipalities know ahead of time what they can do or what's going to be coming their way. Now we see this unexpected increase, so that just leaves it in the municipalities' minds that: "Well, I guess maybe the minister is going to make a political decision at the time. We don't know." But if the proper budgeting is done ahead of time, maybe they can feel confident that the minister knows what he's doing. At the end of the day, the question is: why is that grant money showing up here in supplementary supply? Has the construction already started, or is this money that could have easily been put into the next budget here and recognized in the 2018 construction year?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, thank you. To the member opposite: I make decisions based on facts. I don't have a crystal ball to look at the future. What I do is that I listen to my municipalities when they come forward with projects and core infrastructure projects that they need.

The Chair: That brings us to the end of that 10-minute segment.

Any government members wishing to ask questions?

Seeing none, we will return to the Official Opposition. The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just have one question for the Minister of Status of Women.

The Chair: And again you want to go back and forth?

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. Just the one question and then she can take the rest. I just want to understand what programs or availability of funds there are within the portfolio to deal with female genital mutilation, honour beatings, and honour killings. This is a major crisis for our women and girls, and I'd like to know what's being done within Status of Women.

11:40

Ms McLean: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to take the opportunity as it's clear to me that, despite our lengthy estimates conversations in the past, for some reason this is not clear. Status of Women is not what you'd call a programming ministry like Community and Social Services, which runs programs out of their ministry. They come up with things that they do to serve the public good, things like the AISH program. There's no third-party organization that is out there in the world running that program, that we give money to. That is a government-run program. So when I say programs and services, that's what I mean.

We have a granting arm that has small dollars. It has its own particular requirements for applying to. If a community organization has a project that falls within one of our mandate areas, they are welcome to apply under that fund, which is budgeted at \$500,000 a year. Sometimes through cost savings we have a little bit more money if we haven't hired a position, et cetera, so sometimes that goes up a little bit. But those are the dollars that come out of Status of Women. We are not a programming ministry, as I've articulated, in the way that Community and Social Services is.

I welcome community organizations with all different perspectives, all different ideals, all different policies and programs and creative strategies to solve a number of issues that face women and girls in this province. Frankly, those organizations are often best suited to know what the issues are facing women and girls in Alberta. I can tell you from our first and the last granting round that we had – for our second one the applications are now closed, and we're reviewing those applications. We had some fantastic applications with a variety of different solutions to combatting the number of barriers and issues that women and girls face, including issues around violence against women and girls in the province.

We rely on community organizations to come up with solutions and applications to solve the various problems that you've alluded to. The way that Status of Women is built – and we've had these conversations, again I'll reiterate, at estimates in quite a lot of length and detail – is that we are largely an internal organization of government, an internal department that provides support to other government ministries, advice through the GBA plus lens in order to be able to ensure that our policies and programs GOA-wide, within other departments, have that lens on them and that any programs and policies take into account how they impact women and girls, how they may disproportionately impact certain populations. As the Member for St. Albert mentioned, it's not just limited to a gender analysis. It will identify if a particular race, socioeconomic class, age group is being left behind or particularly benefiting. That gives us the opportunity to know where the gaps are that we may need to mitigate for.

That is the essential core work of what Status of Women does within government. We have, certainly, opportunities to partner with agencies and organizations that have policies or programs that fall within the mandate that we can participate in but that, for some reason, fall outside of the scope of our granting program. I hope that answers your query around what I mean when I say that we're not a programming or services industry by way of comparison to CSS.

What we are doing to combat violence against women and girls: our efforts are numerous. Like I mentioned, we've got a number of granting programs that assist with this. But one of the latest things that we've done, that I'm happy to provide some more information on because I ran out of time to do that, is our \$8.1 million, government-wide investment that is really due to the application of the GBA plus lens.

When you ask why this wasn't in last year's budget, the answer is simple. AASAS had their business case prepared at a particular point and time in the fiscal year and came to us after our last budget was already completed. When they came to us with this, we knew that this was a priority for us, that it was a priority for Alberta women and Alberta girls, and it was essential that the government ensure that women and girls have these sexual assault services. So even though it was outside last year's budget, we made this a priority, to find funding to be able to fund AASAS so that they could enhance counselling services with the goal of cutting wait times for counselling; expanding immediate crisis services, including over the phone, walk-in, or at the hospital; increasing outreach and education . . .

The Chair: Hon. minister, once again you've run out of time.

Ms McLean: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Did you have any further questions, Chestermere-Rocky View?

Mrs. Aheer: Yes. Again, you didn't answer my question about female genital mutilation specifically. You're saying that you don't run programs. But I want to understand: how is it that female genital mutilation, an extreme, abhorrent act against our young girls, is not within the scope of Status of Women to be dealing with or at least within some aspect of the scope of how you deal with the other ministries? If you could please answer the question with respect to that and why the language on that particular horrific act is not within Status of Women. Protecting girls, domestic violence: it falls under all the categories which I understand Status of Women to stand for.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you. I certainly take umbrage with the member's characterization that Status of Women does not play a role in those policy decisions. I also take umbrage with the suggestion that I said anything to that effect. I think that it's incumbent upon members opposite to ensure that when they're characterizing the words of government, they're not doing it in a way to mislead the public, which I think may have been the effect of the words expressed by the member opposite. So I will caution the member that we need to make sure, when we're talking about women and girls, that we are not doing more harm than good, particularly when we're talking about use of language and words.

I'm happy to give additional information to the member about our gender-based analysis plus. Issues around women's health fall within the Department of Health specifically. So when we're talking about a variety of matters on women's health, including mutilation, these issues directly fall within the Ministry of Health.

However, they receive gender-based analysis plus support and training from our ministry in order to be able to assess the needs of Albertans and their own policy decisions and perspectives. I certainly encourage the member opposite, if she has detailed questions about the government's position on that, to ask it of the ministry that is ultimately responsible for it.

Our role in this is to provide support, advice, analysis, and research to the departments responsible, whether it's mutilation, whether it is violence against women and girls in other forms, whether it's sexual harassment, whether it's economic empowerment, whether it is indigenous women and girls as that primarily falls under the Department of Indigenous Relations. We provide support. Just like with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, we are cosupporting on that on the government side with Indigenous Relations, but we do not lead it. That is the structure of Status of Women and how we operate with respect to all areas.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Just so I understand correctly, Status of Women provides support. The medical pieces with regard to that are quite well known, but I'm wondering about the supports, Minister.

11:50

The Chair: We've reached the end of that 10-minute segment, so there won't be the opportunity to respond on that.

Going back to the government side?

Any on the Official Opposition? Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. van Dijken: Yeah. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to continue questioning with regard to the MSI grant funding changes in supplementary supply. Earlier on the minister discussed making decisions based on facts. At the end of the day, the question was about understanding proper planning and due diligence in budgeting, so we need to ensure that that's highlighted. If he was not prepared to borrow the money last spring, why is he prepared to borrow the money this spring?

Mr. S. Anderson: A good question. Simply because things change over time; they don't stay static. Municipalities come forward with different projects that they have, and I'm there to support them.

The Chair: Hon. member, any further questions?

Mr. van Dijken: No further questions.

The Chair: Are there any further questions? No?

You're ready to proceed to the question?

All right. As there are no further members who wish to speak, I shall put the following questions.

Vote on Supplementary Supply Estimates 2017-18 General Revenue Fund

Agreed to:

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate

\$720,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:

Agriculture and Forestry

Expense \$257,223,000
Financial Transactions \$1,050,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:
Children's Services
Expense \$113,532,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:
Community and Social Services
Expense \$239,251,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:
Culture and Tourism
Expense \$21,650,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:
Education
Expense \$18,000,000
Financial Transactions \$2,722,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:
Indigenous Relations
Financial Transactions \$31,923,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:
Justice and Solicitor General
Expense \$37,012,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:
Labour
Expense \$3,300,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Municipal Affairs
Expense \$809,076,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Status of Women
Expense \$626,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:
Economic Development and Trade
Transfer from Expense to Capital Investment \$10,000,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:
Education
Transfer from Expense to Capital Investment \$31,500,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Service Alberta
Transfer from Capital Investment to Expense \$7,200,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Service Alberta
Transfer from Expense to Financial Transactions \$1,000,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

The Committee of Supply shall now rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again. The following resolutions relating to the 2017-18 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018, have been approved.

Legislative Assembly, office of the Child and Youth Advocate: \$720,000.

Agriculture and Forestry: expense, \$257,223,000; financial transactions, \$1,050,000.

Children's Services: expense, \$113,532,000.

Community and Social Services: expense, \$239,251,000.

Culture and Tourism: expense, \$21,650,000.

Education: expense, \$18,000,000; financial transactions, \$2,722,000.

Indigenous Relations: financial transactions, \$31,923,000.

Justice and Solicitor General: expense, \$37,012,000.

Labour: expense, \$3,300,000.

Municipal Affairs: expense, \$809,076,000.

Status of Women: expense, \$626,000.

The Committee of Supply has also approved the following amounts to be transferred:

Transfer from the Economic Development and Trade expense vote to the Economic Development and Trade capital investment vote, \$10,000,000.

Transfer from the Education expense vote to the Education capital investment vote, \$31,500,000.

Transfer from the Service Alberta capital investment vote to the Service Alberta expense vote, \$7,200,000.

Transfer from the Service Alberta expense vote to the Service Alberta financial transactions vote, \$1,000,000.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed? So ordered.

I wish to advise the hon. members that Standing Order 61(3) provides that upon the Assembly concurring in the report by the Committee of Supply, it immediately reverts to Introduction of Bills for introduction of the appropriation bill.

Introduction of Bills

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Bill 4

Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 4, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to this Assembly.

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a first time]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1) the Assembly now stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Prayers	143
Orders of the Day	143
Committee of Supply	
Supplementary Supply Estimates 2017-18	
General Revenue Fund	143
Vote on Supplementary Supply Estimates 2017-18	
General Revenue Fund	163
Introduction of Bills	
Bill 4 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018.....	165

Alberta Hansard is available online at www.assembly.ab.ca

For inquiries contact:

Managing Editor

Alberta Hansard

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875