



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 31st Legislature  
First Session

Standing Committee  
on  
Alberta's Economic Future

Ministry of Immigration and Multiculturalism  
Consideration of Main Estimates

Tuesday, March 11, 2025  
9 a.m.

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The 31st Legislature  
First Session**

**Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

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Loyola, Rodrigo, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP), Deputy Chair  
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Boparai, Parmeet Singh, Calgary-Falconridge (NDP)  
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**Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

**Participant**

Ministry of Immigration and Multiculturalism  
Hon. Muhammad Yaseen, Minister



9 a.m.

Tuesday, March 11, 2025

[Mr. Getson in the chair]

**Ministry of Immigration and Multiculturalism  
Consideration of Main Estimates**

**The Chair:** Welcome, everybody. I'd like to call the meeting to order. I'd like to welcome everyone in attendance. The committee has under consideration the estimates of the Ministry of Immigration and Multiculturalism for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026.

I'd like to go around the table and have members introduce themselves into the record. Minister, please introduce your members and officials who are joining you at the table. To get it started and show everybody how this works, my name is Shane Getson, the MLA for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, better known as God's country around these parts. I'm also the chair of the committee.

We'll start with introductions going to my right.

**Mr. Wright:** Justin Wright, MLA for the charming constituency of Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Ron Wiebe, MLA for the Grande Prairie-Wapiti constituency.

**Ms de Jonge:** Chantelle de Jonge, MLA for Chestermere-Strathmore.

**Mr. Cyr:** Scott Cyr, MLA, Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Muhammad Yaseen, MLA, Calgary-North and Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism. I also have on my team Ako Ufodike, deputy minister; Brian Doyle, assistant deputy minister, financial services and senior financial officer; Gosia Cichy-Weclaw, assistant deputy minister, immigration; and Lisa Ross-Rodriguez, assistant deputy minister, newcomers and multicultural supports.

**Member Tejada:** Hello. Lizette Tejada, MLA for Calgary-Klein and shadow minister for Immigration and Multiculturalism.

**Mr. Deol:** Good morning, everyone. Jasvir Deol, MLA for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Ms Pancholi:** Good morning, everyone. Rakhi Pancholi, MLA for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**The Chair:** Perfect. Thank you very much, members. There isn't anyone joining us online, so that will make it really easy for everyone in the room here.

I would like to note the following substitutions for the record: Mr. Deol for Member Loyola as deputy chair, Ms Pancholi for Member Hoyle, Member Tejada for – did I say that incorrectly?

**Member Tejada:** Tejada.

**The Chair:** Tejada. Perfect. Thank you. Tejada for Member Elmigli – sorry; I'm getting over a flu here, you guys; it's taking me a bit – and Mr. Wiebe for Mr. van Dijken.

A few housekeeping items to address before we turn to the business at hand. *Hansard* staff will be running the microphones, so we don't have to be grabbing those. Committee proceedings are live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV online. The audio- and videostream and the transcripts of meetings can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website.

Members participating remotely are encouraged to turn on your cameras. We don't have to do that today. Remote participants – we can skip that as well, but for those of us in the room, please turn your cellphones to the least disturbing setting as possible. Off, preferable, but we know that we need to use those as well.

Speaking rotation and time limits. Members, the main estimates in the Ministry of Immigration and Multiculturalism shall be considered for three hours. Standing order 59.01 sets out the process for consideration of the main estimates in the legislative policy committees. Suborder 59.01(6) sets out the speaking rotations for this meeting. Speaking rotation charts are available for the committee on the internal website, and hard copies have been provided to ministry officials at the table. For each segment of the meeting blocks, time will be combined only if both the minister and the member speaking agree.

If debate is exhausted prior to three hours, the ministry's estimates are deemed to have been considered for the time allotted and for the main estimates scheduled, and the committee will adjourn.

Should members have any questions regarding speaking times or the rotation, please e-mail or message the committee clerk about the process. He is sitting immediately to my left.

With the concurrence of the committee, we'll have a five-minute break near the midpoint of the meeting; however, the three-hour clock will continue to run. Is everybody okay with taking a bio break partway through for five minutes? Any opposed? Okay. Good. Everyone else is a human as well. Glad to see that.

Ministry officials who are present may, at the direction of the minister, address the committee. Ministry officials seated in the gallery if called upon have access to the microphone in the gallery area, but you're asked to introduce yourselves into the record before proceeding.

Pages are available to deliver notes or any other materials between the gallery and the table. Attendees in the gallery may not approach the table. Space permitting, opposition caucus staff may sit at the table to assist the members; however, members always have priority sitting at the table.

Points of order will be dealt with as they arise, and individual speaking times will be paused; however, the block speaking time, the overall three-hour meeting, the shot clock will continue to run.

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

Finally, the committee should have the opportunity to hear both the questions and the answers without interruptions during the estimate debate. Debate flows through the chair at all times, including instances when speaking time is shared between the member and minister. You will find that the chair will nod his head lots. He will be very appealing for all of you to look at and all those types of things, so we'll keep the decorum working through the room, and the chair will intervene to make sure that decorum is maintained at all times. The Legislative Assembly operates under a little bit of different thing. I honestly believe we have a good chance here through this committee to do some really good work, and we'll conduct ourselves accordingly.

Now I'd like to invite the Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism to begin with your opening remarks. You have 10 minutes, sir.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you to the chair, MLA Getson. And good morning, everyone. I'm happy to be here today to discuss Immigration and Multiculturalism's 2025 budget. Joining me again are people from the ministry: Ako Ufodike, deputy minister; Brian Doyle, assistant deputy minister, financial services, and senior financial officer; Gosia Cichy-Weclaw, assistant deputy minister of

immigration; Lisa Ross-Rodriguez, assistant deputy minister of newcomer and multicultural supports.

Now, moving into the details. Immigration and Multiculturalism's consolidated 2025-26 operating expense is estimated at \$41.8 million. With this budget Immigration and Multiculturalism will continue to help grow Alberta's economy by attracting in demand, experienced workers to meet workforce challenges and fill labour gaps. We will also continue to help newcomers settle in Alberta by supporting and funding settlement integration and language supports and labour attachment programs, and we will continue to foster a province where people from all backgrounds are valued and continue promoting the benefits of a diverse multicultural society, including through supporting antiracism initiatives.

The ministry's economic immigration program helps meet the province's short- and long-term workforce challenges. It supports Alberta's comparative advantage and helps maintain the province's position as Canada's economic engine. This is critical to Alberta's long-term economic growth and success. Budget 2025 will provide \$23.2 million over three years to ensure Alberta's economic immigration program continues to help meet critical provincial labour shortages. Our economic immigration program is called the Alberta advantage immigration program, otherwise known as AAIP. It also aims to attract entrepreneurs wanting to grow businesses and create jobs.

Last September AAIP adopted a new point-based approach to better manage the unprecedented demand for the program. This enhancement enables us to better target skilled economic immigrants who best match Alberta's labour market needs and priorities. AAIP created specific streams to attract and retain workers in key sectors such as health care, technology, tourism and hospitality, and rural renewal stream, a dedicated health care pathway for work-ready internationally trained health professionals. Our tourism and hospitality stream helps Alberta's visitor economy address chronic labour gaps and challenges. There is a tech pathway for tech workers, with job offers in these sectors. The rural renewal stream is a community-driven approach to help rural communities address their workforce challenges and economic needs. AAIP also conducts draws for the construction, agriculture sectors to help these employers supplement their domestic recruitment.

Immigration to Canada is projected to decrease in the next two years due to federal policy changes, shifting away from higher immigration levels over the past several years. In January the federal government informed Alberta that its 2025 permanent residence nomination allocation will be 4,875, a 50 per cent cut from 2024's 9,750 nominations, which will affect Alberta's ability to help meet its economic labour needs. My ministry continues to collaborate with other ministries on specific job attraction strategies to raise awareness about jobs in skilled trades and professions, including pathways for education, apprenticeship, and training.

Budget 2025 will provide \$17.6 million over three years to support assessment of international education and training credentials so newcomers can put their skills to work faster. Our international qualification assessment service assesses credentials earned outside Canada to help immigrants and new Albertans work in the professions they're trained for.

#### 9:10

While attracting skilled newcomers is an important part of our labour strategy so is supporting them once they arrive here. That's why a key Immigration and Multiculturalism priority is to increase access and enhance funding opportunities for mentoring labour attachments and labour market integration programs. Budget 2025 allocates \$23.9 million over three years for settlement integration and the English language. With this, our Alberta settlement and integration program will continue to help new Albertans settle and

integrate via agency-delivered settlement and language supports and help Alberta communities strengthen their capacity to attract, welcome, and retain newcomers.

To further help newcomers integrate into the province's workforce, Budget 2025 allocates \$10.7 billion over three years for a labour market attachment and mentorship including funding services to improve newcomers' labour market outcomes, facilitate information-sharing among employers and organizations, and support connecting newcomers to programs and services, providing mentorship opportunities, licensing supports, community capacity building, and system improvements.

In addition, in June 2024 Alberta's government established the Foreign Credential Advisory Committee to help identify challenges and opportunities to streamline provincial foreign credential recognition processes. Enhancing foreign credential recognition will help fill critical labour and service gaps in key professions that Alberta relies on helping foreign-trained professionals put their skills to work faster. All these ministry programs work together to support newcomers and provide services and resources to help them integrate into life in Alberta.

Since 2022 we have worked to better recognize their contributions to Alberta. Our Alberta immigrant impact awards recognize and celebrate the outstanding contribution of Albertans born abroad. The response to this program has been exceptional.

Newcomers are vital to Alberta's social, cultural, and economic growth. According to 2021 census data of Alberta's total population 23 per cent are immigrants and 27 per cent are visible minorities, and those numbers continue to grow.

As Alberta's population becomes increasingly diverse it is vital for government to promote the value of a multicultural society and provide opportunities for cross-cultural sharing. We do this in many ways, including grant programs to support community-driven multicultural and antiracism initiatives, working with Alberta Anti-Racism Advisory Council, Premier's Council on Multiculturalism, and the Black Advisory Council and by hosting cultural events such as Black History Month, Lunar New Year, and Diwali.

In 2023-24 we received a tremendous response to our ethnocultural grant programs and antiracism grant programs. We are currently reviewing the many applications we received for the 2024-2025 call for proposals. Budget 2025 will enable us to continue both these programs with \$12 million over three years for ethnocultural grants and \$1.5 million over three years for antiracism grants. This funding helps community organizations promote cross-cultural understanding, celebrate cultural diversity, and combat racism.

Helping to inform government's efforts on addressing racism is the Alberta Anti-Racism Advisory Council whose recommendations guided the Alberta antiracism action plan in 2022. In the past two years the government has already completed 27 of the 28 actions outlined in the three-year plan.

Chair, these are some of the highlights of the Immigration and Multiculturalism budget. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that, Minister. Just before we get back going here again, I think I might have missed a couple of members who were online and then transitioned into the room, so if we could have MLAs Stephan and Boparai read their names into the record for us as well.

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you very much, Chair. MLA Jason Stephan, Red Deer-South.

**Member Boparai:** Thank you, Chair. MLA Parmeet Singh Boparai, Calgary-Falconridge.

**The Chair:** Excellent. Thank you, gentlemen.

And the other thing, too. Just to make it really easy for the chair, we have under consideration government estimates, so we've got this book, we've got the ministry plans, Meeting the Challenge, for this calendar year; strategic plan for the government of Alberta; and then the fiscal plan, Meeting the Challenge 2025-28. If members could reference this for the chair's edification and those following along at home in your questions pertaining to these documents, these calendar years. If you can reference the table number, page number, et cetera, or some of the items, it would make it awfully handy.

Then when we get started here as well, the Official Opposition has the first combined time. In this block you can ask the minister if you want to share time. If so, that's great. If not, that's great, too. But you can't speak more than 10 minutes, and in this first section you can cede your time to other members within this section. The other one, too, is if you want the chair's attention, you've got to get my attention so I can put you on the speaking list so I know who is speaking. That goes for both sides.

With that, I will turn it over to the opposition, and whomever wants to get the chair's attention, I will call on them to go.

**Member Tejada:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** All yours.

**Member Tejada:** Thank you. My name is Lizette Tejada, MLA for Calgary-Klein and shadow minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism. I wanted to say thank you to the minister and ministry staff and for all of our colleagues gathered here today and to the ministry for helping illuminate how the budget will impact the Ministry of Immigration and Multiculturalism.

**The Chair:** Member, if you can . . .

**Member Tejada:** Oh, sorry.

**The Chair:** No worries. If you just want to ask the question to start of the minister for back and forth or block time.

**Member Tejada:** Yes. Sorry. That's a key question.

To the minister: would you like to share time or use block time?

**Mr. Yaseen:** Block time.

**Member Tejada:** Okay. I'm okay with using block time. Thank you.

All right. Thank you so much for gathering here today to illuminate how the budget will impact the Ministry of Immigration and Multiculturalism and our multicultural communities and newcomer populations. Just to go through a little bit of what I'm seeing here in the business plan, the ministry mandate is "promoting and enabling an inclusive, multicultural society that embraces Alberta's diverse communities, and attracts and supports immigrants to strengthen and grow Alberta's economy."

In reference to the fiscal plan we know that net international migration is expected to decrease by roughly half, with the net inflows from provincial migration expected to make up the difference and still remain robust given what is said to be Alberta's affordability advantage. While I understand that the hits to international growth will stem from changes at the federal level, we still have a population to serve, immigrant populations to serve, stakeholders who serve those populations. I'm concerned that

we've also seen significant losses to the programs that are providing supports to them on the federal level, to newcomers who have arrived in the last few years through closure of LINC departments in established institutions. We know that the impact will be felt on landed immigrant and refugee populations.

As determined by the reductions in federal plans, further growth in terms of immigrant populations will flatten and decrease while the ministry budget remains roughly the same and, in fact, increases due to increased fees to those who want to call Alberta home. That is roughly double from what I'm seeing in our fiscal plan. That budget will remain roughly the same. So throughout our discussions I'd like to get some clarification on why the budget remains largely unchanged when revenues are in fact increasing and how this new budget will be allocated when it comes to the needs of existing populations in Alberta that will be left with far fewer options in terms of where to strengthen language skills and also the needs that they will have in supporting their employment and helping them navigate our current affordability crisis as well as new systems in these communities.

Of the many conversations that I've had with stakeholders who serve immigrant populations, the highest priority issues are, of course, jobs, as they are for the general population, and how to find meaningful work using their education and work experience gained abroad. I'll be looking for clarification on how we're supporting newcomers in having their credentials recognized. I know that the minister referenced the council on credentials, but I'm wondering how those councils are being employed to inform policy decisions and how credential recognition will be expedited.

9:20

Looking at the fiscal plan, again, we're just looking at the pattern of population growth since 2023. We saw a massive spike in both nonpermanent residents and interprovincial migration, and that has often been referenced as the reason for the strain on services, housing, and language services. While I understand that the federal changes to immigration dictate funding, what I'm seeing here is a great opportunity for the province to step up and provide relief as we have new Albertans to serve and also existing populations. We know that integration, full integration and meaningful integration, can take some time to achieve.

Through the conversations that I've had with folks in the immigrant-serving sector, the weight on their teams and our neighbourhoods and our folks that are serving the immigrant population navigating their new home is becoming quite overwhelming. The support systems that we have in place for the larger population as well as for the immigrant populations have not kept up with immigration growth. While the numbers might decrease this year, we still have a backlog to address and just basically a lack in terms of the services that we're providing to Albertans overall. That will of course impact our immigrant populations even more intensely as, you know, there are often language challenges and a lack of knowledge around how to navigate the systems.

In terms of attracting the workforce we need to address the gaps that we know exist in health care, travel, tourism, and education, I'd like some clarification on exactly how the province is taking the lead on advocating for the areas of highest priority. We'll be exploring some of the outcomes that are mentioned in the business plan, and I'm particularly interested in getting clarification on those councils and their outcomes. All of our communities are valuable and form the foundations of the province we're building, and I'll be exploring how we're able to serve our communities.

Let me start with the first couple of outcomes, and those are that international talent is attracted and supported to strengthen and grow Alberta's economy and that vibrant and welcoming multicultural

communities are fostered and supported as part of a strong and prosperous Alberta.

Under key objective 1.3 in the business plan we are talking about assisting prospective and newly arrived international talent, so I'll just start with a couple of questions here. We know that federal changes are dramatically decreasing the inflows that are on the horizon. The nominations program, which the minister mentioned here, AAIP, is critical in terms of prioritization for target industries.

What I'd like to get is some clarity on performance metric 1(a), which is the number of Alberta advantage immigration nomination certificates that have been issued. According to page 86 of the ministry business plan our allocation for 2024 was met, but I can see from the AAIP updates page on the ministry website that we're still processing applications from as early as March 2024 for the rural renewal stream and June '24 for the accelerated tech stream with some variation. I see that the streams under health care seemingly have a shorter window in terms of processing those, which is a good sign.

Through the chair, can the minister advise how the expressions of interest and nominations are prioritized? Specifically, can the minister tell us what the current priorities are in terms of streams, and will we have metrics on how those priorities are met? Last year new streams were introduced for tourism, and we know well that health is an area of great need. What percentage of the targeted streams are we planning to fill with the AAIP program?

My next question around AAIP is considering that Alberta has seen a significant need for health care practitioners, whether that be doctors, nurses, technicians, and the AAIP allotment numbers have essentially been cut in half. Through the chair to the minister: how does the government plan to address the ongoing labour shortage in the health care industry while having its AAIP numbers reduced? Similarly, on the same item around nominations, how will the government fill labour gaps in other crucial industries like educational services and skilled labour jobs such as forestry, logging? Construction, I think, was mentioned in the business plan.

Still on the topic of AAIP, I think this has been a hot topic amongst a lot of the stakeholders I've spoken to just because of the drastic reduction that we know is set for 2025. Can the minister also tell us if the backlog from 2024 will count towards the 2024 allotment? I understand that we've actually met our allotment for 2024. Or are we counting this for the allotment to 2025? I think this is a critical question just given how big that reduction is.

My next question around AAIP is: what is the plan for addressing the backlogs given the drastically smaller number of nomination allocations? I'm also seeing through the ministry fiscal plan that we're planning on reducing some of the FTEs in the ministry, so how are we meeting those backlogs?

Due to this drastic increase I've talked to a lot of folks who are now panicking. They've put in their applications through the nominations program; they're not hearing back. So what is the system that we have in place for communicating when that allotment has reached capacity, and how soon can folks expect to hear back on their applications? I'm hearing that they're very long wait times.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Member, and thank you for the tone as well. Great questions.

Minister, over to you.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you very much, MLA Tejada, for your comments, questions, and observations. I appreciate it, and I will just briefly go over some of the things that you talked about so that we are on the same wavelength in terms of me answering them.

You talked about budget levels, saying it will affect the nominations being reduced. You also went over credential

recognition, how it's working, and the impact of population increase in 2023, how our support system is there to continue to help those who need workforce in terms of health care, education. How are we helping these sectors? The international talent: how is that being properly utilized to meet our labour shortage? Also, towards the end you talked about federal changes again, the nomination program, the rural renewal stream and how it's handling the processing time and so on, and, in terms of processing time, the backlog that you observe there for some of the areas. How are we going to handle that?

Thank you. Thank you for all these questions. Let me share this with you. Our Alberta advantage immigration program is doing its best to meet all the challenges that were mentioned here given the resources we have and the services that we provide. I understand that clarification may be needed regarding the upcoming fee increases for the Alberta advantage immigration program. Since late 2023 we have seen a significant surge in interest in immigrating via AAIP. This increase in interest has led to higher operational and service delivery costs.

To manage this growing demand, we have implemented several technical changes to better handle applications intake, enhanced our antifraud measures, provided additional support for rural communities, and addressed the rising volume of inquiries and other stakeholders' needs. These efforts have inevitably resulted in increased operational costs. Starting April 1, 2025, we will be aligning the worker application fee with the increased cost of our services. It is important to note that all other fees will remain unchanged. Furthermore, beginning in the 2026-2027 fiscal year the AAIP applications and services fee will be adjusted annually to reflect the average Alberta consumer price index. This fee indexation will occur on April 1 of each year moving forward. I want to emphasize that the AAIP operates both efficiently and effectively.

**9:30**

In 2024 we engaged a consulting firm to recommend efficiencies aimed at reducing the steps involved in application assessments. We are currently in the process of implementing those recommendations. Despite our continued efforts to improve processes, it is essential that our fees align with the growing demands to ensure the continued delivery of the program. While we understand that fee increases are never welcome news, they are necessary to maintain the high standards of services supports that the AAIP provides. We remain committed to operating effectively and efficiently, and we will continue to seek ways to improve our processes and manage the cost.

One thing I must say to you in this regard is that the fees with respect to AAIP as well as international qualifications are cost-neutral fees. The revenue that we receive covers the services that we provide, so it's not something that we can keep. It's cost-neutral fees. They are very much competitive with respect to other jurisdictions in this country and, in fact, probably in some cases maybe even lower than some other jurisdictions.

I want to address the critical issue of how Alberta is identifying and prioritizing labour market shortages through our ministry's program, particularly the Alberta advantage immigration program. First and foremost, immigration is a vital component of our comprehensive workforce strategy aimed at meeting Alberta's labour market and economic needs. Our Immigration and Multiculturalism department collaborates closely with other departments on workforce development and attraction initiatives. This collaborative approach ensures that we are addressing the diverse needs of our economy and workforce.

Our primary focus is on economic immigration through AAIP, which is specifically designed to support the economic needs of our



province. Provincial economic immigration programs like the AAIP are uniquely suited to address specific provincial labour and economic requirements. Provinces and territories possess the best understanding of their labour market needs, backed by insights and data that enable them to effectively design their immigration program. This approach allows us to be more responsive and adaptive to the changing needs of our labour market. Alberta's provincial nominee program is tailored to select immigrants who are best suited to meet our specific economic needs. Our program prioritizes work-ready licensed professionals who can immediately contribute to our economy. By focusing on skilled professionals, we ensure that our labour market remains competitive and robust.

Looking ahead, Alberta is forecasting shortages in specific occupations and sectors over the next decade. The AAIP leverages various labour market information data, including Alberta's occupational outlook and short-term employment forecast, to identify occupations in demand and those with persistent labour shortages expected to continue into 2033. Sectors such as health care, trades and construction, transportation, manufacturing, mining, oil and gas, and aviation are all experiencing labour shortages. These sectors are critical to our economic growth and development, and addressing their labour needs is a top priority.

To address these shortages, the AAIP targets nominating candidates in these critical sectors. We have created specific streams and pathways to address labour shortages in key sectors and support labour gaps in rural Alberta. These include the dedicated health care pathway, accelerated tech pathway, tourism and hospitality stream, and rural renewal stream. Each of these pathways is designated to attract skilled professionals who can fill the gaps in our labour market and contribute to the growth of our economy.

Furthermore, the AAIP has introduced a new expression-of-interest system that enables us to label market data to inform targeted selection draws for occupations and sectors experiencing labour shortages or those expected to face shortages in the future. This system will allow us to be more strategic and data-driven in our approach, ensuring that we are meeting their needs. We are committed to addressing our labour market needs through strategic and targeted immigration programs. We are confident that our approach will help us meet the economic challenges ahead and ensure a prosperous future for our province. By focusing on economic immigration and leveraging data-driven insights, we are well positioned to address the labour shortages in the critical sectors and support the continued growth and development of our programs.

The demand to improve Alberta has skyrocketed since 2023. AAIP processing times are similar to those of other provinces, whose timelines have also increased due to increased demand. Multiple sectors affect processing times: application volumes, provincial priorities, available nominations, application completeness, and validating application data. AAIP created an expression-of-interest system to help manage the demand and process approvals based on Alberta's economic priorities. To have candidates . . .

**The Chair:** Thank you for that, Minister.

Member Tejada, are you taking the lead on this again, or is somebody else?

**Member Tejada:** Yes. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Over to you. You can ask the question again. I'm not sure if he's going block or back and forth, but you can ask.

**Member Tejada:** Oh, we can ask again? Okay.

Are you still wanting to do block, sir, or shared?

**Mr. Yaseen:** Yes, block.

**Member Tejada:** Okay. Thank you.

And just for clarification to the Chair: it's Tejada.

**The Chair:** Oh, I'm so sorry.

**Member Tejada:** No, that's okay.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Member Tejada:** Thanks.

All right. Well, thank you so much for answering those questions, Minister. I just want to circle back on some of what I received in the explanations for some of those questions. We've mentioned that the AAIP specifically targets economic immigration and specific industries and skills. Through the chair to the minister: how is this reflected in the performance metrics in the business plan? I don't see a measure, when we are actually targeting specific criteria in terms of professional skills and work experience, of how we are measuring the work that we're doing.

We're now doubling our fees in terms of what is being charged to folks who want to apply under AAIP, and that has also been said to reflect the consumer price index. Those fees have effectively doubled. I know that the minister said that this is cost neutral, but I guess I would like a little bit more information on why exactly it is now doubled. That is a significant difference.

What I'm hearing from many of the folks that have met criteria through Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada is that they've met all of the points required to enter their professions, so how are we measuring that they've actually succeeded? If the goal is economic migration and the goal is to have folks contributing and working within their areas of expertise, how are we measuring that they actually got there, especially through this one area where we as a government, as a provincial jurisdiction have some say in who is applying to this program? Through the chair to the minister, I would like to know if we are planning to add that as a metric in our business plans in the future because I know that this has definitely, through what I'm seeing in the business plan, been a focus – right? – that economic migration piece.

9:40

I just want to continue in terms of the AAIP and the measures under 1.1. There is a mention of program integrity and the measures that are being taken to ensure compliance. What I'd like to know, through the chair to the minister, either today or in writing, is if there is publicly available information about the percentage of cases that have not been compliant and perhaps if they can illuminate us on exactly what those compliance measures entail.

I would say, as a follow-up around compliance, that we have been hearing from different stakeholders that there's sometimes a lack of clarity in terms of postsecondary requirements. We have international students that are joining us at our institutions, and I know that this would nominally fall under Advanced Education but it involves international students, so I'd like to know if those measures for compliance are applied only to the people applying under AAIP or if we're looking at compliance in terms of some of the institutions that are accepting students and their delivery of the programs and what the students have come here for.

**The Chair:** The member did mention, just for clarity, too, that if there are touchpoints, the minister may or may not be able to talk to him, so hopefully he can navigate through that for you, as you've noted there.

**Member Tejada:** All right. I just also want to note that in the business plan, one of the things mentioned in the mandate is that the Ministry of Immigration and Multiculturalism collaborates with other ministries closely in terms of developing plans, so that is why I'm asking that question.

Finally, on the AAIP program I would like some clarification about what percentage of the budget is dedicated to nominations. Given that the budget under immigration has increased by \$1 million and that the actual nomination spaces have decreased, how are the funds within this line item now being distributed?

Under the performance metrics for key objective 1 on page 86 of the fiscal plan can the minister confirm whether ASIP, which provides services for newcomers – I'm sorry; I forget the acronym here – is only offered in English language or multi-language supports? If it's only ESL, is there any plan to have some supports for the francophone communities as well?

Under the same item grants are referenced, and the metric is around the total number of newcomers supported by ASIP through SNI, which is supports for newcomer integrations. Apparently I didn't forget to put in that acronym. I would like to just clarify. What I see is that the numbers through ASIP are flat for the next three years, so not increasing. What I would like to know is how those grants are being distributed, and do we have a publicly available list of organizations who receive them?

On the same topic of SNIs referenced on page 86, on the ministry website it looks like contracts have been extended to March 31, but we're not seeing mention of any further intakes on the website. I'm sure there are further intakes because the numbers are still there, so can the minister confirm if there are further intakes planned to meet the performance measure 1(b) over the next three years?

I also would like some clarification on ASIP services in terms of wait-lists. If we have wait-lists, what measures are being taken to reduce wait times? As mentioned before, we have the same budget. We're working with actually an increased budget because of those increased fees, as mentioned in the business plan, and I'd like to know what measures are being taken to reduce wait times and ensure timely access to settlement and language services.

Another question around those wait times is if we can get some clarification on what the average duration is between a newcomer's arrival in Alberta and their connection to these support programs under ASIP. How are we tracking and monitoring to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in terms of supporting newcomer integration? How frequently are newcomers accessing the ASIP programs and services, and how are we evaluating their impact in the larger community? How do we know who we're serving and how many of those people we're serving? I'd like to know as well, through the chair: what mechanisms are in place to incorporate feedback from both newcomers and stakeholder organizations? What kind of consultations are being done? Are there ongoing conversations around how those needs are being met?

Now, just to move on to objective 1.2, which is addressing gaps in the labour market. Definitely a hot topic in the economy that we're in. So 1.2 in the business plan says that we want to "address gaps in Alberta's labour market through targeted international initiatives and networks, recognition of international credentials and other supports for the retention of international talent." This is again one of the places where we are referencing other ministries. It's important to understand that there is a significant overlap across ministries when we're talking about supporting newcomer populations. It says here that we're going to try to "assist partner ministries to design ministry-specific job attraction strategies that include raising awareness among new Albertans changing careers of the skilled trades and professions available in each economic sector."

I'm interpreting that this means that, you know, we know that there are immigrants that are not able to find meaningful work in their fields of choice, so we're looking at alternatives, which is a positive thing. But I'd like to know, for my first question around objective 1.2: what type of collaborations has the ministry had with other ministries, and what specific job attraction strategies have been developed and with which ministries? I don't see a performance measure tied to this objective. Are jobs in targeted ministries and occupations tracked? As with everything, we want to have that information, right? We want to know if our programs and initiatives and our funding are tied to programs that are actually successful.

My second question on this item is: how . . . [Member Tejada's speaking time expired] Oh.

Thanks.

**The Chair:** No worries. Thanks, Member Tejada. I said it correctly this time, I hope.

**Member Tejada:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good. Third time's the charm.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, MLA Tejada. Again, I will go over some of the questions or comments that you have made and would like to get an answer on. You talked about fees, fee increases or doubling the fees. You also want to know about program integrity. You talked about ASIP. I will give you what this acronym stands for. It's Alberta settlement and integration program, ASIP, and under this we have SNI and SILP, two different programs under that. You talked about wait times, if they're going up and why that is. At the end you also talked about: how do we get our target selection? As well, under metric 1.2: what type of collaboration do we do with other ministries? I will try my best to answer all those within the time allowed here.

With respect to fees I just want to say this. Our fee has not been changed for a long, long time. We increased the fee based on the demand that we had for these programs. Again, this fee is cost neutral. It's a service that we provide. It's covered by the fee that we charge, both in AAIP applications as well as IQAS, international qualifications assessment service, that we provide. So the fee is there. Over and above that, please understand that this fee is very much competitive with other jurisdictions in this country. We are very cognizant of the fee increases, and we had to only do it when it was absolutely necessary.

With respect to immigration, other concerns that you brought up. Immigration fraud is a growing concern across Canada, and Alberta is no exception. Our Alberta advantage immigration program, or AAIP, has implemented several robust processes and systems to identify potential fraud. These measures include employers, site visits, interviews, job offers, verifications, reference letters, and the validation of education and language test documents.

9:50

Recently we have further strengthened our protections. We have established a dedicated program integrity and antifraud team to provide direct oversight and attention to complex, sensitive, and trending casework. Additionally, we have introduced an employer declaration form and new job offer and employer eligibility requirements. We are also committed to educating the public through AAIP's website, which now features a dedicated web page identifying types of fraud, how to report fraud related to AAIP applications and other agencies, and the consequences of fraud.

Looking ahead, in 2025-2026 we will continue to enhance our program's integrity and antifraud measures. We will actively engage in crossjurisdictional work groups to share information and best practices

to tackle fraud. We will expand these information-sharing capacities bilaterally with our provinces and territories. Furthermore, we will ensure that our policies on penalties or fraud and misrepresentations are refreshed and up to date.

AAIP takes immigration fraud very seriously. We report immigration fraud and suspected fraud to appropriate authorities and continue to collaborate with key stakeholders, including provincial and federal immigration partners, to address this. AAIP measures are only for a AAIP, not for postsecondary institutions. Alberta advantage immigration program is \$8 million.

The Alberta settlement and integration program, or ASIP, is a cornerstone of our government's commitment to growing Alberta's economy. Through ASIP we provide crucial grant funding for services and initiatives that help newcomers access essential services and fully integrate into our communities.

There are two main types of ASIP grants, supports for newcomer integration and settlement and language projects. These grants have already benefited thousands of newcomers. Supports for newcomer integration programs are specifically designed to provide settlement supports and language services for newcomers who live and work in Alberta. This funding is particularly aimed at those who do not qualify for federally funded settlement and language services, ensuring that no one is left behind. So the ASIP program, basically, meets the unmet needs that are not covered under the federal programs.

On the other hand, settlement integration and language project grants focus on building the capacity of our communities to receive and retain newcomers. They also address labour market attachments for underemployed and unemployed newcomers and drive system improvements within the settlement sector. These grants fund both ongoing services and time-limited projects that address unmet settlement needs and complement existing programs. For instance, supports for newcomer integration provides nearly \$5 million per year to support services provided for organizations that serve approximately 16,000 newcomers annually; that is 16,000 per year.

Through Budget 2025 we plan to maintain a similar level of investment for the coming years. Similarly, settlement integration and language project grants provide around \$3 million to support the capacity of our communities to welcome and retain newcomers. Again, through Budget 2025 we plan to continue this level of investment. ASIP is a vital program that not only supports newcomers but also strengthens our communities and economy. We are committed to continuing this important work and ensuring that Alberta remains a welcoming and prosperous place for all.

One of the powerful ways the supports for newcomer integration program supports newcomers is through language learning, which complements and leverages federal funding in this area. We fund two language assessment and referral centres in Calgary and Edmonton that provide assessment and referrals to over 2,000 newcomers per year, allowing them to enter federally funded language instruction for newcomers to Canada classes as well as job training that requires a language assessment prior to entry. We also fund three drop-in English language centres that provide informal learning opportunities for around 1,000 newcomers each year whose work and family commitments prevent them from attending full-time language programming.

Calls for proposals for two Alberta settlement and integration and language project grants recently closed on January 20, 2025, and supports for newcomer integration grants on February 5, 2025. Proposals are currently being reviewed with funding to be issued by March 31, 2025.

Targets for the next three years. The next three years are set at 16,000 newcomers supported each year and are based on historical results as well as program funding levels which we have maintained

for some time. [interjection] Thank you very much for that. I will continue here.

Budget 2024 included additional investment to assist newcomers with integrating into the province's labour market. Budget 2025 maintains this investment with \$8 million in 2025-2026 for grants to support settlement and integration as well as an additional \$2.6 million for labour market attachments to help newcomers settle and get jobs. My ministry is maintaining its settlement funding for the coming year at current levels. The high volume of newcomers requiring settlement services is likely to moderate in the near future as . . .

**The Chair:** Oh. We almost got it all. You'll have to save that one for the next reply.

MLA Tejada, is it back to you again?

**Member Tejada:** Yes. Thank you, sir. Okay. Do I have to ask the question each time about block time or shared time?

**The Chair:** Up to you. This time I think two strikes is probably good.

**Member Tejada:** I think we're block? We're block. Okay.

Great. All right. Thank you so much, Minister, for those answers. I just wanted to circle back on expressions of interest and how the nominations are prioritized under AAIP. I'm just wondering if the minister can let us know either through writing or let us know if it's publicly available: how are those nominations are prioritized right now? What is the plan over the next year for how we're prioritizing the nominations?

Also, I think specifically a question that I will come back to is around the health care streams and how we're processing those, what our targets are around the health care stream. You know, as we're seeing that reduction in nominations from the federal jurisdiction, what are we doing to meet those needs within the health industry? How are we using the various programs that have been mentioned here to prioritize getting the most skilled people to meet that very pressing need that we have in the province of Alberta?

I will also circle back just to some of the questions for further clarification around grants through SNI. Thank you, Minister, for your answers around the grants meeting unmet needs from federal jurisdiction and giving us some information on the language referral centres and drop-in programs that offer some flexibility. We know that a lot of our newcomer populations are working or trying to work, so trying to fit in that language acquisition can be challenging.

**10:00**

So since the SNIs are also supporting language acquisition and now that we know that federal funding is no longer available in terms of some of the LINC programs that I had referenced earlier and just the growing need that we have, although we know that the federal numbers are decreasing, we still have an existing population that we need to assist in terms of integrating into Alberta and being able to find meaningful work. So now that federal funding is no longer available for some of these language programs, will we be seeing an increase in grants given to some of the institutions that have lost funding?

I'm not entirely sure that I heard an answer on the question of the further intakes for the SNIs, because I wasn't able to see them on the website, so I'm wondering if we can get some clarification either in writing or, again, if we can get some information on where it's publicly available to see what the further intakes are around ASIP. Again, I think I didn't quite hear an answer around the wait-list for ASIP services and how we're meeting the backlog, if there is a wait-list, and where we can find that information.

Just continuing in the area of addressing the gaps in the labour market, what we're seeing is that, you know, we're talking about raising awareness of opportunities and skilled trades. I would like a little bit more information on how we're raising awareness as a ministry. We know that the immigrant population has various needs in terms of language. I'm meeting folks that English is one of the official languages from where they're coming from and others, like some in the francophone community, where English may not be a first language but it's still one of our official languages and then, of course, all the various languages that folks are coming to Alberta with. How are we raising awareness, through which organizations and through which channels, around those opportunities in the skilled trades?

It mentions in the business plan also pathways to education and training available. Given that some of the folks that I've mentioned here are already working part-time or struggling to find work and that we are in an affordability crisis, are any of the pathways to education and training available through similar grants? Are these included in the SNIs? Are there any grants available? Are there low-cost options?

Also, with the conversations that I've been having with community leaders and stakeholder organizations, one of the topics that comes up most is having credentials recognized. We know that folks that have relevant education and work experience in targeted industries like health care, tech, and other industries want to find meaningful work in their fields with good pay. This is how they can contribute to our economy much quicker than is the usual path, and having a little bit of experience with this through my own life experience as the kid of immigrants, I know that jump from working in your field to coming to a new place and just the struggle to find that relevant work.

We know that this is a net benefit in the areas where we have labour shortages, yet, you know, again, to revisit this point, folks are meeting the criteria under the point system. They're not able to work in their areas of expertise, and this is actually a loss for our communities because we have shortages that we need to fill, and that includes doctors and nurses, and we need to have that ready workforce that is skilled but may be unable to overcome barriers. Sometimes those barriers come in the form of not having credentials recognized or simply just facing discrimination. What is the government doing to remove these barriers while maintaining the integrity of our workforce and industry standards?

Further to the above point, under the performance indicator 1(c) on page 86 of the business plan the indicator is total number of permanent residents in Canada being considered as the indicator of our retention of skilled international professionals. Are we actually tracking the professions that are declared upon entry, and how are we measuring retention as it relates to working within those same professions or related professions? I would really love to see a plan from the government in how we are tracking our success in that area.

My next question around credentials is: can the minister, through the chair, disclose the distribution of funding that's allocated to support the recognition of international credentials and the retention of international talent? I'd like to know a little bit more about the initiatives that are currently being funded to support mentoring, labour attachment, and other labour market integration programs.

What research or evaluations have been conducted to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of these programs facilitating successful integration? What measures are in place to ensure the efficiency and accessibility of these pathways, particularly for people facing barriers to entry in skilled trades and professions? Can the minister elaborate on the research or evaluations being conducted on the labour market integration programs and point us to the funds that are being used for this? How are we ensuring that

the programs are achieving their intended outcomes – I think that's a little bit of a repetition here – or where can we find the information if it's publicly available?

Moving on to objective 1.3, which is assisting prospective and newly arrived international talent with supports and services, enhancing prearrival tools and enhancing funding, my first question is: how much of the immigration budget line is being allocated to enhance funding opportunities from mentoring, labour attachment, and other related market integration? Can we explain exactly what that means? What programs are we enhancing, and through which channels?

On page 125 in the estimates document for this ministry under the revenue portion we saw that the ministry expected to generate about \$17 million from '24-25 from premiums, fees, and licences, but we only actually generated \$1.1 million. Can the minister account for the difference between the forecasted and the actual number and perhaps just a little bit of clarity on which premiums and fees are included here? Just a breakdown. And if they didn't meet targets, why didn't they?

Thanks.

**The Chair:** Thanks, Member. It goes by fast, doesn't it? It's incredible.

**Member Tejada:** It does go fast.

**The Chair:** Yeah.

Minister, back over to you.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Yeah. Well, thank you very much again, MLA Tejada. You brought up a few questions, and one of them was probably a repeat of what didn't get covered last time. I will try my best to make sure that I look after your question this time.

You talked about EOI, how the nominations are prioritized for health care and so on under EOI, grants to SNI language support. You also mentioned about the federal program reduction in this area and: how are we impacted by that? Credential recognition: how that is working? How much is funding on that? International talent: how much budget for labour attachment and so on? Then at the end you talked about fees, from \$17 million to \$16 million, and: what is that about?

I will address, you know, some of these questions here right away. With respect to EOI the new system, expressions of interest, came into being after the very high demand for the Alberta advantage immigration program that we experienced in July and August of 2024. We just needed to have a different program to make sure that people have time to put in their expression of interest for AAIP. That started in September of 2024. We had so many applications. I think the last time we checked that program, over 40,000 people wanted to apply for very few allocations that we had. And please keep in mind that the allocations come from the federal government, and we must not exceed the allocation that is given to us.

**10:10**

With respect to our AAIP targets by stream: to be posted on the AAIP website in the coming weeks. Dedicated health care pathways are prioritized as it is high priority for our government. In fact, I think, actually, we have a specific target for 2025. As compared to other priorities, health care is on top, and we are increasing the allocations for this particular stream. We will also be focusing on transitioning temporary foreign workers in Alberta to a permanent residency as they are already here and working here. I think our target is to issue 85 per cent of our nominations for temporary foreign workers who are already here. Yeah.

Over the past several years the federal government has admitted an unprecedented number of newcomers. The government of

Alberta is committed to supporting those who have chosen our province as their new home. Moving forward, we anticipate that the demand for settlement services will lessen as the federal government has reduced its targets for both permanent and temporary immigration. In the short term we acknowledge that settlement services may experience pressures as we work to clear current backlogs and the number of newcomers begins to diminish. However, I want to assure you that Budget 2025 will maintain its investment in Alberta settlement services.

The total federal and provincial funding for settlement integration and language service disbursed through my ministry amounts to about \$8 million, as I mentioned to you earlier. Of this, the federal government provides \$1.6 million in funding specially for training to help newcomers gain employment. Additionally, the Alberta government will provide \$6.3 million to fill gaps in settlement services.

It is important that, due to federal reduction in overall immigration numbers, federal funding programs through Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada that support settlement services across the country have been significantly reduced. This reduction in federal funding may result in lower staffing complements for settlement organizations across the country. However, Alberta recognizes that there continues to be a significant need for supporting newcomers to integrate into our economy. As such, through Budget 2025 my ministry is maintaining its settlement funding at current levels. Budget 2025 will see \$23.9 million over three years to help support newcomers integrate via settlement integration and English as a second language services as well as \$10.7 million over three years for workforce integration grants to assist newcomers with integrating into the province's workforce. I look forward to seeing the results of the work of Alberta settlement organizations that support immigrants who choose to call Alberta their home.

We are also funding foreign qualification recognition initiatives such as the Alberta immigrant mentorship innovation grant, which supports internationally trained professionals in increasing their job-funding opportunities. Our ministry is partnering with private-sector employers, not-for-profit organizations, and professional regulatory organizations to support the integration of internationally trained newcomers and address workforce needs. Budget 2025 provides \$10.7 million over three years for workforce integration grants to assist newcomers with integrating into the province's workforce. Our objective is to connect Alberta's underemployed or unemployed internationally trained individuals to the labour market while also assisting employers in effectively attracting and retaining these skilled employees in our province. We must ensure that talented newcomers we have invested in remain in our province. While we cannot prevent people from leaving the province, our strong economy and excellent opportunities available here provide a compelling reason for them to stay here.

We will continue to monitor the situation and ensure that our services focus not just on the initial settlement but also on long-term integration and retention of newcomers. This comprehensive approach will help us maintain a robust and inclusive workforce, benefiting both our economy and our communities.

Our ministry is actively partnering with private-sector employers, not-for-profit organizations, and professional regulatory bodies to support the integration of internationally trained newcomers and address the pressing workforce needs in Alberta. We recognize the challenges faced by newcomers, many of whom are navigating the licensing process. To support them, we are providing mentorship opportunities, on-the-job training, and facilitating local work experiences. These initiatives are crucial in helping newcomers to gain the necessary experience and credentials to succeed in their chosen professions.

In addition to supporting newcomers, we are also assisting employers in specific industries . . .

**The Chair:** Almost got it out.

With that, we'll turn it over to the government caucus. I see MLA de Jonge giving me the nod. Over to you. Again, ask that question in the front end, whether it's block or shared time.

**Ms de Jonge:** Thank you very much, Chair.

Good morning, Minister. Did you want to do block time or go back and forth?

**Mr. Yaseen:** We'll do block, just to be fair here. Thank you.

**Ms de Jonge:** No problem. Thank you, Minister, for being here this morning. I'll jump right into it. Outcome 1 on page 85 of your business plan states that "international talent is attracted and supported to strengthen and grow Alberta's economy." Under that, key objective 1.1 states that its goal is to "maximize the nomination allocations made available annually" to the Alberta advantage immigration program by the federal government and support opportunities for all sectors of the provincial economy to attract international talent.

Minister, I know you've already talked about the AAIP in your opening statement. It's important work that your ministry does, and you discussed it in the first block as well. It's something that's important to employers in my constituency, and it's put to good use by them, so I'm interested in exploring the process of that nomination allocation as that will provide some valuable insight into how Alberta will remain competitive in attracting top talent.

Through the chair, Minister, how does your ministry ensure that the limited number of nomination allocations provided through the AAIP is distributed effectively across all sectors of the provincial economy? You mentioned a few sectors earlier as well. Are there any particular industries or sectors that have seen a greater demand for nomination, and how does your ministry prioritize these needs within its allocation strategy?

I'll continue on with my questions. Thank you.

**The Chair:** It's block time, so you have up to 10 minutes to speak, and you can cede time if you need to as well, MLA.

**Ms de Jonge:** Sounds good. All right. My second question, just following up, is still referencing the nomination allocations mentioned on page 85 of the business plan. It seems like the federal government is the deciding factor when allocating nominations to the provinces, and that, of course, means that it's critical to have that strong relationship in collaboration with the federal government to ensure that our province remains competitive in attracting skilled professionals. I'm wondering if the ministry can expand on the collaboration strategies with the federal government to ensure that Alberta receives a fair share of nomination certificates compared to other provinces under the federal government's nominee program.

**10:20**

Then my final question that I have on the AAIP, again on page 85 of the Immigration and Multiculturalism business plan. Given the recent developments on restrictions to steady permits across Canada and the high number of temporary foreign workers in Alberta, through the chair, what steps is the ministry taking to support the permanent residency pathways through the AAIP while ensuring that adequate resources are in place to attract and retain skilled workers in key sectors? And beyond the AAIP I'm wondering what other provincial initiatives are aimed at assisting temporary foreign workers and international graduates transitioning to a permanent residency in Alberta.

I do have a question for the chair. If we're ceding time, would I do that now or after he's answered?

**The Chair:** You could do it either way. If you turn it over to the minister, then he has up to 10 minutes to respond, and then remaining time would come back to questions. So it all depends on what you want to do. Or you could cede the remaining six minutes left now.

**Ms de Jonge:** Okay. Well, maybe I'll pass it on to the minister to answer those questions about the AAIP.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Well, thank you very much, MLA de Jonge, for your very important question with respect to nomination. This has been a topic of discussion between our province and the federal government for some time now, particularly the nominations that are allocated to our province. We have been in constant touch with the federal government on this particular issue. We have been wanting to increase our nominations from 9,750 to a different level. First, we asked for 14,000, but demands were growing. Then we upped our request to 20,000, and then we also asked for a special 10,000 for Ukrainian evacuees who are in our province, to meet their needs as well. But we haven't heard anything back. In fact, what we heard back is what you talked about here, a 50 per cent reduction in our nomination, from 9,750 to 4,875.

The Alberta advantage immigration program uses Alberta's occupational outlook and short-term employment forecast to identify occupations currently in demand and occupations in which labour shortages are expected to persist all the way to 2033. The program launched a new expression-of-interest system in late 2024 that allows the program to use labour market data to form targeted selection draws for candidates in occupations and sectors that are expected or are already experiencing a significant labour shortage.

The Alberta advantage immigration program continuously experiences high demand from multiple industries and sectors. The ministry responds to these demands based on evaluating how existing streams serve these needs already within a limited allocation; the business case made by industry, stakeholder engagement, and other labour market and evidence-based information to support program adjustments, as needed.

As with many of the Alberta government's priorities across all ministries many of the province's needs are not recognized, shared by the federal government. Economic immigration is another area where this is an ongoing challenge. Through continuous advocacy and evidence-based information Alberta received a significant increase to its allocation between 2022 and 2023, up from 6,500 to 9,750, but this still fell short of Alberta's request at the time. Despite the continued advocacy Alberta, along with all other provinces and territories, received a 50 per cent reduction to its 2025 allocation.

This unilateral decision made by the federal government is very concerning, and my ministry will continue to advocate for economic immigration solutions from the federal government that meet our unique needs based on economic and labour market needs. We will advocate both bilaterally and through multilateral forums such as the Forum of Ministers Responsible for Immigration.

The retention of internationally trained professionals is a challenge due to barriers such as requirements for Canadian work experience and education by employers or lengthy licensure processes in regulated professions. Our province continues to make significant investment to support newcomers to make full use of their skills and professional backgrounds in their workforce.

We have established the Foreign Credential Advisory Committee, which aims to position Alberta as a leader in Canada. This committee will provide recommendations to facilitate the recognition of foreign credentials in Alberta, improve our province's attractions to skilled workers, address expected labour shortages, and foster a more prosperous and inclusive workforce. We are also funding foreign qualification recognition initiatives such as the Alberta immigration mentorship innovation grant, which supports internationally trained professionals in increasing their job-finding opportunities.

The AAIP is the province's only economic immigration program to nominate qualified workers for permanent residences and address provincial labour market needs through international talent. AAIP has four work streams designed to attract international talent and transition temporary foreign workers already working in our province and contributing to Alberta's communities to permanent residency. This area of nomination, a number of allocations that we have: this is an important aspect of our program. Our program is based on this. We have so much demand for labour that we are experiencing shortages in our province. We are doing our best to work with the federal government to increase our economic immigration program to a level of at least 20,000 for this province, and we continue to work with them on this very important issue.

I think I have answered your question, so I can go to the next question or the next MLA.

**Ms de Jonge:** Thank you, Minister. I appreciate the important work you're doing. It's certainly difficult to balance the needs of various labour markets within the restrictions of the program set out by the federal government, but I appreciate all the work you're doing to support employers in the province.

With that, I'm going to cede my time to my colleague MLA Wright.

**Mr. Wright:** Thank you, Member de Jonge.

Through the chair to the minister: we'll continue on with that block time piece.

On outcome 2 on page 87 of the Immigration and Multiculturalism business plan it states that "vibrant and welcoming multicultural communities are fostered and supported as part of a strong and prosperous Alberta." Key objective 2(1) states that its goal is to "promote welcoming communities with advice from the Premier's Council on Multiculturalism and the Alberta Black Advisory Council."

Reviewing the process, how would these councils contribute to multiculturalism and help strengthen their impact? Could the minister please elaborate on how these working councils support ethnocultural communities and multicultural communities? Referencing the Premier's Council on Multiculturalism, as mentioned on page 87 of the Immigration and Multiculturalism business plan, could the minister explain how the role of the Premier's Council on Multiculturalism differs from Alberta's Anti-Racism Advisory Council?

Then the next question I would have is continuing along that same line regarding the Alberta Black Advisory Council and still referencing the Premier's Council on Multiculturalism and the Alberta Anti-Racism Advisory Council mentioned on page 87 of the ministry plan. What is the role of the Alberta Black Advisory Council? How does the Alberta Black Advisory Council work with the Premier's Council on Multiculturalism and Alberta's Anti-Racism Advisory Council? What role do the Premier's Council on Multiculturalism and Alberta Black Advisory Council play in immigration attraction and retention, and how can Albertans learn more about the Premier's Council on Multiculturalism or the Alberta Black Advisory Council by accessing supports through them and getting involved in their programming?

10:30

Then, looking at the time here, I think maybe I'll just have one more question and then turn it over to the minister for answers. From outcome 1 of the business plan on page 85 part of the ministry's mandate is the attraction of skilled labour to Alberta. Attracting and retaining skilled labour is essential for Albertans' continued development in our strong economy as well as Alberta's growth in GDP and leading the country. Skilled professionals not only contribute to key industries but also help drive long-term stability, ensuring Alberta remains the top destination for international talent required to grow our economy.

On page 86 of the business plan performance indicator 1(d) shows total growth of Alberta's labour force and per cent contribution of landed immigrants to total growth. This indicator demonstrates the extent to which immigrants contribute to the growth of Alberta's workforce. Can the minister outline the specific initiatives to attract skilled newcomers to the province? And, (b), I assume that the target sectors must change with different economic or labour market circumstances, but can the minister provide which sectors will be targeted in this specific budget?

I've got time to squeeze in one more. Ensuring that immigrants who choose Alberta as their home remain in the province for the long term is essential to our workforce and economic growth as well as community development. On page 88 of the business plan performance indicator 2(d) shows Alberta's average five-year immigration retention rate and provides valuable insight on whether newcomers are staying after five years or leaving. The data suggests that many immigrants continue to build their lives here in Alberta, reinforcing the province as a place to work, live, and raise a family. How much funding is allocated towards newcomer retention efforts to keep them in Alberta? Based upon this funding, what specific supports does the ministry offer to help increase and maintain newcomer retention?

I'll turn it back to the minister.

**The Chair:** Perfect. With that, over to you, Minister, with 4:51 remaining.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, MLA Wright, for your questions. You bring in an important aspect of our ministry, the councils and how they work, how they interact with each other, what the objective is and the deliveries of councils, and how they advise the government. I will start with the Premier's Council on Multiculturalism. It is a vital advisory body dedicated to supporting, inspiring, and promoting cultural diversity and inclusion across Alberta. Budget 2025 commits \$100,000 to continue the important work of the council. The budget enables government to provide honoraria for council members meeting and to help cover travel expenses. The budget also includes support for government-hosted ethnocultural events such as Lunar New Year celebrations.

It is important to understand that multiculturalism and antiracism are distinct concepts. This is why we have the Premier's Council on Multiculturalism to provide specialized advice on multiculturalism while the Alberta Anti-Racism Advisory Council focuses on combatting racism in this province. Our council is composed of up to 30 members, including two council chairs, who represent the rich multicultural diversity of Alberta. These members are leaders within their ethnocultural communities, chosen for their exceptional ability to promote cross-cultural awareness and understanding. They are not here to advocate solely for their own communities but to provide advice on how all communities can work together harmoniously.

The council was established for a term of seven years with the possibility of extension based on need. Currently we have 29 dedicated members, including our two co-chairs. Members are

appointed for a term of up to three years and can be reappointed for a maximum of seven consecutive years of service. Through its tenure the Premier's Council on Multiculturalism has provided invaluable advice to various government of Alberta departments on issues affecting ethnocultural communities. This council is a testament to our commitment to fostering an inclusive and diverse society where every individual feels valued and respected.

The government of Alberta is unwavering in its commitment to ensuring that every individual has a fair chance to succeed. We are currently aware of the significant systemic barriers and challenges that Black communities face. This is precisely why the Alberta Black Advisory Council was established. Its purpose is to provide the government of Alberta with crucial advice on combatting anti-Black racism and dismantling the barriers that prevent Black Albertans from fully contributing to our economy and society.

Budget 2025 commits \$100,000 to the Alberta Black Advisory Council to enable them to hold regular meetings, engage with communities, and provide recommendations for annual government-hosted Black History Month celebrations. Alberta Black Advisory Council members received both honoraria and reimbursement of travel expenses for attending these important meetings. The members of the Alberta Black Advisory Council are not just participants; they are leaders within their own communities. They ensure that Black voices and perspectives are not only heard but are integral to celebratory and educational opportunities as well as addressing the pressing issues that affect their communities. The role of the Alberta Black Advisory Council is distinct from other councils.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister.

Now we're moving into, colloquially, the lightning round. It's 10-minute blocks at this point. You can do a combined or block time in it, but no one can speak longer than five minutes. It's also known as the use it or lose it round. Time cannot be ceded to another caucus member. If the time is not combined, then the member or the minister may only speak once.

We're going back to the opposition. Again, if there's any confusion, I'll sort it out as we go along. Who wants to go?

**Member Tejada:** I can go.

**The Chair:** Sure.

**Member Tejada:** I just wanted to ask. Are we still having a scheduled break time at any point during this meeting?

**The Chair:** Yeah, we will. We're just co-ordinating with the other room. Unfortunately, we don't want a foot race to limited services, so we're just going stay in this. We'll take a break after this.

**Member Tejada:** Okay. Perfect. You know, it's not that I just really want to take a break, but thank you for clarifying, Chair.

All right. I just want to circle back, Minister, to some of the questions that I asked around . . .

**The Chair:** Just for clarity – I apologize – did you want to ask the question combined? We just need to know for the shot clock.

**Member Tejada:** Oh, for this part as well.

**The Chair:** Yeah.

**Member Tejada:** Would the minister like to do shared or block time?

**Mr. Yaseen:** We'll continue with block time.

**Member Tejada:** With block time. Thank you so much. All right.

I just want to circle back to some of the questions that we asked around the grants and how those are distributed. I was asking a question around publicly available lists of organizations who receive grants. If those are available, I'd love to know more about it. I also wanted to circle back on the question around how the funding is changing now that several of the institutions that were receiving federal grants no longer have those monies. Am I to understand that, you know, the answer was that the funding will remain the same? We understand that. But I want to make sure that I understand that there won't be further funding allocation to those institutions who have lost funding around their language services.

Also just wanting to circle back to the publicly available lists, through the chair, to meet the ministry's objectives in the business plan or to execute the operations through those lists, does the ministry have any contracts or use the services of Rubicon Strategy, the firm where the Premier's former chief of staff Marshall Smith is engaged?

**10:40**

Going into page 86 of the business plan, where we measure the total growth of Alberta's labour force contribution and of landed immigrants to total growth, the indicator talks about immigrants contributing to the growth of Alberta's labour force, and we've seen a sharp decline from '23 to '24. What we know through various stakeholders and through publicly available information is that immigrants actually have a higher unemployment rate. My question through the chair to the minister is: how is this government planning to improve this particular measure and ensure that the folks that we have called here are able to find meaningful and relevant work? How are we measuring that specifically in terms of employment of our newcomer populations?

I also want to move into our second outcome, which is promoting welcoming and diverse communities with advice from the Premier's Council on Multiculturalism and Alberta Black Advisory Council. Also, there's a mention of the antiracism council under that second outcome. Given the documented rise in hate crimes, I'm hoping the minister can illuminate Albertans on the outcomes from each of these councils.

My question here would be under performance metrics 2(a) and 2(b) in the business plan, both of which are funding grants for ethnocultural grants and the antiracism grant. We've seen in the business plan that we have target decreases over the next few years. Could the minister please explain how decreased funding each year is representative of a positive performance?

I also just want to ask a little bit about the antiracism and ethnocultural programs that are supported by the ministry, if we can get a little bit more detail on what these programs comprise and if these programs are available or if we have some publicly available information about how some of these programs are utilized outside of our major metropolitan cities.

I'm just going to have a quick look here. On page 88 of the business plan under performance indicator 2(c) can the minister explain the process of discrimination complaints on the basis of sexual orientation, which is a protected ground under the Alberta Human Rights Act, why it's not being listed in the performance indicator? I ask this as well just because I know through several of the conversations that I have with stakeholders and especially in the immigrant-serving sector that as of last year there's a large influx of folks that are seeking refuge on that basis. I think it's very important to cover that point and to look at why that's not being measured when it's in fact one of the motivators for people coming to Canada because it is a protected right.

Thanks.

**The Chair:** Over to you, Minister.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Well, thank you. Thank you very much, MLA Tejada, for your questions and observations again. You are talking about the funding grants, how they are disbursed and how the federal cutback on funding is impacting us. There are questions around the councils and discrimination, our higher employment rate with the newcomers and all that.

I will start with the growth of Alberta's labour force and contribution of landed immigrants. In light of the soft domestic population growth and an aging labour force, it is evident that immigration is and will continue to be essential for expanding Alberta's labour supply. A robust labour supply is crucial for sustaining the province's economic development and growth. In 2024 Alberta's labour force saw an increase of 112,900 participants. Notably, landed immigrants contributed 34 per cent to that total growth. Additionally, nonpermanent residents and workers born outside of Canada contributed 45 per cent to Alberta's labour force growth, a significant rise from 11 per cent in 2023. In contrast, workers born in Canada contributed 20 per cent in 2024, up from 12 per cent in 2023. The strengthening of Alberta's economy and the success of the province's Alberta Is Calling campaign likely played a role in these positive results. To provide a comparison, in 2023 Alberta's labour force grew by 93,500 participants, with landed immigrants contributing 77 per cent to this total growth.

While the ministry's efforts have certainly contributed to these outcomes, we must acknowledge that these results are also influenced by various external factors. For instance, in 2020 Alberta's labour force experienced a significant decrease due to the pandemic. However, in 2021 the labour force increased by a total of 45,400 participants, off-setting much of the loss from the previous year. During this period landed immigrants contributed to 139 per cent of Alberta's labour force growth. This remarkable contribution was due to the easing of border restrictions and the implementation of solutions to support immigration and cross-border mobility for newcomers and refugees.

The government recognizes that immigrants face many barriers to successfully enter the workplace in their field of training. Initiatives such as labour market integrations or a new approach focusing on innovative partnerships with private-sector employers, not-for-profit organizations, and professional regulatory organizations to support the integration of internationally trained newcomers to address their workforce needs. Labour market integration leverages key partners with a stake in Alberta's labour market to help newcomers achieve full employment based on their training and experience.

An example of a labour market integration initiative that I would like to highlight is the Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council's pathway to employment pilot project for internationally trained lawyers and accounting professionals. This project provides . . .

**The Chair:** With that – I appreciate the answer – we now have a five-minute recess. Don't be late.

[The committee adjourned from 10:49 a.m. to 10:54 a.m.]

**The Chair:** Welcome back, everyone.

The chair recognizes MLA Wiebe from the outstanding constituency of Grande Prairie-Wapiti. Just as the last minutes here, I have to ask the question whether it's block time. It's only 10 minutes in total, and you cannot cede any of your time. With that, over to you, sir.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Great. Thank you, Chair and through you to the minister. I'm guessing it's block time, Minister?

**Mr. Yaseen:** We'll continue with block time just to be fair.



**Mr. Wiebe:** Okay. Thank you.

You may have touched on this already, Minister. Performance metric 1(a) on page 86 of the business plan shows a number of AAIP nomination certificates issued in 2024 and the targets over the next three years. The metrics note that Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada “provides the AAIP with an annual allocation of nomination certificates that can be issued by the province.” Does the provincial government work with the federal government to determine the number of allocations, or is it entirely dependent on the province? The metric states that it is the goal of the province to maximize allocations. Have there been any instances of Alberta not reaching its goal? If so, could the minister point out the necessary reasons? Are the targets for the next three years based on the allocations Alberta will receive from the federal government, or is it more of a forecast of the allocations we are set to receive?

Key objective 1.3 on page 85 of the business plan outlines the work to assist prospective and newly arrived international talent with supports and services to help them integrate into Alberta's labour market. This initiative is essential to maintaining Alberta's culture while still attracting newcomers. The supports that help with integration into the labour market are crucial for the long-term success of each of the individual newcomers. Could the minister expand on some of the supports that are currently available through the Alberta government to assist with newcomers transitioning to the workforce? What supports do the companies hiring these workers provide? Do these companies receive support or funding from the government in this regard?

Referencing key objective 1.3 on page 85 of the Immigration and Multiculturalism business plan, the key initiative supporting key objectives states: “a cumulative total of \$10.7 million in funding over three fiscal years, from 2025-26 to 2027-28.” Is this allocation for the grants to support workforce integration initiatives to assist newcomers with integrating into the province's workforce, for grants to support labour market attachment to assist newcomers with integrating into the province's labour market? I think it is essential to know how these resources will be used to achieve the stated goals. Could the minister please expand on the labour market attachment and how the total of \$10.7 million in funding will be used to support the labour market attachment?

Key objective 2.1 on page 87 of the business plan states the goal to promote multiculturalism communities for a better and more inclusive, diverse, and economically robust society. This promotes intercultural understanding by providing funding for projects that encourage people to share, learn, and appreciate and respect cultural diversity. Can the minister expand on the funding to ethnocultural community organizations? What are the selection criteria or metrics to grant funding to the ethnocultural community organizations? Does the minister have a mechanism to ensure that these grants are used by the ethnocultural community organizations and the objectives these grants are intended for?

On page 88 of the business plan performance measure 2(a) is the average amount of the funding provided to the organization through the ethnocultural grant program, and performance measure 2(b) is the average amount of funding provided to the organizations through the antiracism grant program. The ethnocultural . . .

**The Chair:** It goes by fast.

Minister, over to you.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Well, thank you very much, MLA Wiebe, for your questions. I appreciate your comments, your observations and questions. I will go in the same sequence that you put your questions to me to answer your questions. First of all, talking about how to determine the number of allocations: it's entirely independent of the province. Each year Alberta advocates for allocations that would

align with Alberta labour market needs. We advocate both bilaterally and through multilateral forums such as the Forum of Ministers Responsible for Immigration. We meet on those forums, and we bring these requests to them as well. We also write them letters with regard to our needs for allocations.

**11:00**

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada is responsible for establishing immigration levels and making allocation decisions and provides provincial nominee programs with a yearly allocation of nomination certificates every year. Alberta has maximized its nomination allocations each year for the last four years. These are the allocations that are given to us. We have used all of them because there's so much need here. It's not that we are not using our allocations and we are asking for more. No. We have been maximizing, and then we are asking for more because there's additional demand for it.

In 2020 as part of Alberta's recovery strategy Alberta reduced the allocation from 6,250 to 4,000. That was due to the impact of COVID-19, and you know how things were at that time, immigration needs at that time. In 2025 the target for this measure of 4,875 nomination certificates is based on our actual allocation from the federal government for this year, which fell short of the 20,000 nominations Alberta requested from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. The targets for 2026 and 2027 are set at 20,000 nomination certificates to reflect our economic needs and my ministry's continued efforts to advocate the federal government for increased control over economic immigration to our province.

The labour market attachment refers to initiatives that help skilled newcomers obtain employment in their area of expertise. These initiatives are known as labour market integration projects and are a new approach focusing on innovative partnership with private-sector employers, not-for-profit organizations, and professional regulatory organizations to support the integration of internationally trained newcomers to address their workforce needs. Labour market integration leverages key partners with stakes in Alberta's labour market to help newcomers achieve full employment based on their training and experience.

The question: how will the total \$10.7 million in funding be in support of labour market attachment? I'll say this, that the allocation of this funding has not been determined. We are exploring innovative approaches to support skilled newcomers to obtain employment in their area of expertise. Alberta is developing a strategy to attach our underemployed or unemployed internationally trained professionals to labour markets while also assisting employers to effectively attract and retain internationally trained professionals in the province.

This strategy complements our new labour market integration approach, which includes strategic labour market attachment grants designed to enhance the employment prospects of internationally trained professionals. Additionally, recommendations provided by the Foreign Credential Advisory Committee will guide our initiatives going forward.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister.

With that, we're back to the left hand side of the table from the chair's perspective. MLA Tejada.

**Member Tejada:** Thank you. Okay. I just wanted to circle back to AAIP. From what we can see on the ministry website and given the information that we have in the business plan about the reduction in nominations, we know that the expressions of interest – I think the minister had also referenced them being over 40,000. We're sitting, I think, at around 48,000. I'm wondering: do we have a number around the percentage of those expressions of interest that will be successful? I'm concerned because I know, especially with

the increase now in the fees, although they are nominally revenue neutral, if we're actually trying to attract folks into these streams and we're encouraging people to apply and they are paying these increased fees, do we have a way of knowing how many of those folks will actually be approved?

I'll also move to the question around metrics for ethnocultural grants and antiracism, just again repeating: why are we seeing a decrease in funding in these grants? Also, as a follow-up, while grants are a wonderful way to encourage engagement on these topics and a great way to get community organizations involved, especially grassroot ones, what is the government doing in terms of systemic change to racism and xenophobia?

I will also refer to the councils that we've been talking about and what their metrics are in terms of the work that they're doing. How are we following up with the councils? There's one on antiracism, there's the multiculturalism council, and also the credentialing council. I'd like to know specifically: do we have public calendar dates for the meetings? Do we have minutes for those meetings publicly available? How are we following their work? How are we following the recommendations that they are giving us, and how are we implementing those into policy through the ministry of immigration? Ultimately, especially around the antiracism piece and the Black Advisory Council, what policy recommendations are being taken, and will we see these represented in legislation in the next little while? What is the breakdown of budget for each of these councils, and how are they performing?

Again I'll come back to my question around discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. It's not included in the metric, but it is included as a protected right. Do we see this metric as effective? I'm seeing just a large swing in the numbers here. From 2022-23 there's minus 28, to '23-24, 16, and that is the change in the complaints of discrimination. These numbers don't really pan out given what we know about an increase in hate crimes.

Coming back to the issue of the publicly available information on listed organizations and grant recipients. I don't think I heard an answer around meeting the ministry objectives and contracts with Rubicon Strategy. That's the firm where the Premier's former chief of staff Marshall Smith is engaged.

Further to this, I wanted to ask, just because we know that the federal government has also reduced supports to Ukrainian refugees, and while that funding has reduced as it has in many federal areas for immigration, what the ministry is doing to make up for the shortfall or what efforts we're taking from our provincial jurisdiction.

In accordance with 2(d) of the performance metrics for objective 2, the five-year immigrant retention rate is mentioned. We want Alberta to be a place where people build their lives and spend as much time here as possible, contributing to economy and workforce. What is the government actively doing to retain long-term immigrants in the province? And I'll come back to the question of: how are we measuring that retention? Does the retention just include how long they're staying, that they're staying for the five years, and are they finding employment that is relevant to their experience?

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Member.

*11:10*

**Mr. Yaseen:** Well, thank you very much again, MLA Tejada. I will try to answer your questions.

First of all, with respect to fees, we do not charge fees for people who have expressed interest under the expression-of-interest portal. They are invited to put in their application. After a review has been completed, those people are charged. It's not everybody who's out

there that they just put their name in the expression of interest and get charged. No, it's not true. Only people who are invited get charged a fee.

Also, with respect to the ethnocultural grant we talked about, there has been no decrease in the ethnocultural grant in Budget 2025. We are maintaining that at \$13.5 million over three years. I just wanted to get that out of the way.

Our engagement with the councils is structured to ensure that their recommendations are reflected in government policies aimed at combatting racism. The Alberta Anti-Racism Advisory Council has also collaborated with the Premier's Council on Multiculturalism and the Alberta Black Advisory Council on issues that impact diverse communities. Council members are actively involved in consultations, offering advice on strategies to address systemic racism and improve inclusivity.

The Alberta Anti-Racism Advisory Council working groups have provided me with recommendations on how to effectively combat racism by enhancing public awareness, empowering communities through intercultural sharing, and improving educational practices and approaches. Additionally, the council has engaged with other ministries and entities, including regular interactions with Alberta hate crimes liaisons, Alberta Public Safety and Emergency Services, and both Edmonton and Calgary Police Services. The government of Alberta with the invaluable support of the Alberta Anti-Racism Advisory Council is dedicated to making our province a place where everyone can thrive free from the scourge of racism.

The grants are published on websites, and we can give you the website for that after the meeting. Ethnocultural and antiracism grants are on the government grant disclosures website as well, just to get to that point.

Since March 2022 a number of provincial services were provided in a co-ordinated crossministry approach to help Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel visa holders settle and integrate. This includes regular crossministry ADM meetings led by Immigration and Multiculturalism. Since March 2023 my ministry has provided more than \$8.9 million for the provincial emergency hotel accommodations and Ukraine emergency supports programs supporting Ukrainian evacuees. The Ukraine emergency supports program, a one-time grant program funded by my ministry, provided funding of over \$2 million to agencies for supports specific to Ukrainians, which will continue until March 2026.

Based on Alberta health care applications, around 65,000 Ukrainians have been welcomed to our province, and my rough estimate is that number has gone up to around 70,000. It is likely that the majority of those who are intending to come to Canada under the Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel visa program have already arrived and are receiving their support.

**The Chair:** Perfect. Thank you for that, Minister.

Back to the government caucus.

**Mr. Stephan:** Through the chair: Minister, can I confirm that we're still doing block? Is that correct?

**Mr. Yaseen:** I think that would work.

**Mr. Stephan:** Yeah. Seeing as we've been doing that, that's great. Minister Yaseen, it's great to be here talking to you about immigration and multiculturalism. I remember hearing your maiden speech a while ago now, and I remember being struck as you shared your experience of being an engineer in Rimby. There are other individuals here on both sides of the aisle who are immigrants to Canada, and I have so much admiration and respect. It's not an easy thing to do, coming to a new country, sometimes having to learn a new language, but I feel it's great that we do have an immigration minister who has lived experience

and who has gone through many of the experiences that our newcomers to Alberta have. I think that's so wonderful. I truly do.

I might just add that one of my highlights as being an MLA is actually being able to meet many organizations and many newcomers to Alberta and to Canada. It's just such a highlight and a blessing I think for each and every one of us.

I want to just talk about – I'm going to ask a few questions here. First of all, I'll reference 1.3 of the business plan. It talks about assisting prospective and newly arrived international talent with supports and services that help them integrate into Alberta's labour market. Minister, from my experience, albeit limited, it appears to me that language, having proficiency in English, really is a gate that allows our newcomers to have the opportunity to become self-reliant and to really realize and use the unique talents and abilities that they have in their former countries.

I know my wife had the opportunity to volunteer at the Red Deer public library, providing ESL tutoring assistance to two Ukrainian families on two separate occasions. It's very interesting. She commented to me, without really thinking about it, that there's many inconsistencies in the English language, and she used the example of the word "up." It's something we kind of take for granted, but there's actually a lot of different meanings for the word "up," just a two-letter word. It's very interesting. But ESL is certainly an important element in order to integrate and to realize the outcome looked for in 1.3.

I'd be interested in hearing from you, Minister, on things that you've seen that have been done through different organizations in Alberta that help our immigrant population integrate and to get that English proficiency, some of the tools that you're seeing that are being developed to really help these families and individuals that come to Alberta and have that opportunity to really use the great talents and abilities they have. I think that's such an important element, and I'd be interested in hearing from you maybe one or two success stories that jump out to you.

I'm now going to talk about another question. In 1.1 of the business plan, it talks about the Alberta advantage immigration program. I think we've had a number of questions and discussions about that, but I would be interested in understanding. My understanding is that the Alberta immigration program – we are looking to maximize our ability as a province to seek those individuals who will satisfy specific market needs unique to Alberta. You know, we have labour shortages, and we want to attract and be able to have immigrants who can help address some of those shortages that we do have in our labour markets. I note that Quebec has the Canada-Quebec accord.

11:20

**The Chair:** It goes by fast.

Over to you, Minister.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Okay. Well, thank you very much, MLA Stephan. Thank you very much for referring to my maiden speech. I can share with you that all newcomers go through their difficulties. The good thing about this country is that it provides opportunities to overcome those difficulties and reach your full potential. I can give you so many examples, but I think it's going to be difficult for me to narrate those examples. I can share with people at this table, some of them have gone through those difficulties, and I think despite those difficulties, we are lucky to be living in a province and a country that is second to none.

So let me get back to your other questions here. Our program complements federal government services, addresses emerging issues, and fills gaps in the support system for newcomers. In the fiscal year 2023-24, we supported a total of 20,652 newcomers through three distinct service streams funded by the supports for newcomer integration grants.

Firstly, 1,158 newcomers benefited from English as an additional language drop-in services. Secondly, 6,568 newcomers received language assessment and referral services. Lastly, 12,926 newcomers were provided with settlement and community support services. These numbers not only met but exceeded our expectations thanks to the extraordinary efforts of our service providers, particularly in accommodating Ukrainian evacuees in the province. We observed a significant increase in demand for both language assessment and referral services as well as settlement and community support services compared to the previous year. We are committed to supporting newcomers and will continue to adapt and respond to the evolving needs of our community.

One of the powerful ways that the supports for newcomer integration program supports newcomers is through language learning, which complements and leverages federal funding in this area. We fund two language assessment and referral centres in Calgary and in Edmonton that provide assessment and referral services to over 2,000 newcomers every year, allowing them to enter federally funded language instruction for newcomers to Canada classes as well as other job training that requires a language assessment prior to entry. We also fund three drop-in English language centres that provide informal learning opportunities for around 1,000 newcomers each year whose work and family commitments prevent them from attending full-time language programming. In the labour market attachment substream of settlement integration and language projects, newcomers receive work skills and language training that are intended to directly lead to employment. Typically we fund five to six projects.

**The Chair:** Thanks, Minister.

Back over to the folks to my left. Did somebody raise a hand? Anyone tell me? There we go.

**Ms Tejada:** I guess I should have been doing that all along.

**The Chair:** That's okay. I kind of messed up your name, too, so I guess we're giving each other some latitude.

**Ms Tejada:** We're doing okay. Thank you, Chair.

Thank you so much to the minister for the clarification and the answers to the questions around the expressions of interest, for the clarification on the fees. I know we all had a moment there, so thank you, Minister. We do have varied experiences. I'm a second-generation Canadian myself, so I've seen it from a different perspective than you have, but very grateful for that.

And just getting back to the performance metrics around the second key objective 2(a) and – oh, wait. Sorry. Not 2(a) and 2(b). We already asked that question. Just still around the performance indicator 2(c) on page 88, just wanting to clarify if we're going to see an expansion around this metric, and if we can get an explanation on that vast swing in numbers from '23 to '24.

Around autocredentialing, which is mentioned in the business plan, I'd like to know and have some clarification on how much funding the minister has put towards online autocredentialing and when we can expect this program to start.

Thank you for answering the questions around the Ukrainian refugees and how we'll continue to support refugees.

The next question is around tariffs. We know that we're all living in the world of impending tariffs, impending some weeks and maybe disappearing the next, but we know that tariffs have started, and they're expected to affect up to 1 million Canadian jobs, some of which are held by immigrants, who already have the highest unemployment in the country. How will this budget support immigrants that experience budget loss? How are we channelling our supports to our immigrant-serving agencies and to those

communities to ensure that they have some relief from the storm of tariffs?

Just thinking back here on some of the questions that I had around the grants. I think I did ask about the grants. I again will repeat that the grants are always welcome, but we want to make sure that we are enacting systemic change, especially in light of increased hate crimes and increased negative rhetoric around immigration. We know that it's a hot-button issue, but it is still one of the drivers of our economy, and we'll want to make sure that, as referenced by the business plan, we have a welcoming province that encourages immigration because we know that immigrant folks are still strong contributors to our economy and are building our communities.

I would like to know, in terms of the ministry, what else we're doing outside of those small grants. The amounts, I think, listed are around \$7,000 per organization, and as I've heard from some stakeholders, those are great for sort of singular events, but they don't really contribute to systemic change. I would like to know what other initiatives we're taking because I think those hate incidences may increase given the rhetoric that we're seeing. What are we putting in place?

This is a little bit of a crossministry question. I'd like to know what engagements we've had with other ministries. When it comes to anti-racism, those things will touch on education, on health care. In previous sessions I know that we had introduced anti-racism legislation that talked about data collection to better serve our multicultural communities and racialized communities. I'd like to know if there are any initiatives being heralded by the government in terms of the legislation coming up and where we can see that work being done if it is part of the recommendations. Again, I think I'd ask a question around – I don't think I heard an answer about – the publicly available information around what engagements, what we can expect to see around the minutes that arise from each of those councils, and how we're measuring the work that's being done.

11:30

**The Chair:** Thank you, Member. Over to you, Minister.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you. Thank you very much, MLA Tejada, for your questions and observations again. I think you touched on a few items here as well. So I will try to address them as I go along. Hopefully we can get to all of them in the time allotted.

With respect to a number of complaints, I think you brought it earlier as well. The year-over-year change in the number of complaints received by the Alberta Human Rights Commission provides a valuable insight into discrimination in Alberta, particularly against race, colour, ancestry, origin, and religious beliefs. This indicator reflects the level of inclusivity and acceptance of diverse ethnocultural communities across our province. Through our antiracism initiatives Immigration and Multiculturalism is actively working to address some of the underlying challenges that drive these complaints. We are collaborating with the Premier's Council on Multiculturalism, the Alberta Black Advisory Council, and Alberta Anti-Racism Advisory Council, as well as with partners like the Alberta Human Rights Commission to tackle racism and systemic barriers and challenges facing Alberta's diverse ethnocultural communities.

While our ministry's efforts and those of our partners contribute to the results for this performance indicator, we acknowledge that other factors also play a role. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021-22 there was a significant increase in the number of complaints of discrimination against religious beliefs. The numbers of such complaints rose from 52 in 2020-2021 to 378 in 2021 to 2022, with most of the vaccine-related complaints being

made on the grounds of religious beliefs. However, since that time we have observed a significant decrease in complaints made on the grounds of disbelief.

While the increase in the number of complaints is discouraging, it does tell us three important things. First, it tells us that the commission's efforts to streamline and improve access to the complaints process have been successful. It also tells us that public awareness and efforts by governments, community organizations, and schools have changed people's view on discrimination and people are more comfortable reporting these incidents. More importantly, it confirms that continued funding for the Alberta Anti-Racism Advisory Council through Budget 2025, so that even more progress can be made in ending discrimination, is an important investment.

We are all Albertans regardless of our background, and we all have a role to play in combatting racism, discrimination of any kind. I will take this opportunity to share my own experience, personal story. I came to Alberta from Pakistan as a teenager in the late 70s, and like many before me experienced my share of difficulties. But since then, incredible progress has been made in terms of understanding, compassion, and acceptance. It's thanks to the tremendous effort of all Albertans that we have progressed to the point where we are now. We should all be grateful and celebrate those efforts. This is what has made Alberta the province it is today and why so many people come here from around, invited to take part in opportunities available to everyone. We have come a long way since the 1970s.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that Minister, and I'm sure everybody in the crowd can appreciate here that you're wearing your heart on your sleeve as you always do on this file. I appreciate that, sir.

Now with that, MLA Cyr, you caught my attention.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you for sharing that heartwarming story, Minister. Would block time be sufficient, sir, or would you like to go back and forth?

**Mr. Yaseen:** Yes. Please. Let's continue with block time.

**Mr. Cyr:** Okay. Well, Minister, hearing your maiden speech from my colleague Jason Stephan – I unfortunately didn't get to hear that; I wish I could have when you had given it – it sounds like it was very heartfelt. Hearing you today, I know that we all feel the passion and dedication for the new immigrants and protecting multiculturalism in Alberta. Thank you for that, sir.

I will echo some of the concerns that some of my colleagues have brought forward regarding the rural renewal stream in the AAIP. I'm seeing a lot of frightened and discouraged people coming into my office in Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul. It's upsetting to see that our federal Liberals-NDP coalition has dropped the ball so badly on this file. It is front-line people like yourself, sir, who are trying to pick up the pieces. It's unfortunate.

I literally had a woman come into my office that – she can't get her work visa, and she's pregnant right now, so she's no longer got access to health care. Like, this is the level that we're dealing with, with the distress up in my area. A lot of times the only hope they have is the AAIP and the rural renewal stream. To hear that they was cut in half, when there are so many that depend on that, is distressing.

It especially impacts two groups within my constituency: my East Indian community and my Filipino community. They seem to be the hardest hit in all that. These are people that have been in my community for, in many cases, four to five years, so they've become very ingrained in the community. It's heartbreaking to hear that they're having so many difficulties going through that.

What I would like to move on to is something that is important to my constituency. As you probably know, I've got the Cold Lake First

Nation, the Kehewin First Nation, Saddle Lake First Nation, Frog Lake First Nation, the Elizabeth settlement, and Fishing Lake settlement in my constituency. Key objective 2.2 on page 87 highlights the challenges and barriers facing marginalized and Indigenous Albertans. I'd like to expand on the Indigenous Albertans that are impacted by these challenges. I'd like to know that Alberta's anti-racism action plan is to develop and implement anti-racism legislation that fits into Alberta's diversity as a whole. Can the minister expand on any ongoing and future initiatives in this plan that are targeted towards Indigenous Albertans? How does the Minister ensure that Indigenous communities are directly involved with the development and implementation of these initiatives?

I know that the Indigenous and the Métis within my constituency have some questions. I'm sure you're the minister that is going to be able to find the answers for them. Thank you for that, sir.

I'd like to move on to page 87 of the business plan under key objective 2.1. This explores the development of legislation that permits Albertans to observe major holidays more easily without placing undue hardship or expense on Alberta businesses. This is clearly an obvious balancing act that your ministry has to do because, again, we want people to thrive in our area. That means work. It's important that we are able to meet some of these major holidays, sir.

**11:40**

I wish I had more time. Clearly, these speed rounds are just not enough time to get through everything. But sir, I'm sure you'll be able to answer some of my questions.

The statement of operations on page 89 of the business plan outlines some key revenue streams. I see roughly \$13.2 million in estimated revenue from premiums, fees, and licences. It is important to understand what services and programs these funds will support and how they will contribute to Alberta's broader immigration strategies. I recognize you've touched on this already, sir, and I would hope that maybe you could add some more light to it.

I also would like to hear the rest of what you were trying to say, before you were cut off, with that last one. So if you could start with how being a new immigrant, sir, has changed your life, I'd appreciate that.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Well, thank you very much, MLA Cyr, for your observations and your comments and questions. I would quickly conclude what I was trying to say before. It was actually a pretty funny story, too. We talked about the English language at that time. When I took my English – grade 12, English 30, it used to be called at that time – my teacher said to me that I'll talk to the class, of course. They gave us a paperback copy of Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, and they said that we will discuss this on Monday, and this was on Friday. So then I came back home, and I just didn't know what to do. So I had three dictionaries going on: Urdu to English, regular English, and regular English to Shakespearean English over the weekend. But, you know, the good thing about that is that later on I learned that nobody speaks Shakespearean English here anyways. Right? So it was all good. But you know, that presents challenges to newcomers.

The good thing about our society here is that this society provides enough to let you move forward if you want to move forward. I think that many immigrants when they come here, they do that because they have burned their bridges, and they are here to make something out of it. That's why we started this award, the Alberta immigrant impact award, to recognize the efforts of newcomers in our province. That's going to be a long story. I'm going to be short on your answers here, so let me go back to your questions.

Thank you very much for your passionate commitment that you have for a number of First Nations as well as multicultural communities, including East Indian and Filipino communities. I have personally been in contact with some of these communities myself, maybe not in your area of the province but elsewhere, and I know how much they contribute and how much we need to help them to make sure that they reach their full potential. With everybody in this room and our government we do our best to help them out.

Going back to your other questions. Government: our government recognizes the continued effort in truth and reconciliation and continues to support Indigenous communities through Alberta's anti-racism action plan. This plan requires collective effort on the part of all ministries to ensure that all Albertans have opportunities and are treated fairly. I would like to highlight some examples of the actions implemented to date as part of the action plan to support Indigenous people such as programs offered by the Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services, including Indigenous housing capital program, amendments to social housing accommodation and regulations that commit to addressing racism faced by Indigenous people, and employment and financial services projects funding for employment and skills development on- and off- reserve across Alberta.

Alberta ministries have also invested in Indigenous-specific programming such as employment partnership funding, northern and regional economic development, and Indigenous employment training partnerships grant funding to Indigenous communities. There is also continued engagement by various ministries through tables such as First Nations and Métis women councils on economic security and the Premier's Council on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two Spirit Plus People.

Specific to Immigration and Multiculturalism, our ethnocultural and antiracism grant programs specifically aim to celebrate and educate Albertans on the history of Indigenous people and create awareness and understanding of racism faced by Indigenous people and intergenerational impacts. I've had a number of instances where I ask our newcomers to connect with our Indigenous people here because they have gone through this long before us – and they continue to go through this – trying to create some feeling of understanding and working together, learning from them and moving forward. My non-Indigenous organizations who are focused on intercultural sharing with Indigenous communities and especially on the antiracism grant program – the projects were specifically focused . . .

**The Chair:** We'll have to wait for the rest of that in the next round. MLA Tejada, are you still . . .

**Member Tejada:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Member Tejada:** Still open to doing block time, Minister?

**Mr. Yaseen:** We'll continue with the block time.

**Member Tejada:** Great. Thank you so much, Minister and actually to the member opposite around questions on Indigenous engagement. Obviously, a critical piece of multiculturalism in Canada is recognizing First Nations and Métis people and their invaluable contributions to our nation. Thank you for that.

This question is a little bit more around consultation with the different cultural communities and also hearkening to that question around the holidays. That's in outcome 2.1, around developing legislation for ethnocultural community members to observe major

holidays without placing undue hardship on employers. Just in reference to that, I know that the Premier had made a promise to the Muslim community around Eid being made a paid statutory holiday. I know that I've also had other stakeholders in other communities talking about consultation on recognition of holidays like in the Hindu community, sometimes having those line up with the federally recognized holidays.

I'm wondering where in the budget we can see how the ministry has consulted with both employers and cultural communities, in this case specifically around the promise to the Muslim community that Eid would be made a paid statutory holiday. Where can we see in the budget that those consultations have been done? Do we have, again, any publicly available information on consultations with other communities as well? I think it's very important that we have consideration for different communities in recognizing holidays and having that not eat into, you know, say, a family's income for a month. Again to the minister: where would we see these types of consultations done in the budget, and can we expect to see any movement on the promise to the Muslim community that Eid would be made a statutory holiday?

I'm not sure how much more time I have. Two and a half more minutes?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Member Tejada:** Okay.

**Ms Pancholi:** You can pass it over if you want.

**The Chair:** No, you can't.

**Ms Pancholi:** No; I mean that she can stop talking if she wants.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Member Tejada:** Okay. So I actually do have some additional questions on the consultations with other ministries. I think I had asked that sometime before but would really like to see a little bit more detail, especially on the antiracism piece – I'm not sure if I heard an answer to that specifically around education – how the recommendations from the various councils also are being used to inform policies of other ministries. Is that actually a topic of conversation that's covered through the ministry in its consultations with both Education, with health care and other ministries, especially around labour and how we're attracting labour?

Are we also consulting with the ministry of seniors and housing? I know I've had a number of stakeholders in conversations with me around culturally appropriate senior care and the availability of that. We know that overall the senior population is quite large and growing, and we're certainly seeing that in our immigrant populations as well. I can think of a few examples of where this has been done successfully. I'm looking at some of the other questions around culturally appropriate care, and since we've been talking about Indigenous communities as well, I think I'd love to see if any work has been done in that regard as well with senior care.

I think that concludes my questions for the minister under this block.

11:50

**The Chair:** Minister, over to you.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Well, thank you very much, MLA Tejada, again for your questions and observations. The first question was around faith-based holidays. Actually, it wasn't only specific to the Muslim community. It was faith-based and cultural holidays. I have that in my mandate letter as well. We are working on that. I just want to clarify that it's not specific to the Muslim community. What

probably was specific to the Muslim community a little bit more than others was the halal financing, which has already been done through our legislation recently.

I will talk about cultural and faith-based holidays now a little bit more. Immigration and Multiculturalism has been given the critical task of reviewing models from other jurisdictions to develop and implement legislation that allows Alberta's cultural community members the flexibility to observe major holidays more easily without placing undue hardship or expense on Alberta businesses. This has to work in collaboration with Alberta businesses and the ethnocultural community's needs. To support this important work, the Premier's Council on Multiculturalism formed a dedicated working group in the spring of 2024. This group has provided some preliminary recommendations for the minister's consideration regarding observance of major ethnocultural holidays.

Immigration and Multiculturalism is now working closely with the Ministry of Jobs, Economy and Trade to analyze these recommendations. As I said before, it has impact on our businesses, so advice has to be sought through Jobs, Economy and Trade. We are assessing their potential impact on Alberta businesses and providing options for implementation to both ministries. It is important to note that under Alberta's Employment Standards Code there is already some flexibility to allow observance of major ethnocultural holidays. Employers have the option to designate other days as a general holiday in addition to the legislated holiday. We recognize the importance of taking the time to consult widely with ethnocultural communities, organizations, and businesses. This consultation is crucial to gain a better understanding of what should be included in the potential legislation.

I am so proud that Alberta's government is actively implementing Alberta's anti-racism action plan, where all departments across government have an opportunity to take action on racism and discrimination. Potential legislation could go a step further by establishing long-term government commitments to combatting racism.

We are taking the necessary time to consult with other ministries and public service organizations to define the scope of this legislation as it would have implications across the entire public sector. The good news is that the work has already begun in the form of online surveys, targeted stakeholder engagement, and ongoing discussions with the Alberta Anti-Racism Advisory Council, the Premier's Council on Multiculturalism, and the Alberta Black Advisory Council. Some of the feedback from engagement in the community has highlighted inequities when it comes to the access of employment and education opportunities as well as justice services.

On a personal note, I am deeply troubled whenever I hear that anyone is experiencing discrimination. That's why I look forward to the input of community members, the councils I mentioned a moment ago, and departments across government on what steps need to be taken to better address discrimination so that every Albertan can be successful. This is a very important thing in my mandate letter. We want to make sure that we have all the information necessary to have this legislation in place as soon as possible.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Over to MLA Cyr.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you to you and your staff for all of the answers that you've provided today. The fact that we got through almost all of this with a little extra time on the NDP side shows that you've done a very good job of answering fully all of their questions.

One of the things that I'd like to just – and I'll run through it real quick because we don't have a lot of time. Under performance

metric 2(c) on page 88 of the business plan the Alberta Human Rights Commission tracks year-over-year changes in the number of complaints of discrimination based on the grounds of race, colour, ancestry, origin, and religious beliefs. I know these complaints are taken very seriously, and it's very important that people of Alberta can live without feeling the effects of racism. With cases like this it is essential to stay informed so that proper management and follow-up can be ensured. How closely does the ministry work with the Human Rights Commission to track complaints of discrimination? Does the commission share any complaints with the ministry so that the complaints are met with necessary supports?

Finally, as we wrap up with this discussion, does the minister have anything that you'd like to highlight or emphasize that we haven't touched on in today's meeting?

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, MLA Cyr. The ministry is focused on addressing systemic racism and does not track or investigate individual cases or complaints. That is the role of the Alberta Human Rights Commission, an independent commission established under the Alberta Human Rights Act, and that falls under the Ministry of Justice. The Alberta Human Rights Commission assists Albertans with inquiries related to human rights and helps resolve complaints of discrimination based on protected grounds specific in the Alberta Human Rights Act, that include physical and mental disabilities, gender, race, religious beliefs, age, and sexual orientation, among others. The ministry does not directly track these cases but instead uses this indicator, which is based on public reporting by the Alberta Human Rights Commission, to give us insights on trends of discrimination reported based specifically on race, colour, ancestry, and religious belief.

You also asked about a comment – I appreciate another opportunity to emphasize the importance of the work reflected in my ministry's

business plan. Budget 2025 enables my ministry to help grow Alberta's economy by bringing in skilled workforce to fill important jobs gaps. We will keep supporting newcomers by funding programs that help them settle, integrate, learn the language, and work.

We will also continue to build a province where everyone is valued, and we will keep promoting the advantage of Alberta's diversity, including supporting antiracism efforts. We want everybody to move forward in harmony, understanding, tolerance, acceptance, respect. We want to make sure that no one is left behind as we all move forward. The opportunities that we have, I want to make sure that everybody has the same opportunities to move forward and nobody is left behind because there were some barriers in the system. I think that is pretty well it. Sorry for being a little emotional there, but that's the way it is. [applause]

**The Chair:** Well, I think that's a first for me in committees, where we got applause from both sides of the aisle. Gold star, members, for doing that. Minister, thank you so much for bringing the realism to your file and some of the personal experiences. Members, gold stars all around for decorum and the way you handled yourselves today. I just absolutely appreciate it so much from everybody here. That has concluded the time that we have allotted for considering it. Minister, your ministry estimates have been considered at this point.

I'd like to remind the members that this afternoon at 3:30 we have the Ministry of Technology and Innovation. But the best part of all of this little preamble, or amble, we have is: meeting adjourned. Thank you so much.

[The committee adjourned at 12 p.m.]











